

The Warsaw Pact Reconsidered

Inquiries into the Evolution of an Underestimated Alliance, 1960-1969

Een nieuwe visie op het Warschaupact

**Een onderzoek naar de ontwikkeling van een ondergewaardeerde alliantie,
1960-1969**

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

PROEFSCHRIFT

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*To my husband
Kenneth Gabreëls
my most beloved ally*

Cover Illustration: Foundation of the Warsaw Pact, 14 May 1955, Warsaw

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Cover Illustration (back): Map of Europe showing NATO and the Warsaw Pact (ca. 1973)

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CONTENTS

CONTENTS

Abbreviations

Chronology of Events

Note on Translations

Introduction: Reconsidering the Warsaw Pact	1
A New Approach towards the Warsaw Pact	2
The International Constellation	5
New Cold War History	8
Research Strategy	11
Alliance Theory	13
Conceptualisation and Strategy	16
Looking Ahead	19

PART I: EMBRYONIC EMANCIPATION

1 The Warsaw Pact in Its Infancy	25
The New Course	27
The Foundation of a Multilateral Alliance	30
The Foundation of a New Kind of Foreign Policy	34
The Warsaw Pact in Practice	37
The Echoes of Khrushchev's Secret Speech	41
The Polish Road to Emancipation	43
Equality on Moscow's Terms	46
Albanian Reaction to the Thaw	51
The Polish Push for Reforms	53
Demilitarising Romania	56
Further Demilitarisation	57
Ulbricht and the Second Berlin Crisis	59
Conclusion: An Alliance by Default?	63

CONTENTS

2 The Warsaw Pact in the Shadow of the Sino-Soviet Split	67
Communist Unity under Pressure	68
Albanian Defiance	71
The Albanian Fourth Party Congress	74
The Confrontation of David and Goliath	77
Albanian Emancipation and WP Multilateralisation	81
Albanian Exclusion	84
Sino-Romanian Rapprochement	88
The Mongolian Application	91
Romanian Mediation	95
The Romanian Declaration of Independence	100
The Aftermath	103
The Impact of Romanian Independence	105
Conclusion: Emancipation and Multilateralisation	108
3 The Warsaw Pact Compromised by the German Question	112
Warsaw Pact (Dis)Harmony on the German Question	114
Brinkmanship versus Caution	117
The Warsaw Pact as Ulbricht's Instrument	120
Raising the Stakes Again	122
Driving Himself up the Wall	127
The German Question in Nuclear Terms	132
The Ulbricht Doctrine	135
The Denouement	140
The Seeds of Multilateralisation	144
Conclusion: Manoeuvres in a Multilateral Arena	148

PART II: THE DYNAMICS OF DISSENT

4 Warsaw Pact Reforms and Westpolitik	153
The Crisis in Context	155
The PCC's Paralysis	160
The Romanian Change of Direction	163
Allied Arguments	166
The Romanian Rebuttal	169
Romania's 'Triple Yes!'	171
A West German Move	176
The Romanian Method Revisited	178
'Some' against 'Others'	181
The Success of the Romanian Strategy	184

CONTENTS

The Aftermath	187
Division on the German Question	191
Conclusion: The Warsaw Pact's Transformation	194
5 Gaullism in the Warsaw Pact: Ceausescu's Challenge	199
The Vietnam War	201
The Nuclear Question	203
Playing the Chinese Card	206
Bilateral Preparations	209
PCC Clashes	212
The Alliance Inside Out	215
Closing Ranks on Vietnam?	219
The Polish Move	222
The Romanian Countermove	224
'One' against 'Six'	226
Lessons for the Future	231
Vietnam Revisited	233
Consultations on Non-Proliferation	237
Non-Proliferation under Pressure	239
Romania under Pressure	241
Conclusion: Romania Reconsidered	246

PART III: CRISIS AND CONSOLIDATION

6 The Limits of Emancipation: The Prague Spring	253
The Historical Context	256
The Six in Dresden	259
Echoes from Dresden	263
Moscow in May	267
The Romanian Reaction	269
The Decline in Relations	271
Warsaw: The Point of No Return?	274
The Romanian Interpretation	279
Soviet-Czechoslovak Estrangement	282
A Multilateral Solution?	284
Casting the Die	286
The Intervention	289
Paving the Way for 'Normalisation'	291
A Crumbling Coalition	294
Normalisation under Pressure	296
Conclusion: Irreversible Multilateralisation	301

CONTENTS

7 Closing Ranks, while Clashing with China	305
Military Reforms	308
Yakubovskii on Tour	310
General Prchlik's Challenge	313
Reforms in the Post-Invasion Period	316
The 'Qualitative Turning Point'	319
The Sino-Soviet Split	323
European Security	327
Military Reforms Revisited	331
The Denouement	335
The Aftermath	337
Conclusion: The Warsaw Pact Multilateralised	341
Conclusion: The WP as Underestimated Alliance	345
Embryonic Emancipation	346
The Dynamics of Dissent	348
From Crisis to Consolidation	350
Comparison to NATO	352
Alliance Theory Revisited	355
Contributing to New Cold War History	361
Recommendations for Future Research	366
Samenvatting (Dutch Summary)	370
Bibliography	376
Archives	376
Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security	378
Published Primary Sources	380
Secondary Literature	381
Curriculum Vitae	395

ABBREVIATIONS

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ANIC	Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale ale României
AWP	Albanian Workers' Party
CC	Central Committee
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCUAF	Commander in Chief of the United Armed Forces (WP)
CMFA	Committee of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
COMINFORM	Communist Information Bureau
CPCz	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSCE	Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSSR	Czechoslovak Socialist Republic
CWIHP	Cold War International History Project
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam)
ENDC	Eighteen Nations Disarmament Committee
FIG APC	Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivio del Partito Comunista Italiano
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany)
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
HWP	Hungarian Workers' Party (up to October 1956)
HSWP	Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (from October 1956)
Interkit	'China International': Eastern European institution against China
MfAA	Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der DDR
MLF	Multilateral nuclear Forces
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NLF	National Liberation Front for South Vietnam
NSWP	Non-Soviet Warsaw Pact (member)
NTBT	Limited Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty
PA AA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes der DDR
PCC	Political Consultative Committee
PCI	Partito Comunista Italiano
PHP	Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRP	People's Republic of Poland
PUWP	Polish United Workers' Party
RCP	Romanian Communist Party (from August 1965)
RWP	Romanian Workers' Party (up to August 1965)
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe (NATO)

ABBREVIATIONS

SAPMO-BArch	Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (East German)
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (West German)
UAF	United Armed Forces (WP)
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WP	Warsaw Pact

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

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5 March 1953	Death of Stalin
16-17 June 1953	Uprisings in East Germany
9 May 1955	Admission of Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) to NATO
10 May 1955	Soviet disarmament proposal
14 May 1955	Foundation of the Warsaw Pact (WP)
15 May 1955	Austrian State Treaty
26 May 1955	Khrushchev's reconciliation with Tito
18-23 July 1955	Geneva summit
September 1955	Establishment of diplomatic relations between the SU and FRG
27-28 January 1956	First meeting of the WP's Political Consultative Committee in Prague
25 February 1956	Khrushchev's Secret Speech at the CPSU's 20 th party congress
June 1956	Official normalisation of Soviet-Yugoslav (diplomatic) relations
June 1956	Dissolution of the COMINFORM
19 October 1956	Wladyslaw Gomulka elected first secretary in Poland
23 October 1956	Beginning of Hungarian Revolution
24 October 1956	Intervention of Soviet troops in Hungary
30 October 1956	Soviet declaration on friendship and cooperation in Eastern Europe
4 November 1956	Second intervention of Soviet troops in Hungary
June 1957	Khrushchev survives the anti-party coup in Moscow
24 May 1958	Meeting of the Political Consultative Committee in Moscow
27 November 1958	Khrushchev issues a six-month ultimatum on the status of West Berlin
27-28 April 1959	Meeting of the foreign ministers of the WP countries and China
September 1959	Khrushchev's trip to the USA, meeting Eisenhower at Camp David

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 4 February 1960 PCC meeting in Moscow on peaceful coexistence and the German Question
- 20-22 June 1960 Third Romanian Party Congress in Bucharest
- November 1960 Moscow Meeting of international communist parties
- 13 February 1961 Albanian fourth Party Conference in Tirana
- 28-29 March 1961 PCC meeting in Moscow on Albania and the German Question
- 3-5 August 1961 Meeting of WP first secretaries in Moscow on intra-Berlin border closure
- 13 August 1961 Beginning of the building of the Berlin Wall
- 17-31 October 1961 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
- 22-28 October 1961 Checkpoint Charlie Crisis between SU and USA in Berlin
- 16-28 October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis
- 7 June 1962 PCC meeting in Moscow on the German Question
- 26-27 July 1963 PCC meeting in Moscow on accession of Mongolia to the WP
- 3-10 March 1964 Romanian delegation visits China to mediate in Sino-Soviet split
- 15-22 April 1964 Extraordinary plenum of the Romanian Workers' Party CC in which 'Romanian Declaration of Independence' is made public
- 14 October 1964 Ouster of Nikita Khrushchev; Leonid Brezhnev becomes the party leader
- 16 October 1964 First successful detonation of a Chinese nuclear device
- 20 December 1964 First meeting of the WP deputy foreign ministers in Warsaw
- 19-20 January 1965 PCC meeting in Warsaw on reforms, European Security, and nuclear issues
- 1 March 1965 Preparatory meeting of international communist conference in Moscow
- 4-9 February 1966 Meeting of the WP deputy ministers of defence in Moscow
- 10-12 February 1966 Meeting of the WP deputy foreign ministers in East Berlin
- 7 March 1966 France announces its withdrawal from NATO's military structures
- 24 March 1966 'Peace note' of FRG government to all WP states except GDR
- 7 April 1966 Meeting of WP first secretaries in Moscow
- May 1966 Informal meeting of WP ministers of defence in Moscow
- 6-17 June 1966 Meeting of WP foreign ministers in Moscow
- 4-6 July 1966 PCC meeting in Bucharest on European Security and Vietnam
- August 1966 Mao launches the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- 31 January 1967 Romania establishes diplomatic relations with West Germany
- 8-10 February 1967 Meeting of WP deputy foreign ministers in Warsaw
- 5-10 June 1967 Six-Day War between Israel, Egypt, Jordan and Syria
- 14-21 Dec. 1967 Foundation of the INTERKIT in Moscow
- December 1967 Conclusion of the Harmel Report within NATO
-
- 3-5 January 1968 Election of Alexander Dubcek as the first secretary of the CPCz
- 26-27 Feb. 1968 Meeting of WP deputy foreign ministers in Berlin
- Feb.-March 1968 Consultative meeting on international communist conference in Budapest
- 6-7 March 1968 PCC meeting in Sofia on the non-proliferation treaty
- 23 March 1968 Meeting of the six socialist countries (except Romania) in Dresden
- 14-15 July 1968 Meeting of 'the five' socialist countries (except Romania and Czechoslovakia) in Warsaw
- 1 July 1968 Sixty-three states sign the non-proliferation treaty
- 3 August 1968 Meeting of the six socialist countries (except Romania) in Bratislava
- 20-21 August 1968 Invasion of Czechoslovakia by 'the five' socialist countries
- 30 October 1968 Meeting of WP ministers of defence in Moscow
-
- 2 March 1969 Beginning of Sino-Soviet border clashes on the island of Zhenbao
- 16 March 1969 Meeting of WP deputy foreign ministers in Budapest
- 17 March 1969 PCC meeting in Budapest on military reforms and European Security
- 17 April 1969 Removal of Alexander Dubcek as party leader of the CPCz
-
- 1 August 1975 Conclusion of the Helsinki Final Act at the CSCE in Helsinki

NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

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All the translations from the sources from the Romanian, German, and Italian archives are my own, unless I refer to sources, which have already been published. In the transliteration of names I have chosen not to use any accents for the sake of consistency.

INTRODUCTION

RECONSIDERING THE WARSAW PACT

The Warsaw Pact is a ‘cardboard castle, (...) carefully erected over what most observers considered an already perfectly adequate blockhouse.’¹
NATO officials about the WP at its foundation on 14 May 1955

The fate of the Warsaw Pact already seemed to have been sealed upon its foundation. The stigma of a ‘cardboard castle’, which NATO-officials attached to it when it was founded in 1955, has endured, and its subsequent demise in 1991 seems to vindicate such a derogatory approach to the Warsaw Pact. It is suggested that the WP had no substance, that it was a mere facade, a kind of Potemkin version of NATO, which at best provided the Soviet ‘satellites’ with a *pro forma* platform to express their opinions, but in fact enabled the Soviet Union to keep them more tightly in its grip. It would, however, be teleology at its worst to suppose that there was little substance to the Eastern European alliance, simply because it barely survived the Cold War. This does nevertheless seem to be a widely held assumption, which explains why historians have largely overlooked the WP since the 1980s. However, the fact that the Warsaw Pact survived for thirty-six years is quite a long time for a ‘cardboard castle’. It suggests that the ‘castle’ was not entirely made of cardboard, and that it had a more substantial history before the end of the Cold War led to its collapse. This deserves further inquiry.

The opening of the Eastern European archives since the end of the Cold War has provided many astonishing new fields for exploration, some of which have still remained unexplored. Research into the Warsaw Pact from the perspective of the Soviet Union’s allies is, surprisingly, one of those virgin territories. According to the recent *Encyclopaedia of the Cold War* the Warsaw Pact was ‘used to continue the total subordination of the smaller East European governments to the Kremlin’s actual aims and policy in the post-Stalin era.’² The dynamics of power within the Soviet bloc is consequently regarded from the perspective of bilateral relations between the Soviet

¹ V. Mastny and M. Byrne (eds.), *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact 1955-1991* (Budapest and New York, 2005), 1.

² Cf. J. Baev, ‘The Warsaw Pact’, in R. van Dijk (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Cold War* (London and New York, 2008), 960.

Union and its so-called satellites, while failing to inquire into the multilateral interaction within the Warsaw Pact. If history were as simple as that, this would explain the absence of a recent monograph on the Warsaw Pact. But this was emphatically not the case, as this book aims to show.

A NEW APPROACH TOWARDS THE WARSAW PACT

This book will not only be the first monograph on the Warsaw Pact based on primary sources to be found in Eastern European archives which became public following the fall of the Berlin Wall, but it will also be unprecedented in its challenge of the unfounded, but persistent assumption within historiography of the WP as a mere instrument of Soviet influence. This assumption prevails even in the seminal book *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict* by the American foreign policy analyst Zbigniew Brzezinski, who calls the Warsaw Pact ‘a useful forum for the articulation of unanimity, expressing ritualistically the bloc’s support of Soviet foreign policy initiatives versus the West’.³ Although Brzezinski shrewdly observes that ‘the East European margin of autonomy increased greatly’ in the first half of the 1960s, while analysing the ‘emancipation’ of the Eastern European countries from ‘satellites into junior allies’, he fails to link this process of ‘de-satellitization’ to the alliance to which these ‘junior allies’ belonged.⁴

In the books which focus on the Warsaw Pact, the role of the Eastern European countries is hardly discussed at all. A welcome exception is Robin Remington’s *The Warsaw Pact: Case Studies in Communist Conflict Resolution*, but since it was written in 1971 it has largely become out-dated.⁵ The greatest surge of WP research took place at the height of the ‘second Cold War’ in the early 1980s, when Western policy-makers were particularly concerned about the Warsaw Pact’s military might. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that historians at the time mainly focused on the military aspects of the WP, while characterising the WP as the Soviet Union’s ‘transmission belt’,⁶ and as ‘the most important organization for perpetuating Soviet influence in Eastern Europe’.⁷ Since most of their findings were based on little, if any, archival evidence, they steadily became obsolete after the collapse of the Soviet bloc; even so, their approach to the WP as a Soviet instrument still dominates current historiography.

The military emphasis remains in the only recent monograph on the Warsaw

³ Z. K. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict. Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Harvard, 1967), 458.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 433-455.

⁵ R. A. Remington, *The Warsaw Pact. Case Studies in Communist Conflict Resolution* (Massachusetts, 1971).

⁶ R. W. Clawson and L. S. Kaplan (eds.), *The Warsaw Pact. Political Purpose and Military Means* (Ohio, 1982), x.

⁷ C. D. Jones, *Soviet Influence in Eastern Europe. Political Autonomy and the Warsaw Pact* (New York, 1981), ix.

Pact, written in 2005 by the German historian Frank Umbach, who analyses the development of the Warsaw Pact from the perspective of Soviet security policy.⁸ Because Umbach fails to distinguish between the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact (NSWP) countries, while at the same time basing his theory on secondary literature alone, his book still leaves ample room for a monograph on the WP within the context of the Soviet bloc from a multilateral angle, based on multi-archival research. Although the relation between an NSWP member and the Soviet Union has recently been the subject of a number of monographs published in Eastern Europe, all of these merely address the bilateral relation between the Kremlin and one of its allies from the national perspective of the country in question, without examining the dynamics within the alliance as a whole.⁹

The picture that emerges from a multi-archival analysis of the WP reveals the shortcomings of its one-sided treatment in historiography. The first five years of the WP's existence may vindicate its characterisation as a Soviet transmission belt, since the Warsaw Pact's Political Consultative Committee (PCC) – its only official organ – only met sporadically in order to rubberstamp Soviet policies. Events, however, took a different turn in 1960. In this year the failed Paris summit between Khrushchev and Eisenhower marked an exacerbation of the second Berlin Crisis. At the same time, the public divergences between the Soviet and Chinese leaders at several international communist conferences heralded the Sino-Soviet split. In the shadow of the disintegrating communist movement and the escalation of the German Question, the Albanian leader Enver Hoxha and his East German 'comrade' Walter Ulbricht began to explore the scope for manoeuvre within an alliance under pressure. Their attempts to stretch the limits of the WP paved the way for their NSWP comrades – the Romanians and Poles in particular – to assert their own interests within the alliance and thus 'emancipate' themselves from the Soviet grip. Behind the scenes of the PCC meetings an increasingly multilateral process developed, in which the NSWP members gradually redefined the alliance.

This process was marked by genuine dissent among the WP members on a wide range of issues, varying from the building of the Berlin Wall, the potential nuclearisation of West Germany and European Security, to non-proliferation, the Vietnam War and ways to reform the Warsaw Pact. During the 1960s the Warsaw Pact, as an institution, was continuously in crisis, since the absence of any clear delineation of its purpose left ample scope for its members to disagree on the goals and scope of the alliance.¹⁰ The Prague Spring in 1968 exposed more fundamental

⁸ F. Umbach, *Das rote Bündnis. Entwicklung und Zerfall des Warschauer Paktes 1955-1991* (Berlin, 2005).

⁹ The most notable examples of this trend are Wanda Jarzabek's book in Poland, *PRL w politycznych strukturach Układu Warszawskiego w latach 1955-1980* [*The Polish People's Republic in the political structures of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1980*] (Warsaw, 2008), and Petre Oprei's monograph in Romania, *România în Organizația Tratatului de la Varsovia (1955 - 1991)*, (Bucharest, 2008).

¹⁰ Cf. V. Mastny, 'The Warsaw Pact. An Alliance in Search of a Purpose', in M. A. Heiss and S.V. Papacosma (eds.), *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intra-bloc Conflicts* (Ohio, 2008), 141-160.

differences between the WP members, since Romania disagreed with five of its WP allies on the merits of offering ‘fraternal assistance’ to its ally, Czechoslovakia. The persistent allegation that the ensuing invasion in Czechoslovakia was carried out as a Warsaw Pact operation sealed the fate of the pact as a coercive alliance. However, the alliance as an institution actually remained aloof from the developments in Czechoslovakia, and under pressure from increasingly assertive NSWP members concentrated instead on ways to reorganise the alliance.

This process of redefinition culminated in a series of reforms, which after acrimonious debates within the alliance were approved at a PCC meeting in March 1969. At this meeting there was genuine unanimity not only about the reorganisation of the Warsaw Pact, but also about the appeal for a European Security Conference, following a Polish initiative in 1965; this in turn paved the way for the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. The appeal for such a conference reflected both the Warsaw Pact’s search for an adequate solution of the German Question, and a paradigm shift from Khrushchev’s brinkmanship in the second Berlin Crisis to a more constructive proposal for European cooperation. While producing a way out of the impasse on the status of both Germanys, the meeting also confirmed the irreversibility of the Sino-Soviet split, since it coincided with Sino-Soviet border clashes at the Ussuri river. The WP thus definitively turned Westward, focusing on European détente instead of restoring communist unity. The multiple crisis that had begun in 1960 was resolved.

At the same time the PCC meeting in 1969 sealed the evolution of the WP from a so-called ‘empty shell’ into a more mature alliance, and marked the emancipation of the individual NSWP members.¹¹ It is worth researching to what extent the WP’s origins as an empty shell provided its non-Soviet members not only with scope for manoeuvre, but also with the unique opportunity to define the shape of the alliance and turn it into something more substantial. In the 1960s the WP matured from an alliance that seemed to resemble a ‘cardboard castle’ to an alliance whose appeal for European Security NATO took seriously in 1969. The emancipation of the NSWP members also led to the evolution of the alliance at large. Moreover, it anticipated a relatively independent role for the NSWP members in the Helsinki process, which has been examined recently.¹² This period from crisis to consolidation was unique in the history of the Warsaw Pact. This book therefore examines to what extent the Warsaw Pact inadvertently provided the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact members with an instrument to assert their national interests, emancipate themselves from the Soviet grip, and influence Warsaw Pact policy in the period 1960-1969. It also measures the impact of

¹¹ A. Korbonski, ‘The Warsaw Treaty After Twenty-five Years: An Entangling Alliance or an Empty Shell?’, in R. W. Clawson, and L. S. Kaplan. (eds.), *The Warsaw Pact. Political Purpose and Military Means* (Ohio, 1982), 3.

¹² E.g. D. Selvage ‘The Warsaw Pact and the European Security Conference, 1964-69: Sovereignty, Hegemony, and the German Question’, in A. Wenger et al. (eds.), *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited* (London and New York, 2008), 85-106.

this process on the alliance itself, which acquired a dynamic of its own in the 1960s, and analyses how the smaller allies' struggle for emancipation served to multilateralise the alliance.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONSTELLATION

The period 1960-1969 also merits particular consideration, since it covers the evolution of the Warsaw Pact under a particularly interesting international constellation, in which not only the second Berlin Crisis and the Sino-Soviet split, but also the Cuban Missile Crisis, the debate on Multilateral Nuclear Forces (MLF), non-proliferation, and the Vietnam War affected the dynamics of the Cold War at both sides of the Iron Curtain. Although this international context has been studied in depth on the Western side of the Iron Curtain, the role of the WP has been ignored, even in histories that claim to be all-embracing, such as Marc Trachtenberg's iconic work, *A Constructed Peace*.¹³ Attempting to deal with the entire concept of security and the German Question in nuclear terms from both perspectives, linguistic constraints nevertheless compelled Trachtenberg to concentrate on the Western side.¹⁴ This is particularly regrettable, since the WP began to play a considerable role in formulating the Soviet bloc's foreign policy in this period, with increasing input by NSWP members. By examining the seminal international developments in the 1960s from an Eastern European perspective, this book also addresses this shortcoming, while simultaneously reassessing the history of Eastern Europe through the prism of the Warsaw Pact.

Moreover, these international developments also contributed to the Warsaw Pact's 'gravest crisis', which coincided with the one in NATO halfway through the 1960s.¹⁵ As in NATO, there was considerable disagreement among the allies on the scope and purpose of the alliance, while the nuclear question also gave rise to increasing dissent. Despite a growing awareness among scholars that 'NATO as a multilateral forum offered small member states the opportunity to make their influence felt in a significant way that put to test the alliance's major powers' during its crisis in the sixties,¹⁶ multilateralism in the WP tends to be ignored. Here rectification is long overdue, if only because of the pronounced imbalance between research into the role of the Soviet Union's Eastern-European allies in the WP and the amount of recent research on the influence of America's smaller allies in NATO.¹⁷ NATO's crisis in the 1960s has been researched from numerous perspectives, such as Anna Locher's

¹³ M. Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace. The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, 1999).

¹⁴ V. Mastny, 'The New History of Cold War Alliances', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4:2 (2002), 65.

¹⁵ Mastny, 'The Warsaw Pact', 148.

¹⁶ A. Locher, 'A Crisis Foretold. NATO and France, 1963-66', in A. Wenger et al. (eds.), *Transforming NATO in the Cold War. Challenges beyond Deterrence in the 1960s* (Oxford and New York, 2007), 107-127.

¹⁷ E.g. L. S. Kaplan, *NATO Divided, NATO United. The Evolution of an Alliance* (Westport, 2004), for an influential analysis of the differences between various allies within NATO throughout its existence.

research into President Charles de Gaulle's dissent or Helga Haftendorn's study of the nuclear question, but there is no equivalent study on the crisis in the WP.¹⁸

In the last couple of years two collections of essays have been published, which, although addressing the Warsaw Pact's 'stepmotherly' treatment in historiography from an intrabloc perspective,¹⁹ still focus exclusively on the relationship between two or three WP countries on a specific issue and not on an analysis of the dynamics within the alliance as a whole.²⁰ Both of these collections are the result of research conducted under the aegis of the *Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security* (PHP) in Zurich, which disseminates as much archival material as possible concerning the WP and NATO. The project's coordinator, the renowned historian Vojtech Mastny, is also one of the editors of an impressive collection of archival sources on the WP, which was published in 2005.²¹ Although Mastny has published prolifically on the Warsaw Pact, his articles mainly focus on isolated issues from a military perspective,²² leaving plenty of scope for further research in which the interplay between *all* Warsaw Pact allies is assessed from a multilateral and primarily political perspective. Mastny himself acknowledges that '[w]hat is still lacking is a study of the Warsaw Pact's crisis and reform [in the 1960s], comparable to the study by Helga Haftendorn on NATO', and continues to question whether 'the alliance's military value (...) in a hypothetical European war had been superseded by its political value'.²³ The time is ripe for an analysis of the Warsaw Pact's crisis in the 1960s from a political perspective.

The fact that the crisis within the European Community in the 1960s has recently been studied, too, underlines the imbalance between research on institutions in Eastern and Western Europe during the Cold War all the more clearly.²⁴ The discrepancy is, of course, also due to the fact that NATO and the European Union still exist and that both have been, or are still being, plagued with crises. But even though the Warsaw Pact no longer exists, the topics that plagued the alliance are still relevant today: concepts of sovereignty, intergovernmentalism and supranationalism, the purpose of alliances, the response to crises and the possibilities for reform. The WP also went through a process of integration in the 1960s, and is an excellent case study for the institutional fragility that is currently exposed in the European Union. Moreover, it is worth studying the institutional history of the Eastern European countries that have joined both NATO and the European Union over the past twenty

¹⁸ A. Locher, *Crisis? What Crisis? NATO, de Gaulle, and the Future of the Alliance, 1963-1966* (Berlin, 2010), and H. Haftendorn, *NATO and the Nuclear Revolution. A Crisis of Credibility, 1966-1967* (Oxford, 1996) respectively. See also Wenger et al (eds.), *Transforming NATO*.

¹⁹ Cf. Umbach, *Das rote Bündnis*, 3: Umbach calls the WP 'ein Stiefkind der westlichen Osteuropaforschung', but his treatment of it is hardly novel.

²⁰ Heiss and Papacosma (eds.), *NATO and the Warsaw Pact*, and T. Diedrich et al. (eds.), *Der Warschauer Pakt: Von der Gründung bis zum Zusammenbruch 1955 bis 1991* (Berlin, 2009).

²¹ Mastny and Byrne (eds.), *Cardboard Castle*.

²² Mastny, 'The Warsaw Pact'.

²³ Mastny, 'The New History', 76. Although this article was written in 2002, its claims are still valid.

²⁴ N. P. Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crisis of the 1960s. Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge* (London and New York, 2006).

years. Instead of assuming that the diplomatic experience of those countries is negligible when compared to their Western counterparts, it is worth asking to what extent those countries also have experience in multilateral organisations.

It is indeed the potential comparison with institutions such as NATO that makes the WP so interesting. Unlike the communist institutions that preceded it, namely the COMINTERN, which was abolished during WWII in 1943, and its Eastern European successor, the COMINFORM, the WP was an intergovernmental organisation, which linked governments together, not parties.²⁵ This might seem a trivial difference within a communist society, but the distinction is, as this book will show, fundamental. Although it is often assumed that the WP merely succeeded the COMINFORM as an instrument of Soviet control, the alliance was cast in a mould that was altogether different from the COMINTERN and the COMINFORM, which were not alliances, but movements of communist parties, founded on the communist ideology, and designed to propagate it. The fact that Khrushchev dissolved the COMINFORM in 1956, one year after the foundation of the WP, accordingly does not indicate that the WP had replaced the COMINFORM, but that Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation went hand in hand with a remodelling of Soviet foreign policy.

The other institution that is not primarily based on the communist ideology is the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), which was founded in 1949. The COMECON has, however, been researched in more depth recently, notably by the American historian Randall Stone, whose book *Satellites and Commissars* has already yielded some ground-breaking results. Stone convincingly argues that 'the Soviet Union's control over its satellites was much weaker than was believed during the years of the Cold War', which corroborates the central findings in this book.²⁶ His book nevertheless concentrates on trade in the Soviet bloc, and therefore does not deal with the international issues that were so essential to the Cold War at large. Research on the WP thus has the double advantage of researching an alliance that was hitherto underestimated, and approaching several seminal international developments in the Cold War from a novel perspective. None of the other communist institutions primarily served to develop Soviet bloc foreign policy, whereas the WP was in fact, in the first instance, a political alliance, whose Political Consultative Committee was the only organ that was institutionalised up to 1969. The emphasis in this book will therefore be on the WP as an instrument for developing Soviet bloc foreign policy, rather than choosing the more traditional military perspective.

²⁵ These have already been dealt with in R. Service, *Comrades. Communism: A World History* (London, 2007).

²⁶ R. W. Stone, *Satellites and Commissars. Strategy and Conflict in the Politics of Soviet-Bloc Trade* (Princeton, 2002), 3.

NEW COLD WAR HISTORY

The fact that the WP has not been studied in depth for so long is all the more surprising, since it fits so well with the aims of the so-called 'New Cold War History'. Although New Cold War History can be shortly defined as 'Cold War history written after the conflict ended and with access to Warsaw Pact documents',²⁷ these documents have not yet been used to write a new history of the Warsaw Pact itself. By analysing hitherto neglected archival evidence and examining the Eastern European alliance from a radically novel perspective, this book aims to contribute to the New Cold War History by using 'newly available information to refine, or in some cases destroy, old images and interpretations', as the renowned journal *Cold War History* claims it should do.²⁸ According to one of the leading scholars in the field, Odd Arne Westad, 'New Cold War History is in its essence multi-archival in research and multipolar in analysis', and distinguishes itself by 'making the study of the Cold War *international history*, rather than an outgrowth of the history of American foreign relations'.²⁹ By approaching the Cold War from the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain this book not only claims to shed a new light on the Warsaw Pact, but it also aims to explicitly take the role of China and the German Question into account, thus breaking through the traditional bipolar approach.

In a canonical collection of essays by prominent scholars on New Cold War History its founding father, the American historian John Lewis Gaddis, argues that 'the "new" Cold War history (...) is showing that zones of at least relative autonomy existed on both sides during that conflict, and that smaller powers were often in a position to influence actions of their larger counterparts'.³⁰ This is an insightful statement, but Gaddis and many of his colleagues nevertheless still assume that Eastern Europe was an 'empire by coercion'³¹ or even a 'failed empire'³² and that as such it apparently does not merit any further study. In his highly influential book *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* Gaddis goes even further, and argues that '[t]he Warsaw Pact never operated as NATO did: there was little sense of mutual interest, especially after the events of 1956'. By comparing the Warsaw Pact to NATO, Gaddis tumbles into a common pitfall: the fact that the WP did not operate as NATO does

²⁷ O. A. Westad (ed.), *Reviewing the Cold War. Approaches, Interpretation, Theory* (London, 2000), 5.

²⁸ [http://www.tandfonline.com/action/aboutThisJournal?show=aimsScope&journalCode=fcwh20#.](http://www.tandfonline.com/action/aboutThisJournal?show=aimsScope&journalCode=fcwh20#.UdsKIY4jDFso) UdsKIY4jDFso, accessed 22 September 2013.

²⁹ Westad (ed.), *Reviewing the Cold War*, 5. Cf. J. L. Gaddis, *We Now Know. Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford, 1997), 282.

³⁰ J. L. Gaddis, 'On Starting All Over Again: A Naïve Approach to the Study of the Cold War', in Westad (ed.), *Reviewing the Cold War*, 31. In the same volume the Cold War historian James Hershberg calls for a 'retroactive debipolarization' of the Cold War. Cf. J. G. Hershberg, 'The Crisis Years, 1958-1963', in *ibid.*, 304.

³¹ L. Bohri, 'Empire by Coercion: The Soviet Union and Hungary in the 1950s', *Cold War History* 1:2 (2001), 47-72.

³² V. M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill, 2007, 2009).

not necessarily imply its members had no mutual interest either. Excelling in sweeping statements, Gaddis continues - without any recourse to archival evidence - to argue that the 'Russians (...) knew of no way to deal with independent-thinking other than to smother it', which 'surely' resulted in 'subservience'.³³ It is worth dwelling on this interpretation, since it is part of his book's last chapter, called 'The New Cold War History: First Impressions', in which Gaddis maps the future of New Cold War History.

The way Gaddis treats the WP illustrates the cursory manner in which it is discussed in many books on the Cold War.³⁴ The Warsaw Pact tends to be only referred to *en passant*, and without any explanation of its significance. This even applies to the *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, which is admirable in both its depth and breadth and has been regularly consulted while writing this book, but hardly mentions the WP in its seventy-two essays, and when it does, tends to treat it erroneously.³⁵ This book accordingly intends to straddle the current divide in historiography between the monographs which focus on the development of the Cold War or the Soviet bloc, but fail to pay any explicit attention to the Warsaw Pact, and the books (mostly collections of articles) on the WP, which tend to treat its existence in isolation, while separating it from the broader context of the Cold War.³⁶

A lot of research therefore remains to be done, since the way in which the WP inadvertently served to emancipate its NSWP members has so far been overlooked. The only elaborate analysis on the leverage of a Soviet satellite over the SU is Hope Harrison's *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, which is a stimulating analysis of how the tail could wag the dog, but it is limited to the bilateral interaction between the East German leader Walter Ulbricht and the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev from 1953-1961.³⁷ Harrison herself expresses the hope that her 'book will inspire scholars to examine other instances of important allies affecting the cold war and superpower policy, especially on the communist side of the cold war'.³⁸ Although Harrison's book is a tribute to New Cold War History, it simultaneously illustrates the shortfalls of an analysis of solely bilateral relations. An examination of the same topic from the perspective of the Warsaw Pact reveals that there were other factors at play, too, and therefore somewhat revises Harrison's theories on Ulbricht's influence on

³³ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 289.

³⁴ E.g. Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, and A. Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism* (London 2009), and J. L. Harper, *The Cold War* (Oxford, 2011). This also applies to books in other languages: cf. G. Soutou, *La Guerre de Cinquante Ans* (Paris, 2001), and F. Romero, *Storia della guerra fredda. L'ultimo conflitto per l'Europa* (Turin, 2009).

³⁵ E.g. the assumptions about Soviet control in the Warsaw Pact of A. Kemp-Welch, 'Eastern Europe: Stalinism to Solidarity', in M. Leffler and O.A. Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume II: Crisis and Détente* (Cambridge, 2010), 219-237.

³⁶ Cf. Heiß and Papacosma (eds.), *NATO and the Warsaw Pact*, and Diedrich et al. (eds.), *Der Warschauer Pakt*.

³⁷ H.M. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall. Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton, 2003).

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Khrushchev. Ulbricht was not the only one with a vested interest in the building of the Berlin Wall, as this book attempts to show.

The focus on *bilateral* relations within the communist side of the Cold War has become a recurrent feature in New Cold War History, which needs to be complemented by a multilateral approach. Both the Swiss scholar Lorenz Lüthi and the Russian historian Sergey Radchenko have shed a new light on the bilateral relations between China and the Soviet Union, in two thought-provoking monographs, which partly overlap with mine in both time-frame and content, since the Sino-Soviet split had a huge impact on the dynamics of the WP in the 1960s. In *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* Lüthi traces the decline in Sino-Soviet relations between 1956 and 1966, and argues that '[t]he story of the Sino-Soviet breakup cannot be told without a focus on ideology'.³⁹ In this respect Lüthi echoes a persistent trend within New Cold War History, which stresses the importance of ideas and ideology.⁴⁰ In his *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967*, Radchenko nevertheless takes issue with this approach, and claims to be 'a little more sceptical of the power of ideas and more appreciative of the idea of power'.⁴¹

Radchenko is not alone in questioning the primacy of ideas that prevails in New Cold War History. Both the Norwegian historian Geir Lundestad and his American colleague Melvyn Leffler have questioned the renewed emphasis on ideas.⁴² Leffler in particular regrets 'the loss of focus on traditional questions of security, power, and interest', because it 'simplifies the complexity of the historical process and distorts what we now do know about the Cold War'.⁴³ The extensive archival research that forms the foundation of this book confirms the views of Radchenko and Leffler that security concerns often overrode ideological inclinations. The emphasis in this monograph will therefore be on security, although ideological motives will be analysed wherever it seems necessary. This book also places the German Question, which has received 'rather little attention in the new literature', central in an analysis of 'Soviet security requirements', as Leffler suggests, and the same applies to the security concerns of Eastern Europe at large.⁴⁴ Apart from nuancing the emphasis on ideas, this book places itself firmly in the tradition of New Cold War History by radically reconsidering a hitherto underestimated alliance from a multilateral, multinational and multi-archival perspective.

³⁹ L.M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, 2008), 8.

⁴⁰ Cf. Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 283, and Westad (ed.), *Reviewing the Cold War*, 3.

⁴¹ S. Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967* (Stanford, 2009), 18.

⁴² G. Lundestad, 'How (Not) to Study the Origins of the Cold War', in Westad (ed.), *Reviewing the Cold War*, 73, and M. Leffler, 'Bringing it Together: The Parts and the Whole', *ibid.*, 47.

⁴³ Leffler, 'Bringing it Together', 47.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

One of the reasons why the Warsaw Pact has not previously been examined from a multilateral angle might be that there are simply too many archives to consult. It is practically impossible to consult all the relevant archives of the eight ex-WP members for the purpose of writing one monograph. This problem has been partly remedied by the *Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security*, which has published thousands of pages of archival evidence from all these countries translated into English online. Needless to say, all these documents have been avidly perused, particularly in the early stages of this research. The documents published by the PHP nevertheless only cover the meetings that took place within the framework of the WP, and not the preparations for those meetings or other transactions between WP members that took place behind the scenes. Despite the focus on the multilateral dynamics of the alliance, many of the issues arose bilaterally or trilaterally. The periods between meetings are particularly important for the scope of this research, since the WP members only convened every year or every two years in the first half of the 1960s.

This book is therefore based on an archival strategy, which has enabled a detailed examination of the evolution of the WP without consulting the archives in eight different countries, by concentrating on the archives in Berlin, Bucharest, and Rome. The archives in the first two towns facilitated an analysis of the WP from two opposite ends of the spectrum, whereas the research into the archive of the *Partito Comunista Italiano* at the *Fondazione Gramsci* in Rome has provided an *intra*-communist, but *extra*-Warsaw Pact perspective. Research of the PHP documents already indicated that the GDR leadership was particularly proactive within the WP, offering *inter alia* proposals on ways to resolve the second Berlin Crisis, on reforms of the alliance, and on non-proliferation, while taking an exceptionally active stance on the discussions on European Security. Since the German Question defined the issues at stake in the WP to a large extent, Germany seemed a logical place to start the archival research. The East German leadership had a particular interest in the WP, as the only international organisation to recognise the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The archival research in Berlin yielded a great deal of evidence, consisting of *inter alia* thousands of pages of minutes of meetings within the Warsaw Pact, diplomatic reports, letters and speeches.

Moreover, the evidence showed that there was one NSWP member in particular, whose aims and strategies were opposed to those of the GDR, namely Romania. Whereas the East German leaders wanted a rigidly structured Warsaw Pact in order to use it all the more efficiently to further *their* interests, the Romanian leaders strove to keep the alliance as flexible and loosely structured as possible so as to use it as an instrument to emphasise their autonomy vis-à-vis the Kremlin. Many of the crises that plagued the WP in the 1960s originated in disagreements between the East German and Romanian leaders, none of whom was prepared to budge. Because the

dynamics within the WP seemed largely to be determined by the clash of interests between the East German and Romanian leaders, Bucharest seemed a logical place to continue the archival research.

The combination of archival research in Berlin and Bucharest has another advantage: the East German and Romanian leaders not only occupied opposite ends of the spectrum within the WP, but also in their diplomatic relations at large. The research in both archives was therefore largely complementary. Whereas the archives in Berlin abound in diplomatic reports and analyses relating to the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary, the archive in Bucharest contains numerous files on the diplomatic relations with and developments in Albania and China. The policies of countries with a particular stake in the German Question are particularly well represented in Berlin, while the archive in Bucharest contains extremely useful and revealing information on the countries, which were involved in the Sino-Soviet split. Since Romania was the only active WP country that maintained good relations with China throughout the 1960s, the Romanian archive also provides a particularly valuable insight into the way in which the Sino-Soviet split affected the dynamics within the WP. The fact that the author was also allowed to peruse the documents on international relations under Ceausescu, which are still largely classified, made the archival research in Bucharest all the more worthwhile.

The archival research in Bucharest and in Berlin not only complemented each other, but also corroborated each other. Conflicting evidence was almost non-existent, different emphases at most. Moreover, the archival research in Romania confirmed the hypothesis that the tensions between the East German and Romanian leaders affected the WP's dynamics in an important way. Whereas the East German leaders were the most proactive WP members in terms of proposals on foreign policy and reforms, the Romanians were the most zealous members in terms of expressing the right of veto. The other NSWP member that put a particularly large stamp on the alliance's dynamics was Poland. Since Poland and East Germany were, however, on very good terms in the 1960s, it has been possible to reconstruct the Polish point of view by using the German archives. Moreover, the Polish scholar Wanda Jarzabek and the American historian Douglas Selvage have already examined the Polish stance within the 1960s so extensively that their articles and source collections have largely remedied any potential gaps in Polish evidence.

The evidence from Rome has proved very valuable in corroborating and checking some of the evidence found in Berlin and Bucharest. Since the leadership of the Italian Communist Party operated relatively independently from Moscow and was closely involved in the developments within the communist world movement in the 1960s,⁴⁵ the Italian documents proved especially useful in gauging the increasingly independent stance of the NSWP countries in the communist movement, which

⁴⁵ D. Sassoon, *The Strategy of the Italian Communist Party. From the Resistance to the Historic Compromise* (London, 1981), 29.

seemed to mirror their development within the Warsaw Pact. It also confirmed that some WP countries, such as Albania, Romania, the GDR and Poland, emancipated themselves particularly fast in the 1960s. The fact that these countries are examined at greater length than others in this book does, therefore, not reflect an archival bias, but rather a focus on the countries which took the most initiative within the WP, and whose stance affected the WP to the greatest extent.⁴⁶ This monograph is accordingly the product of research that is extensive, but by no means exhaustive. Although there may still be scope for more emphasis on each country's national perspective, all the issues that were at stake within the WP in the 1960s have been covered in depth. The multilateral approach towards the evolution of the alliance has been the guiding principle in the conduct of the archival research.

ALLIANCE THEORY

The opening of the archives in Eastern Europe has been a great boon to historians, but it has complicated the research of specialists in International Relations theory. With hindsight neither the Realist nor the Neorealist schools have succeeded in explaining 'the Cold War as an international system', failing to provide a theoretical framework for 'the speedy changes which ended the Cold War in the late 1980s'.⁴⁷ Although IR theorists might claim that both the Cold War and its collapse were simply 'inexplicable', this does not vindicate the fact that 'IR theory avoids reviewing the Cold War', as the American political scientist William Wohlforth claims.⁴⁸ It seems as though IR theorists have simply not caught up with the new evidence, whereas historians are confronted with such a wealth of evidence that they have concentrated on an analysis of the empirical evidence at the expense of theory. IR theory and New Cold War History have thus grown out of sync, although some of the best work in New Cold War History has managed to conceptualise, explain, and revise certain developments. This monograph, too, does not intend to be mere narrative history. Its findings do not constitute a theory, but serve to contribute to the existing theories on alliances, by conceptualising the evolution of an *Eastern* European alliance.

The literature on alliances falls into two categories, both of which focus on Western alliances: one category attempts to provide an analytical framework for the interpretation of a particular alliance, while the other deals with theories on alliances in

⁴⁶ Although there is, for example, evidence on Czechoslovak ideas to reform the alliance, none of the Czechoslovak suggestions were put forward at a PCC meeting, so the proposals did not have an impact on the actual policies of the Warsaw Pact. Cf. V. Mastny, '“We Are in a Bind”: Polish and Czechoslovak Attempts at Reforming the Warsaw Pact, 1956-1969', in C. F. Ostermann (ed.), *Cold War Flashpoints*, CWIHP Bulletin No. 11 (Washington, 1998), 230-250. The reason why *inter alia* the Czechoslovak reforms were not put forward will be discussed later in this book.

⁴⁷ Westad, *Reviewing the Cold War*, 7.

⁴⁸ W. C. Wohlforth, 'A Certain Idea of Science: How International Relations Theory Avoids Reviewing the Cold War', in Westad (ed.), *Reviewing the Cold War*, 138.

general. One of the most famous theories relating to a particular alliance is that of Geir Lundestad, who argues that the Western Europeans urged the Americans to take an active ‘interest in their affairs’, thus facilitating the creation of an American empire in Europe.⁴⁹ Lundestad’s article was very novel, when it was written in 1986, since it focused on the internal dynamics of one particular alliance, rather than traditionally concentrating on the bipolarity between alliances. Contrasting this so-called ‘empire by invitation’ with the ‘much more rigidly controlled empire’ of the Soviet Union,⁵⁰ Lundestad’s theory fails to research the dynamics within the Warsaw Pact in an equally open-minded manner. The same assumption of NATO’s superiority prevails in the influential monograph of the German historian Thomas Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation among Democracies*. Although his central question whether ‘small states [can] influence the preferences and policies of great powers in alliances among unequals, and under what conditions’ also applies to this monograph, he assumes that the influence of smaller allies on the foreign policy of the alliance leader only applies to *democratic* alliances.⁵¹ It is therefore high time to put this assumption to the test, by examining the influence of the NSWP members on Soviet foreign policy, thus enabling a comparison between both NATO and the WP that has hitherto been impossible.

The theoretical literature on alliances in general is, in fact, very scarce. As its most prominent proponent, the American political scientist Glenn Snyder, argues, it ‘concerns one of the most underdeveloped areas in the theory of international relations’, since the topic tends to be treated ‘as ancillary to broader topics such as “system structure” or “balance of power”’.⁵² Snyder himself is nevertheless heavily indebted to the Realist scholar Kenneth Waltz, who briefly discusses alliances in his seminal *Theory of International Relations*.⁵³ The theories that have been developed on alliances are, however, either more than half a century old,⁵⁴ or focus merely on the origins of alliances,⁵⁵ or concentrate on alliances in a multipolar, instead of a bipolar setting, as is the case with the monograph *Alliance Politics* by Snyder himself.⁵⁶ What all these books have in common is the fact that they regularly refer to NATO, while disregarding the Warsaw Pact. The striking absence of the Warsaw Pact in any theory on alliances reflects the assumption in historiography that it was not an alliance at all,

⁴⁹ G. Lundestad, ‘Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1942-1952’, *Journal of Peace Research* 23 (1986), 268.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 275.

⁵¹ T. Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation among Democracies. The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, 1995), 3.

⁵² G. H. Snyder, ‘Alliance Theory: A Neorealist First Cut’, *Journal of International Affairs* 44:1 (1990), 103. For this ‘ancillary’ treatment, see the work of the realist H. J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York, 1948, 1963), and the neorealists Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston, 1979), and J. J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York, 2001).

⁵³ See Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 166-170.

⁵⁴ G. Liska, *Nations in Alliance. The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore, 1962).

⁵⁵ S. M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, 1987).

⁵⁶ G. H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, 1997).

or, at best, a 'cloak for imperial domination', as Snyder himself states in passing.⁵⁷ It is, however, worth looking at Snyder's theories, which have dominated the debate on alliance formation and cohesion, in more detail, since some of the concepts he uses are more applicable to the WP than he himself fathomed.

Snyder's theory on alliances falls into two categories, one on alliance formation, and the other on alliance management. During the formation 'the alliance bargaining process' occurs, in which each ally attempts 'to maximize its share in the alliance's net benefits'.⁵⁸ Although this 'bargaining process' did not occur at the WP's formation, which might explain the assumption that the WP was not an alliance, it is worth examining to what extent there was a 'bargaining process' *after* the WP's formation: the WP's reorganisation in the 1960s certainly implied a renegotiation of the alliance's fundamental premises. In the phase of alliance management there is, according to Snyder, another 'alliance dilemma', namely 'how firmly to commit themselves to the proto-partner and how much support to give the partner in specific conflict interactions with the adversary'.⁵⁹ There are, after all, two main risks by joining an alliance, namely *entrapment* and *abandonment*. In the first case an ally may be dragged into a conflict by one of his allies, and in the last case an ally might be abandoned by an ally through realignment. Both of these risks can vary from ally to ally, since they are determined by the 'relative *dependence* of the partners on the alliance', and on the '*explicitness* in the alliance agreement', since '[a] vague or ambiguous agreement tends to maximize fears of abandonment', whereas it *minimizes* the fear of entrapment.⁶⁰ This '*tension* between the risk of abandonment and the risk of entrapment' constitutes the 'alliance security dilemma',⁶¹ which determines the rules of the 'alliance game'.⁶²

According to Snyder the abovementioned alliance game only applies to alliances in a multipolar system, since there is no serious risk of realignment in a bipolar system. Explicitly classifying 'the present system (...) as bipolar', Snyder advances several 'theoretical statements', which he admits 'are much more relevant to NATO than to the Warsaw Pact'.⁶³ Snyder has, however, overlooked an important aspect: in the 1960s the system was from the Eastern European perspective no longer unequivocally *bipolar*, since the breakdown of the Sino-Soviet alliance provided some of the WP members with an alternative ally, as the Albanian realignment with China poignantly shows. The analytical tools from the 'alliance security dilemma' are, therefore, very useful to bear in mind when studying the WP, and will be addressed again in the conclusion of this book. Like Lorenz Lüthi's *The Sino-Soviet Split* this monograph therefore aims to serve as 'an empirical challenge to the theoretical literature on

⁵⁷ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁸ G. H. Snyder, 'The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics', *World Politics* 36:4 (1984), 463.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 466.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 473.

⁶¹ Ibid., 484.

⁶² Ibid., 461.

⁶³ Ibid., 484.

alliances',⁶⁴ while also aiming to provide a conceptual challenge, by defining a number of concepts for the analysis of the WP, which can also be applied to other alliances and international institutions.

CONCEPTUALISATION AND STRATEGY

It is perhaps because the WP does not fit into any existing theories that it has received so little attention in historiography, and vice versa. A new conceptual framework therefore needs to be created in order to explain the evolution of the Warsaw Pact from a 'cardboard castle' to NATO's official counterpart, without teleologically treating it as a Soviet instrument. The focus on the WP from a multilateral perspective has necessitated an analytical approach so as to trace the interplay between the interests of eight different countries and its effects on the WP at large. This book therefore aims to create a 'strategic narrative', which 'marshals evidence that particular sequences or patterns unfolded in a particular way, for particular reasons', as the American social scientist Goldstone defines this approach.⁶⁵ Apart from the abovementioned concepts of 'the alliance bargaining process', 'entrapment', and 'abandonment', several other concepts will be used to analyse the evolution of the WP in the 1960s. The framework of this book is conceptual rather than theoretical, because it is – like New Cold War History in general – more concerned with agency than with structure.

The first concept that will be developed so as to examine how the Eastern European alliance evolved is 'emancipation'. This term has already been used *en passant* in the historiography to date,⁶⁶ but it has not yet been employed as an analytical concept to examine the development of the NSWP members. This concept will be used to denote the process according to which the NSWP members turned from being mere satellites into 'junior allies', who could contribute to the decision-making within the WP. Although this is similar to the concept which the foreign policy analyst Zbigniew Brzezinski calls 'de-satellitization',⁶⁷ it can be applied to *any* smaller ally which begins to assert its own interests at the expense of the alliance leader, and which is, accordingly, transferable to other alliances. The concept of 'emancipation' is closely linked with the extent to which the NSWP members succeeded in stretching the limits of the alliance to accommodate their national interests, which they did through exploring the 'room for manoeuvre' within the WP.

In addition, the term 'dynamics of dissent' will be coined, which indicates the

⁶⁴ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 13.

⁶⁵ J. A. Goldstone, 'Comparative Historical Analysis and Knowledge Accumulation in the Study of Revolutions', in J. Mahoney and D. Rueschemeyer (eds.), *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, 2003), 51.

⁶⁶ C. Békés, 'Der Warschauer Pakt und der KSZE-Prozess 1965 bis 1970', in Diedrich et al. (eds.), *Der Warschauer Pakt*, 229, and Z. K. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict. Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Harvard, 1967), 442.

⁶⁷ Brzezinski, *The Soviet Union*, 434.

way in which dissent also served as a catalyst for genuine discussion between all members within the alliance, thus, in the case of the WP, challenging and undermining Soviet hegemony. The dissent that arose in the Warsaw Pact halfway through the sixties tends to be linked to the Romanian attitude without further analysis, and it has always been associated with crisis.⁶⁸ Its connotations have, accordingly, been negative, and seemed to testify to the alliance's weakness. Since the communist concept of 'democratic centralism' did not cater for dissent, it is interesting to examine how dissent from its earliest stages created a dynamics of its own in the WP, which gave the NSWP members a greater stake in the alliance. The conflicting interests of the NSWP members created a new dynamics, in which they began to reap the benefits from their WP membership. The 'dynamics of dissent' accordingly connotes the role and impact of dissent and the way in which it served to 'emancipate' the NSWP members from the Soviet grip, while turning the WP from a 'Soviet transmission belt' into a multilateral decision-making body.

Dissent within the alliance took place at various levels. In the early sixties it mainly emerged in the bilateral relations between the Kremlin and an NSWP member, thus serving NSWP emancipation. Although this dissent within a bilateral context proved to have an impact on the alliance as a whole, it initially seemed to vindicate the characterisation of the Warsaw Pact as a cardboard castle, since the problems were addressed outside the framework of the alliance. Later in the 1960s this tendency nevertheless seemed to be reversed. The bilateral tensions were gradually absorbed into the structure of the Warsaw Pact. This not only implies that the dissent between the SU and its NSWP allies had an increasing impact on the alliance as a whole, but it also shifts the focus of dissent from the SU to the NSWP members. With the absorption of dissent within the WP itself, the influence of the SU diminished, and that of the NSWP members grew. This book serves to assess the extent to which decision-making within the WP thus became more multilateral, as well as the extent to which the alliance transcended the already existing bilateral ties between the SU and its so-called 'satellites'. This process will be called 'multilateralisation', and it will be used to explain the evolution of the WP as a whole from a Soviet transmission belt into an alliance in its own right.

The term 'multilateralisation' has been borrowed from an article by the Swiss NATO-expert Andreas Wenger, in which he argues that '[t]he successful transformation of NATO' from 'the previously hierarchical military alliance (...) to a more political and participatory alliance (...) was instrumental to the multilateralization of détente.'⁶⁹ According to Wenger the way in which 'the United States sought to strengthen multilateral (military and political) cooperation and consultation within NATO' paved the way for a shift from super power détente between the SU and the

⁶⁸ Cf. Mastny and Byrne (eds.), *Cardboard Castle*, 28-34

⁶⁹ A. Wenger, 'Crisis and Opportunity. NATO's Transformation and the Multilateralization of Détente, 1966-1968', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6:1 (2004), 24-25.

US to a broader concept of détente in which all the European countries had a stake, which in turn facilitated the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in the early 1970s.⁷⁰ Wenger exclusively links the multilateralisation of détente to the way in which NATO overcame its internal crisis, but this book serves to gauge whether the multilateralisation of the Warsaw Pact not only meant that the alliance itself became multilateral, but also preceded and formed a necessary condition for the ‘multilateralisation of détente’. Although it has often been suggested that the Helsinki Process in the seventies had a positive effect on the Warsaw Pact, since its multilateral decision-making provided the NSWP members with more scope for manoeuvre,⁷¹ this book will question whether this analysis can be turned on its head, with, as a consequence, the multilateralisation of the WP increasing the stake of the smaller allies within the CSCE and thus facilitating the Helsinki Process. The concept of ‘multilateralisation’ is therefore essential in an analysis of the way in which the Warsaw Pact turned from a mere Soviet instrument into an instrument that the smaller allies could use to further their national interests.

This framework may facilitate an informal comparison between the NSWP members, as well as a comparison with still existing alliances, such as NATO. This book nevertheless does not claim to put forward an *explicit* comparison between the attitudes and strategies of the various NSWP members, since they all contributed to the *same* process, namely the evolution of the Warsaw Pact at large. The different NSWP members will, however, be compared and contrasted when it serves a greater understanding of their aims and strategies, and a challenge to conventional wisdoms. A comparison between Walter Ulbricht and his Polish colleague Wladyslaw Gomulka can accordingly serve to relativise the leverage of Ulbricht over Khrushchev by putting it in a larger context, whereas the standard view on Romanian dissent can also be nuanced by balancing it off against the rest of WP.

Individuals will play an important role in this book, but the individuals in question were persons in the upper echelons of the party leadership or the respective governments. Any mention of interests, emancipation, and attitudes thus refers to the WP regimes. The term ‘national interest’ will accordingly be used to refer to the nation’s interests *as perceived by the respective leaderships*. Although this term is problematic considering the undemocratic character of the regimes in question, it is still employed because the WP leaders themselves regularly used it, when the interests of their state were at stake. This book does, however, aim to approach the role of the respective regimes from a novel perspective, by questioning whether the Eastern European leaders were mere victims or puppets of Soviet coercion, as they were under Stalin. It thus re-assesses the dynamics of power in the Soviet bloc in a decisive period after Stalin’s death.

⁷⁰ Wenger, ‘Crisis and Opportunity’, 72-73.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

LOOKING AHEAD

The abovementioned concepts will also be the guiding principles in the structure of this book, which is divided into three parts, in which *emancipation*, the *dynamics of dissent* and the WP's *multilateralisation* are the leitmotifs. Each part will deal with a particular period in the evolution of the WP. The division into three parts facilitates an approach, which is both chronological and thematic, since the two or three chapters in each part concern different developments, which affected the evolution of the WP in more or less the same period. This leaves room for an analytical approach towards various cases that influenced the dynamics within the WP, rather than a purely narrative treatment. Since different NSWP members were affected by different cases, it will be possible to consider all NSWP members in greater depth, as well as treating one by one the international developments that affected the evolution of the WP.

The first part, called *Embryonic Emancipation*, will treat the period 1953-1964, in which several NSWP members began to emancipate themselves from the Soviet grip by using the alliance as an instrument to assert their national interests. The first chapter of this part will be rather anomalous, because it will begin with a historical overview, which covers the period from 1953-1960, instead of focusing on the 1960s. The Cold War in Eastern Europe is often associated with Stalin,⁷² but Stalin's death in 1953 was in fact a fundamental paradigm shift in the international relations within Eastern Europe. Examining the New Course in Soviet foreign policy after Stalin's death, it is therefore necessary to treat the history and the organisational infrastructure of the Warsaw Pact in its dormant years, from its conception in 1955 till the end of its slumber in 1960. It is important to consider what the WP actually was and what it was intended to be, before it began to evolve into something else. Moreover, the seminal developments within the Soviet bloc will be treated in turn, such as Khrushchev's secret speech in February 1956, the Hungarian Revolution in the autumn of 1956, and the beginning of the second Berlin Crisis in 1958, in order to examine how these affected the interests of each WP member, and already planted the seeds of emancipation in some cases. By providing a brief historical sketch of the WP leaders in that period, and examining their respective stakes in the new alliance, this chapter will therefore be an essential foundation for the rest of the book.

The Sino-Soviet split and its repercussions on the dynamics within the WP will be central in chapter two, which serves to assess how it both caused the first cracks within the WP and created more room for manoeuvre within the alliance. It will concentrate in particular on the way in which the Albanian and Romanian leaders explored the Sino-Soviet split to challenge Soviet hegemony within the WP, while also treating the potential accession of Mongolia in 1963 and its repercussions in the light of the Sino-Soviet split. The third chapter will evaluate the impact of the German Question on the Warsaw Pact in the first half of the 1960s. It will examine to what

⁷² Cf. Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 281-295.

extent Khrushchev's brinkmanship in the Second Berlin Crisis and his stance on Multilateral Nuclear Forces within NATO created scope for the leaders directly affected by the German Question – those of the GDR and Poland – to formulate their own stance within the WP, at the same time overriding Soviet foreign policy interests. Both chapters will start with the WP's PCC meeting in February 1960, which was the first meeting when Soviet choreography was frustrated, and culminate in the first meeting ever of the WP's deputy foreign ministers in December 1964, two months after Khrushchev's downfall and the first detonation of a nuclear device in China.

The second part will deal with the *Dynamics of Dissent* in the period from January 1965 to March 1968, during which the emancipation of the NSWP members already caused a situation in which the NSWP members disagreed more with one another than with the Kremlin on the purpose of the alliance and its foreign policy course. The fourth chapter will once again deal with the impact of dissent on the evolution of the alliance from the perspective of the German Question. The East German zeal for reforming the WP's foreign policy and the Polish proposal for a conference on European Security were both developed to deal with the increased strength of the FRG. The same applies to the Soviet proposals for military reforms, which served to strengthen the alliance vis-à-vis NATO by institutionalising its military aspects. In this period the WP members began to develop a kind of 'Westpolitik', to meet both internal and external challenges, which the Romanian leadership carried so far as to break with WP policy and establish diplomatic relations with the FRG in January 1967. The fifth chapter will focus on Ceausescu's 'Gaullist' stance within the WP, by assessing the way in which Ceausescu questioned the use of the alliance and challenged the role of the 'alliance leader', by vetoing WP proposals on every possible occasion. Central to this chapter will be the WP's attitude to the Vietnam War and to a non-proliferation treaty, which were both issues on which Chinese and Soviet leaders held diametrically opposed views. It will also examine how the Romanian leadership explored this escalation of the Sino-Soviet split to its own advantage, and how the seemingly principled Romanian dissent unified the other NSWP leaders, while turning Brezhnev from an alliance leader into an arbiter.

The greatest shift from *Crisis to Consolidation* took place in the period from March 1968, which marked the beginning of the Prague Spring, to March 1969, when the PCC meeting in Budapest was overshadowed by severe Sino-Soviet clashes at the Ussuri river. This period, which ultimately seals the evolution of the WP into a truly *multilateral* alliance, will be covered by the third and last part. The sixth chapter will be a slight anomaly, since it deals with a development that formally took place outside the official framework of the WP, namely the Prague Spring. This can, however, not be overlooked in a monograph on the Warsaw Pact, and its treatment will serve to challenge persistent conventional wisdoms about the WP's involvement in suppressing liberalisations in Czechoslovakia. This chapter will, accordingly, both address the Czechoslovak stance towards the WP during the Prague Spring and assess the

multilateral decision-making of various WP members concerning a resolution of the Prague Spring, while also interpreting the idiosyncratic stance of the Romanian leadership. It will question the extent to which the alliance itself was actually used as an instrument to limit the Czechoslovak emancipation, and also cover the ensuing 'normalisation' in Czechoslovakia up to Dubcek's downfall in March 1969 from the perspective of all WP members.

Whereas chapter six will treat the period under consideration from the perspective of the Prague Spring, chapter seven will concentrate again on developments *within* the WP itself from the PCC meeting in March 1968 until that in March 1969. It will pick up the thread of the alliance's military reforms, which was discussed in chapter four, and focus on the developments concerning the Polish proposals for a European Security Conference. This chapter not only raises the German Question once again, but also the Sino-Soviet split: the PCC meeting in 1969 took place under pressure from the Sino-Soviet border clashes at the Ussuri river, which initially sparked dissent about the appropriate reaction to the Chinese aggression. The chapter will conclude with an examination of the PCC meeting and its repercussions, since it marked the emancipation of the individual NSWP allies and the evolution of the alliance as a *multilateral* institution, leading to unprecedented unanimity on the reorganisation of the Warsaw Pact and the WP appeal for a European Security Conference.

The conclusion will serve to explain the evolution of the WP into a multilateral institution in the 1960s from a number of perspectives. It will first analyse the interplay between crises and NSWP emancipation and examine to what extent the dissent that overshadowed the WP throughout the sixties actually paved the way not only for the gradual emancipation of some individual allies, but also for the evolution of the alliance at large, thus triggering a more dynamic way of decision-making within the WP and contributing to its consolidation and reforms in 1969. The conclusion will then challenge the conventional view of the WP as an anomaly in international relations by comparing the evolution of the WP to the transformation of NATO in the 1960s, while using the abovementioned conceptual framework. A brief comparative analysis of the emancipation of the individual NSWP members will serve to examine whether Snyder's theories on the alliance security dilemma can also be applied to the Warsaw Pact, *pace* Snyder himself. It is a short step from revising alliance theory to debunking conventional wisdoms in order to assess what this monograph has actually contributed to New Cold War History, and what it still leaves to be researched. An inquiry into the evolution of the WP should thus not only serve to reconsider an alliance that has been underestimated far too long, but also the dynamics of alliances at large.

I

EMBRYONIC EMANCIPATION



Nikita Khrushchev (left) at dinner with *inter alia* Mao Zedong (next to him) in 1959.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/28/Nikita_Khrushchev%2C_Mao_Zedong%2C_Ho_Chi_Minh_and_Soong_Ching-ling.jpg

1

THE WARSAW PACT IN ITS INFANCY

“What do you imagine, that we will make some kind of NATO here?”¹
Soviet Supreme Commander Ivan Konev to Polish politicians in 1957

The foundation of the Warsaw Pact on 14 May 1955 at first sight seems an anomaly. The absence of a preceding bargaining process defies most theories on the formation of alliances,² and the foundation of a military alliance seems out of sync with Khrushchev’s zeal for détente and disarmament. The WP was, after all, founded by a Soviet leadership, which preferred ‘peaceful coexistence’ to further confrontation. After the death of the Soviet despot Joseph Stalin in the spring of 1953 his successors had embarked on a much more conciliatory course towards the West. Four days before the Warsaw Pact’s foundation Stalin’s eventual successor, Nikita Khrushchev, had even put forward the Kremlin’s ‘most credible disarmament proposal to date’, and one day after its foundation Khrushchev signed the Austrian State Treaty, which entailed the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Austria, including Soviet ones, and declared Austria neutral.³ In the wake of the WP’s foundation, Khrushchev chose to demilitarise the Cold War still further, and withdrew Soviet troops from, *inter alia*, Romania and Finland. Moreover, there were already perfectly functioning bilateral treaties between the SU and its satellites in place, which explains why the WP has often been considered ‘superfluous’.⁴

¹ V. Mastny, “We Are in a Bind”: Polish and Czechoslovak Attempts at Reforming the Warsaw Pact, 1956-1969”, in C. F. Ostermann (ed.), *Cold War Flashpoints*, Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) Bulletin No. 11 (Washington, 1998), 232.

² G. H. Snyder, ‘The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics’, *World Politics* 36:4 (1984), 463.

³ V. Mastny, ‘Soviet Foreign Policy, 1953-1962’, in M. Leffler and O. A. Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume I: Origins* (Cambridge, 2010), 317.

⁴ V. Mastny, ‘The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Warsaw Pact in 1955’, Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security (PHP), 2003,

http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll_pcc/into_VM.cfm, accessed 18 August 2013.

It is, therefore, imperative to examine the original objectives of the Warsaw Pact and its functioning in the first years of its existence. Only by closely considering the WP in its infancy is it possible to compare and contrast the way the alliance originally functioned with its evolution in the 1960s. The alliance was, however, not founded in a vacuum, and the first five years of its existence witnessed an extremely turbulent period in the history of Eastern Europe. Stalin's death on 5 March 1953 marked 'a turning point in the Cold War', since his successors embarked on an altogether 'New Course' in Soviet foreign policy, which had serious ramifications for the Eastern European satellites.⁵ The Soviet change of direction already led to uprisings in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Eastern Germany in 1953, and the situation spun out of control in Poland and Hungary in the autumn of 1956 after Khrushchev had publicly distanced himself from Stalin during his 'secret speech' in February 1956. Although Khrushchev's programme of 'de-Stalinisation' facilitated the rapprochement with Tito's Yugoslavia, it also estranged the Albanian and Chinese leaderships from the Soviet cause.

In this chapter the first five years of the WP's existence will accordingly be examined in the context of developments in Eastern Europe from the death of Stalin till Khrushchev's visit to the American president Dwight D. Eisenhower in the autumn of 1959. This visit sealed Khrushchev's zeal for peaceful coexistence, and illustrates the U-turn in Soviet foreign policy between 1953 and 1960. This period is also known as the Soviet 'Thaw', during which Khrushchev relaxed his grip on both Soviet society and Eastern Europe as a whole.⁶ Both the foundation of the WP and the more centrifugal consequences of Khrushchev's liberalisations, such as the Hungarian revolution, should be considered in this context. Since the Kremlin's new foreign policy outlook affected the relations between the Soviet Union and all its satellites, the developments of each Eastern European country in this period will be discussed. The position of each individual WP country, as well as the character of its party leadership and the interests of the political elites will be of paramount importance for the rest of the book. Moreover, a treatment of the wider context should serve to introduce two themes that dominated the WP's dynamics throughout the 1960s, namely Sino-Soviet relations and the German Question.

In order to provide an overview that is both chronological and pays sufficient attention to the stakes of each WP country, this chapter will consider the most important events during the period from 1953 to 1960, while concentrating on each country that had a particular stake in the events in question. Thus the death of Stalin will provide a starting-point for a discussion of the post-Stalin succession struggle in the Soviet Union and the course of the new collective leadership. The treatment of the

⁵ M. Kramer, 'Introduction: International Politics in the Early Post-Stalin Era: A Lost Opportunity, a Turning Point, or More of the Same?', in K. Larres and K. Osgood (eds.), *The Cold War after Stalin's Death. A Missed Opportunity for Peace?* (Lanham, 2006), xiii.

⁶ P. Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (Cambridge, 1999, 2006), 191.

ensuing uprisings in the Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and the GDR in 1953 and those in Poland and Hungary in 1956 will facilitate an analysis of these countries, whereas the Albanian reaction to the Hungarian revolution and the troop withdrawals from Romania in 1958 will serve to concentrate on those countries respectively. Meanwhile, Sino-Soviet relations will be discussed in relation to Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation, and the German Question will receive particular emphasis when dealing with the second Berlin Crisis, which starts in 1958. The foundation and development of the WP will be discussed in the light of these developments, while also treating the alliance's only two meetings in the 1950s, namely in 1956 and 1958, during which several themes already prevailed, which would dominate during the sixties. Thus the foundations will be laid for the rest of this book.

THE NEW COURSE

The death of Stalin on 5 March 1953 heralded the end of an era. Already on the evening of Stalin's death his closest collaborators assumed a 'collective leadership', since none of them was powerful enough to succeed Stalin on his own, and all of them wanted to curb the power of their potential rivals.⁷ Moreover, in this way Stalin's successors clearly distanced themselves from Stalin's autocratic rule. Former secret police chief Lavrentii Beria proposed Georgii Malenkov as chairman of the Council of Ministers, in return for which Malenkov appointed Beria as one of his first vice-chairmen. Beria was additionally appointed minister of internal affairs, which meant he was also in charge of State Security, and Vyacheslav Molotov, another first vice-chairman, was reinstated as minister of foreign affairs.⁸ The meeting in which all of this was decided lasted only forty minutes, which gives the impression that Beria and Malenkov, who formed a close alliance, had decided the course of events after Stalin's death in advance, and had 'presented their colleagues with a *fait accompli*', as Khrushchev claimed later.⁹ Khrushchev, meanwhile, became the senior Secretary of the Party Central Committee, which meant he set the agenda for the Presidium meetings together with Malenkov. Although Beria, Malenkov and Molotov were generally considered 'the three most prominent leaders', it was Khrushchev who would ultimately assume the party leadership.¹⁰

Grappling with Stalin's controversial legacy, his successors strove to convince the West of their peaceful intentions, and even decided on concluding an armistice in the Korean War.¹¹ It was, ironically, the former secret police chief Beria, who most

⁷ See Kenez, *History of the Soviet Union*, 184-190, and W.J. Tompson, *Khrushchev. A Political Life* (New York, 1995, 1997), 114-143.

⁸ Cf. A. Knight, *Beria. Stalin's First Lieutenant* (Princeton, 1993), 176-201.

⁹ Tompson, *Khrushchev*, 115.

¹⁰ Kenez, *History of the Soviet Union*, 187.

¹¹ Mastny, 'Soviet Foreign Policy', 313. They finally did so in July 1953.

vehemently supported introducing a programme of controlled reforms, the so called 'New Course', in Eastern Europe, as well as arguing in favour of a unified, but neutral Germany. These reforms had become overdue anyhow, since Stalin's programme of forced agricultural collectivisation and accelerated industrialisation had wreaked havoc upon the economies within Eastern Europe.¹²

This caused a series of serious protests in the wake of Stalin's death, which began with a major riot by hundreds of tobacco workers in the Bulgarian town Plovdiv on 4 May 1953, who protested against an increase in the work norms, and who had to be appeased by a former popular deputy prime minister, Anton Iugov.¹³ Compelled to adopt the Soviet 'New Course' in order to prevent further upheavals, the Bulgarian prime minister and party leader Vulko Chervenkov relinquished his position as party leader in March 1954 to the 'young, efficient, but self-effacing apparatchik named Todor Zhivkov', thus establishing a kind of collective leadership.¹⁴ As a believer 'both in obedience to Moscow and in strict internal control' the Stalinist Chervenkov attempted to sail a 'New Course' mainly in economic terms, whereas Zhivkov soon developed into one of Khrushchev's most loyal disciples.¹⁵

Social unrest also plagued Czechoslovakia, whose president and party leader, Klement Gottwald, had died on 14 March 1953, just a few days after attending Stalin's funeral. Gottwald almost emulated Chervenkov's subservience to the Soviet Union, and with the slogan "The Soviet Union, Our Model" he had embarked on 'an almost suicidal drive to extirpate not only national traditions but also those of the party itself.'¹⁶ Like Stalin, Gottwald was replaced by a collective leadership, too, in which the veteran trade union leader Antonin Zapotocky assumed the role of president, with the relatively inexperienced Antonin Novotny as the party leader. Novotny resembled his Bulgarian comrade Zhivkov in that their lack of prominence, personal appeal and intelligence had made them seemingly suitable candidates for the position of party leader in a duumvirate: without either powerful friends or enemies they were unlikely to cause Chervenkov and Zapotocky any trouble.¹⁷

The fact that industrialisation and collectivisation had exhausted the Czechoslovak economy caused at this stage more problems. On 1 June 1953 thousands of workers in the Czechoslovak town of Pilsen protested against a currency reform that was imposed from above, while turning the economic demands political by

¹² C. Békés, 'East Central Europe, 1953-1956', in Leffler and Westad, *The Cambridge History*, 335.

¹³ See 'Report on 4 May Disturbances at the Tobacco Depot in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, 7 May 1953', in C. F. Ostermann (ed.), *Uprising in East Germany 1953. The Cold War, the German Question, and the First Major Upheaval behind the Iron Curtain* (Budapest and New York, 2001), 86-89.

¹⁴ R.J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria* (Cambridge, 1997), 195-196.

¹⁵ R.J. Crampton, *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria* (Cambridge, 1987), 181.

¹⁶ H.G. Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution* (Princeton 1976), 26.

¹⁷ See for Novotny's and Zhivkov's remarkably similar background and characteristics Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 29, and Crampton, *Short History*, 177 respectively.

demanding the government's resignation and free elections.¹⁸ Like in Bulgaria, the party leadership embarked on a 'New Course' in primarily economic terms in order to modify the excesses of industrialisation and collectivisation. The Czechoslovak New Course nevertheless 'simply petered out during 1955 and early 1956', and the Czechoslovak leadership took its recourse again to a hard line, which culminated in 'the unveiling of a gigantic statue of Stalin on the bank of the Vltava' in the course of 1955.¹⁹

The East German economy was also in desperate need of a New Course. This was, however, not at all in the interest of the East German party leader, Walter Ulbricht, who had been one of Stalin's most loyal disciples, and was determined to cling to his power. Ulbricht had spent the whole of World War II as a committed communist in the Soviet Union, before he became the leader in the 'Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands' (SED) in the summer of 1945, and appointed many 'Muscovite' Germans to the highest positions.²⁰ Having pushed Stalin into supporting the creation of the GDR in 1949 and the 'building of socialism',²¹ Ulbricht was forced to backtrack on his economically disastrous policies by Stalin's successors in order to stem the increasing number of refugees from East to West Berlin. The new Soviet leadership regarded a moderation of Ulbricht's policies as the solution to the refugee exodus, and compelled Ulbricht to introduce the 'New Course' on 2 June.²² Reluctant to undermine his own power by supporting liberalisations, Ulbricht did not rescind the 10 percent increase in work norms, and thus indirectly facilitated a popular uprising in the GDR on 16-17 June, which had to be quenched by Soviet tanks.²³

Although the uprisings at first sight seem to indicate a weakening of Ulbricht's power, they in fact strengthened his position. It is therefore not farfetched to assume that Ulbricht had a vested interest in these uprisings to safeguard his own power. The greatest casualty of the uprisings, apart from the East German people, was Beria himself, the main architect of the New Course, who was convicted to death on the charge of *inter alia* 'adopt[ing] a course for the conversion of the GDR into a bourgeois government.'²⁴ He was, in fact, not so much a victim of the East German uprisings as of a plot orchestrated by Khrushchev during the post-Stalin succession struggle, but his death penalty served Ulbricht well, since it enabled him to oust the much more

¹⁸ See 'Materials for a Meeting of the Organizational Secretariat of the CPCz CC, with Attached Report on Party Activities in Plzen in Connection with the Events of 1 June 1953, 31 July 1953', in Ostermann (ed.), *Uprising in East Germany*, 113-132.

¹⁹ Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 31-32.

²⁰ H. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall. Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton, 2005), 17.

²¹ W. Loth, *Stalin's Ungeliebtes Kind. Warum Moskau die DDR nicht Wollte* (Berlin, 1994).

²² See 'USSR Council of Ministers Order "On Measures to Improve the Health of the Political Situation in the GDR," 2 June 1953', in Ostermann (ed.), *Uprising in East Germany*, 133-136.

²³ Cf. H. Harrison, 'The New Course: Soviet Policy toward Germany and the Uprising in the GDR', in Larres and Osgood (eds.), *The Cold War after Stalin's Death*, 193-299.

²⁴ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 41.

liberal opposition, consisting of Wilhelm Zaisser and Rudolf Herrnstadt, on the same charge, and facilitated the consolidation of his own power.

Ulbricht clearly signalled to the Kremlin that his iron grip was essential in preventing any more unrest in the GDR and as such quenched any liberalising tendencies and silenced the more liberal opposition. Going against the Soviet Union's 'New Course' had accordingly paid off for Ulbricht, since it had left the Soviet leaders without any alternative to the consolidation of Ulbricht's power. Moreover, it had raised the stakes of a stable East Germany in the eyes of the Soviet leadership, which invited an official East German government delegation to Moscow for the first time since the GDR's foundation in 1949 in order 'to upgrade relations' and promise economic aid.²⁵ This episode clearly indicates Ulbricht's capacity to bend Soviet aims to his own advantage and to sacrifice the greater good for his own power, but Ulbricht's ability to exercise leverage over the divided Soviet leadership strongly diminished when Khrushchev had ousted his rival Malenkov and appointed his friend and ally Nikolai Bulganin as prime minister in February 1955. Although Ulbricht had already succeeded in firmly consolidating his Stalinist rule over the GDR, the consolidation of Khrushchev's power heralded a new phase in Soviet-Eastern European relations.

THE FOUNDATION OF A MULTILATERAL ALLIANCE

The consolidation of Khrushchev's position reinforced his novel foreign policy orientation, and culminated in a vast array of Soviet foreign policy initiatives in 1955. Khrushchev, however, needed to come to terms with the legacy of Soviet foreign minister Molotov, who had conducted foreign policy in a Stalinist fashion, and had convened a "European" security conference in Moscow on 29 November 1954 in order to prevent West German rearmament through its accession to NATO, which had been agreed in the so-called 'Paris Agreements' a month earlier. Molotov's attempt to sow discord within NATO by excluding the United States and Canada from the "European" security conference was a miserable failure: in the end only Soviet allies attended. Khrushchev, meanwhile, rallied Molotov behind a far more constructive approach, and negotiated for a state treaty with Austria, which would entail the withdrawal of all foreign troops, including Soviet ones, and declare Austria neutral. Sincerely believing in the benefits of the *demilitarisation* of the Cold War, Khrushchev responded to the Western proposals to *remilitarise* West Germany by putting forward a genuine proposal on disarmament on 10 May 1955, one day after the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was admitted to NATO.²⁶

²⁵ Ibid., 44.

²⁶ Cf. Mastny, 'Soviet Foreign Policy', 317.

The Soviet leadership nevertheless rose to the challenge of finding a response to the FRG's admission to NATO by founding its own alliance five days later during a conference with its Eastern European allies in Warsaw on 14 May 1955. The concept of a separate communist alliance had already been conceived at the "European" Security Conference in November 1954. Although the foundation of the Warsaw Pact was 'thoroughly orchestrated' by the Soviet Union, the idea of a 'collective defence treaty', which would tie the Soviet allies to the Soviet Union in a multilateral alliance, was, in fact, a Polish one, which is why the alliance was founded in Warsaw.²⁷ Moreover, Khrushchev had sent all potential member states a letter in early March 1955 in which he argued that 'common measures were needed for [their] security (...) in case of the ratification of the Paris agreements', and he therefore proposed concluding a treaty between all the countries, which had attended the "European" Security conference in 1954.²⁸ He enclosed a draft of the Warsaw treaty, and asked its prospective members for their opinion and potential amendments and additions. Although it is generally assumed that the treaty was '[d]rafted by the Soviets without consultation with their allies and accepted without meaningful discussion',²⁹ the allies had the scope to comment on both the idea and the contents of the treaty. Under Stalin such involvement, albeit largely hypothetical, would have been unthinkable.

Moreover, the treaty carried considerable advantages to its proposed members, consisting of Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and of course the Soviet Union itself. The East German leadership had a particular stake in the alliance, since it was the only international institution, which recognised the existence of the GDR. Especially after West Germany's accession to NATO the WP provided the GDR with a necessary boost to its legitimacy, and Ulbricht accordingly welcomed the treaty with great enthusiasm, while enclosing one or two amendments in his reply to Khrushchev on the status of the GDR.³⁰ The same applied to the Polish and Czechoslovak party leaders, although to a lesser extent, since they, too, sought a way to secure the unrecognised borders with Germany. The Czechoslovak leadership had even supported a recent East German proposal for a 'tripartite military arrangement' together with Poland for exactly this reason.³¹ Khrushchev's proposal for the Warsaw Treaty was considered a welcome means to consolidate Eastern Europe's security at a time when Western Europe tried to seize the initiative on the German Question in the wake of the Paris agreements.

Even the party leaders without a direct stake in the German Question were delighted with the treaty. The Romanian leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej considered it

²⁷ Cf. Mastny, 'The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Warsaw Pact'.

²⁸ Letter from Khrushchev to Ulbricht, *Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv* (SAPMO-BArch), DY 30/3385, 16.

²⁹ V. Mastny and M. Byrne (eds.), *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Budapest and New York, 2005), 77.

³⁰ Letter from Ulbricht to Khrushchev, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3385, 1-2.

³¹ Mastny, 'The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Warsaw Pact'.

‘a necessary defence measure, which needed to be taken because of the new situation created in Europe through the ratification of the Paris agreements and the revival of German militarism’.³² The Bulgarian leadership also applauded the foundation of an Eastern European equivalent to NATO, since Bulgaria bordered Greece and Turkey, both of which had joined NATO in October 1952.³³ Meanwhile, the Albanian leadership welcomed the foundation of the alliance as a security bulwark against Yugoslav irredentism.³⁴ Tito had already developed plans in 1948 to unite Albania with Yugoslavia, which had caused severe resistance in the neighbouring and much smaller Albania.³⁵ Although the WP is often considered ‘a transmission belt for Soviet foreign policy’, the members accordingly had a vested interest in the foundation of a multilateral alliance.³⁶ For the party leaders of the participating countries the Warsaw Treaty at the very least served to consolidate their own position. The Paris agreements and the enlargement of NATO had created a strong mutual Eastern European interest in closing ranks for the sake of security.

Moreover, the WP served as the institutional framework to integrate the GDR and its military forces. Complementing the existing bilateral ties between the Soviet Union and its satellites with a multilateral institution could thus facilitate a certain amount of Eastern European integration. Although the fact that the treaty was signed one day before the conclusion of the Austrian State Treaty on 15 May could be interpreted as a clear signal to the other Soviet satellites that the option of neutrality and the withdrawal of Soviet forces was not open to them,³⁷ it also indicates that Khrushchev was serious about relaxing the Soviet grip on international relations. This was indeed how it was interpreted by the Eastern European party leaders, who considered both the Warsaw Treaty and the Austrian State Treaty as Soviet endeavours to safeguard the ‘independence and sovereignty’ of individual states, while also contributing to ‘international détente’.³⁸

Both ‘the principles of respect for the independence and sovereignty of states and of non-interference in their internal affairs’, and European security were enshrined in the ‘Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance’ between the abovementioned Eastern European countries, which accordingly seemed to safeguard its members integrity both individually and collectively.³⁹ The Warsaw Treaty thus

³² ‘Minutes of the Politburo Session of 18 May 1955’, *Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale ale României* (ANIC), Romanian Workers’ Party Central Committee (RWP CC), Chancellery (C), 37/1955, 6.

³³ ‘Conversation between Zhivkov, Maurer, and Ceausescu’, 14 February 1966, ANIC, RWP CC, International Relations (IR), 14/1966, 12.

³⁴ A. Lalaj, ‘Albanien und der Warschauer Pakt’, in T. Diedrich et al. (eds.), *Der Warschauer Pakt: Von der Gründung bis zum Zusammenbruch 1955 bis 1991* (Berlin, 2009), 27-42.

³⁵ E. Biberaj, *Albania: A Socialist Maverick* (Boulder, 1990), 20.

³⁶ J. K. Hoensch, ‘The Warsaw Pact and the Northern Member States’, in R. W. Clawson and L. S. Kaplan (eds.), *The Warsaw Pact: Political Purpose and Military Means* (Delaware, 1982), 33.

³⁷ Cf. V. Mastny, ‘The Warsaw Pact: an Alliance in Search of a Purpose’, in M. A. Heiss and S. V. Papacosma (eds.), *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intra-bloc Conflicts* (Ohio, 2008), 143.

³⁸ ‘Minutes of the Politburo Session of 18 May 1955’, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 37/1955, 12.

³⁹ ‘The Warsaw Treaty’, 14 May 1955, in Mastny and Byrne (eds.), *Cardboard Castle*, 77-79.

upgraded its Eastern European members from Soviet satellites to sovereign states, at least on paper.⁴⁰ The treaty closely mirrored NATO's North Atlantic treaty of 1949,⁴¹ but the slight differences are telling: where the NATO treaty underlined the 'principles of democracy' and 'individual liberty',⁴² the Warsaw treaty cautiously referred to the 'friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance' between all contracting parties.⁴³ Although this reflects the different *internal* political structures of the members of the respective alliances, the treaties were identical concerning the way in which they were supposed to function as a multilateral alliance *between* states. The Warsaw Treaty's article 4 was almost identical to NATO's article 5, with its emphasis on the mutual assistance 'in the case of an armed attack in Europe on one or more of the Parties to the Treaty by any state or group of states', which would be carried out 'with all such means as [each individual state] deems necessary, including armed force'.⁴⁴ In contrast to the North Atlantic Treaty, the Warsaw Treaty nevertheless underlined the *European* nature of the treaty, whose main purpose was evidently to deal with *European* security.

The preoccupation with European security also transpired in a striking article without equivalent in the North Atlantic Treaty, which emphasised that 'the present treaty shall cease to be operative' if 'a system of collective security be established in Europe'.⁴⁵ Emboldened by European détente, which had reached its peak halfway through the 1950s, and a number of successful Soviet initiatives, the Kremlin was so optimistic about the correlation of forces favouring the Soviet bloc, that it thought that the proposal to replace NATO and the embryonic WP with a European Security System might be taken seriously. This would carry considerable advantages for the Soviet Union, since the USA would not enter the equation within this new security system, making the SU the unequivocal super power on the European continent.⁴⁶

The Warsaw Treaty was, accordingly, also intended as a diplomatic instrument to safeguard European security through political means. The architects of the treaty were all employed by the Soviet ministry of foreign affairs, which indicates the initially political orientation of the Warsaw Pact.⁴⁷ Moreover, the Warsaw Treaty's article 3 stressed the need for consultations 'on all important international issues affecting their common interests', whereas the North Atlantic Treaty limited consultations to the threat on 'the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the

⁴⁰ Cf. Békés, 'East Central Europe', 341.

⁴¹ 'North Atlantic Treaty', www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm, accessed 19 August 2013.

⁴² These principles became questionable after the accession of Greece and Turkey to NATO on 22 October 1951.

⁴³ See V. Mastny, *Learning from the Enemy. NATO as a Model of the Warsaw Pact*, Zürcher Beiträge zur Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktforschung Nr. 58 (Zurich, 2001), 9-10, for a more detailed comparison of NATO and the WP.

⁴⁴ 'The Warsaw Treaty'.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Mastny, 'We are in a bind', 230.

⁴⁷ Mastny, 'The Warsaw Pact', 143.

Parties'.⁴⁸ According to the Warsaw Treaty the main organ of the Warsaw Pact would therefore be a 'Political Consultative Committee' (PCC), analogous to NATO's North Atlantic Council, which would consist of a number of representatives from every WP-country. In actual fact the PCC almost exclusively consisted of the party leader, the prime minister, the minister of foreign affairs and the minister of defence from each member state. Unlike the North Atlantic Treaty's article 9, the Warsaw Treaty did not cater for the immediate establishment of a defence committee, which again shows that it primarily aimed to safeguard European security through political means, while reserving the military aspects as a Soviet prerogative for the time being.

According to the Romanian delegation, the 'military measures were not communicated apart from making us aware that a unified command would be created, and a Supreme Commander would be appointed, so the protocol is separate from the treaty, it has not been published, it is a secret document'.⁴⁹ The Romanians nevertheless stressed their active participation in one committee on the 'text of the treaty' and another one on 'problems concerning a unified command of the armed forces', which contradicts Mastny's claim that the treaty was 'adopted at the gathering without even the semblance of a discussion'.⁵⁰ The Romanian delegation even praised 'the comradely atmosphere, the warm friendship, and the mutual understanding' upon its return in Bucharest. Although the 'bargaining process' was short and shallow, the foundation of the WP had already created more room for individual observations and active participation than the WP members had ever enjoyed. The Romanian delegation therefore concluded that it should 'draw lessons for the future' from its 'active participation', since there 'would probably be more conferences'.⁵¹ The mere foundation of the WP had, accordingly, already provided its members with a window of opportunity to make their voices heard in a multilateral platform, which they had hitherto lacked.

THE FOUNDATION OF A NEW KIND OF FOREIGN POLICY

Yugoslavia was the only Eastern European country that was not a member of the Warsaw Pact, since the Yugoslav leader Tito had already been forced to break with the Soviet Union in June 1948, after Stalin had expelled Yugoslavia from the 'Communist Information Bureau' (COMINFORM), which was an organisation 'created by Stalin [in 1947] to secure the unquestioning obedience of European Communists'.⁵² According to the ground-breaking archival research of the British historian Svetozar Rajak Yugoslavia was excommunicated in order to legitimise 'witch-hunts throughout

⁴⁸ 'North Atlantic Treaty'.

⁴⁹ 'Minutes of the Politburo Session of 18 May 1955', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 37/1955, 6.

⁵⁰ Mastny, 'The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Warsaw Pact'.

⁵¹ 'Minutes of the Politburo Session of 18 May 1955', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 37/1955, 6-7.

⁵² Mastny, 'Soviet Foreign Policy', 319.

Eastern Europe’, (...) mobilise popular support behind satellite regimes’, and thus ‘create a monolithic Communist “camp”.’ Tito’s ‘independent foreign policy’, for which he is so well known, thus occurred ‘only *after* the break with Stalin’, instead of causing it, as has usually been considered the case. Stalin had, however, never succeeded in creating the monolithic communist bloc he had envisaged, and the break with Tito had merely undermined Soviet authority, since Tito’s “own road to socialism” proved that the definition of socialism was not Moscow’s prerogative. Meanwhile, Yugoslavia closely cooperated with NATO in the period 1950-1955, which further weakened the Soviet position in the COMINFORM.⁵³

Khrushchev’s Warsaw Pact was, however, fundamentally different from Stalin’s COMINFORM. The WP was an organisation between communist *states*, represented by their *governments*, unlike the COMINFORM, which was an organisation of communist *parties*, intended ‘as a coordinating centre to ensure that [the communist parties] would fight the capitalist enemy together rather than separately’.⁵⁴ The WP was, hypothetically, even ‘open to the accession of other states, irrespective of their social and political systems’, and was, as such, not an intrinsically *communist* organisation.⁵⁵ Moreover, the inclusion of Albania and the GDR – both of which were not members of the COMINFORM – within the WP testified to Khrushchev’s concern for the security of *all* Eastern European states instead of prioritising the spreading of communist propaganda. In contrast to the foundation of the WP, the Eastern European party leaders had not been warned at all beforehand about the Soviet intention to found the COMINFORM, but had been presented with a fait accompli at a meeting of Europe’s most important communist parties in Poland in September 1947.⁵⁶

Khrushchev even announced at the conference in Warsaw, which had served to seal the foundation of the WP, that he was planning to visit Yugoslavia several days later.⁵⁷ This was a sensational proposal, since ties with Yugoslavia had been non-existent since 1948, which implies that Khrushchev’s intention to embark on a new course of foreign policy was genuine. Khrushchev’s envisaged reconciliation with Tito was a fundamental reversal of Stalin’s foreign policy. In an unprecedented change of direction in Soviet foreign policy Khrushchev travelled from Warsaw to Vienna to conclude the Austrian State Treaty one day later, and after nine days in Vienna Khrushchev and his entourage continued to Belgrade for reconciliation with Tito.⁵⁸ In

⁵³ S. Rajak, ‘The Cold War in the Balkans, 1945-1956’, in Leffler and Westad, *The Cambridge History*, 213. For all quotes, see also the whole article: 198-220. See also S. Rajak, *Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the Early Cold War. Reconciliation, Comradeship, Confrontation, 1953-1957* (London and New York, 2010).

⁵⁴ V. Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity. The Stalin Years* (Oxford, 1996), 32.

⁵⁵ ‘The Warsaw Treaty’.

⁵⁶ Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, 32.

⁵⁷ Mastny, ‘The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Warsaw Pact’.

⁵⁸ See for this connection: ‘Report of the RWP CC on the discussion of the decisions of the Warsaw conference of European States on peace and security in Europe’, 21 May 1955, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 37/1955, 27.

less than two weeks Khrushchev had upgraded the Soviet satellites to WP allies, withdrawn Soviet troops from Austria, and retrospectively sanctioned Yugoslavia's independent course.

After a year of secret diplomacy Khrushchev and his comrades arrived on 26 May 1955 in Belgrade, where they signed a declaration with Tito in which they acknowledged 'that relations with Yugoslavia – and with other socialist countries – should be guided by the principle of equality.'⁵⁹ Although the Yugoslav side still did not agree to the reestablishment of party relations, the 'Belgrade Declaration' illustrated Khrushchev's tolerance for an independent kind of socialism, and his willingness to establish Eastern European relations on a more equal footing. The foundation of the WP should also be viewed in this light: the substitution of bilateral ties by multilateral ones provided the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact (NSWP) members with a stake in Soviet decision-making, which they had previously lacked.

Khrushchev's zeal to establish foreign affairs on a novel footing also extended to the Soviet relations with Western Europe and the United States. In July 1955 Khrushchev again submitted the Soviet disarmament proposal 'at the first summit conference since the beginning of the Cold War' in Geneva, which Eisenhower rejected 'on the well-founded suspicion that it might be meant seriously'.⁶⁰ At the same summit the Kremlin capitalised on the foundation of the Warsaw Pact by proposing a collective security treaty, which would replace both NATO and the embryonic WP. Since the Soviet draft of a "General European Treaty on Collective Security in Europe" was almost identical to the Warsaw Treaty, which the American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles considered a mere "device whereby the Soviet Union projected its frontiers into the center of Europe", Khrushchev's proposal was categorically rejected.⁶¹ The clause on a collective security system, which distinguished the Warsaw Treaty from its North Atlantic counterpart, had accordingly lost its validity. Western diplomats in Moscow were nevertheless impressed by the "indefatigable dynamism" and "patent self-confidence of the Soviet leaders", and Khrushchev himself was pleased with the summit, which had contributed to a relaxation of international tensions.⁶² The WP, meanwhile, was there to stay.

Some of Khrushchev's initiatives across the Iron Curtain were more successful. In September 1955 he succeeded in luring the West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer into establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union without affecting the status of East Germany.⁶³ Khrushchev had, accordingly, again boosted the legitimacy of the GDR, since he had undermined West Germany's 'claim to sole representation' of all Germans ('Alleinvertretungsanspruch'). The West Germans in turn formulated the Hallstein Doctrine in December 1955, according to which the

⁵⁹ Rajak, 'Cold War in the Balkans', 213.

⁶⁰ Mastny, 'Soviet Foreign Policy', 318.

⁶¹ Mastny, 'The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Warsaw Pact'.

⁶² Mastny, 'Soviet Foreign Policy', 319.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

FRG would sever diplomatic relations with countries that established diplomatic ties with the GDR. The German Question thus remained a delicate one, but Khrushchev's desire to improve relations with almost everyone had even affected the relations between the SU and the FRG. The so-called 'spirit of Geneva' had proved to be strong.

Khrushchev's foreign policy initiatives in 1955 testify to a genuine desire to reduce international tensions, whether within Eastern Europe at large through his rapprochement with Tito, or even across the iron curtain by reaching out to the FRG, the Soviet Union's nemesis. The Austrian state treaty proves Khrushchev's willingness to demilitarise the Cold War, even though the foundation of the Warsaw Pact one day earlier seemed to contradict that aim. It is, however, important to bear in mind that the alliance was originally founded for political purposes, and that the military provisions were added later. The way the Warsaw Pact came into being accordingly does not justify the stigma of a 'cardboard castle' by NATO officials, since its foundation was part of a genuine campaign to establish relations within and outside Eastern Europe on a more equal footing. Moreover, Khrushchev's rapprochement with Tito emphasised that he, too, had broken with Stalin. The year 1955 was a watershed in Soviet international relations, and the foundation of the Warsaw Pact was symptomatic of Khrushchev's quest for a new way of conducting foreign policy.

THE WARSAW PACT IN PRACTICE

The Soviet leadership had also considered the international events in 1955 remarkable, which culminated in a reflection 'on Current Issues in Soviet Global Policy' by the Soviet Foreign Ministry on 4 January 1956, in which the commitment to 'peaceful coexistence' anticipated Khrushchev's secret speech during the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in February 1956, which will be discussed below.⁶⁴ The report's emphasis on a further relaxation of 'international tensions', improved relations 'with certain capitalist powers', and the 'normalization' of 'relations with the United States' corresponds with the Western perception of 'thaw' in the Soviet bloc.⁶⁵ The report was put into practice on the day of its publication, since the Kremlin had invited the leaders of the European Communist parties to a summit in Moscow on 4 January to discuss international relations. During this summit Khrushchev formulated the new doctrine of "active foreign policy", according to which "the Soviet Union would not always have to be the first to take action", but other communist countries could take the

⁶⁴ 'Soviet Foreign Ministry Notes on Current Issues in Soviet Global Policy', 4 January 1956, in C. Békés et al. (eds.), *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents* (Budapest and New York, 2002), 106-110.

⁶⁵ This was formulated in 'North Atlantic Council Document C-M(56)110: "The Thaw in Eastern Europe"', 24 September 1965, *ibid.*, 168-177.

initiative with Soviet support.⁶⁶ Thus Khrushchev unilaterally denounced Soviet unilateralism.

Two days later Khrushchev showed that he was serious about this, by convening the Warsaw Pact's party leaders to launch the alliance's first PCC meeting in a multilateral context.⁶⁷ The agenda of the meeting was, nevertheless, determined by the Soviet leadership, and the meeting was fully choreographed by the Kremlin. The actual meeting took place on 27-28 January 1956 in Prague, when the Soviet bloc still seemed to reap the benefits of European détente. There was little scope for non-Soviet initiative, since the meeting mainly consisted of prepared speeches, in which each NSWP representative applauded Khrushchev's numerous foreign policy initiatives in 1955, all of which had successfully served to tilt the 'correlation of forces' in Soviet direction, and underlined the positive role of the Soviet Union. The upbeat assessment of the Hungarian prime minister, Andras Hegedus, nevertheless seemed to ring true:

The most significant events in international politics last year – such as the signing of the State Treaty with Austria, the successful Soviet-Yugoslav talks in Belgrade, the Big Four summit meeting, and, subsequently, the meeting of the Big Four Foreign Ministers in Geneva, the 10th Session of the UN General Assembly, and the acceptance of the new states into the United Nations, and, finally, as a worthy conclusion to a year that was rich in foreign policy accomplishments, the trip of Comrades Bulganin and Khrushchev to India, Burma, and Afghanistan – grant us the right to view 1955 as a year of significant progress in the cause of international détente.⁶⁸

Despite Khrushchev's desire for an active foreign policy, the other WP members still acquiesced in the role of passive bystanders. It has to be taken into account that the Soviet leadership was, indeed, riding on a wave of successful foreign policy initiatives, which contributed to Soviet authority. Although the absence of discussion seemed to vindicate the view of the WP as a 'cardboard castle', three important Soviet decisions were approved, which again served to liken the Warsaw Pact more to NATO. It was unanimously decided that a 'Standing Commission to develop recommendations on foreign policy issues' and a 'Joint Secretariat' would be created within the PCC, which would meet 'at least twice a year'.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Békés, 'East Central Europe', 342.

⁶⁷ V. Mastny, 'Editorial note', PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=17484&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

⁶⁸ 'Declaration by the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Hungarian People's Republic (András Hegedüs) at the Meeting of the Political Consultative Committee', 27 January 1956, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=17507&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 Aug. 1956.

⁶⁹ 'Communiqué on the Session of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty Powers', 28 January 1956, PHP,

Moreover, the ‘Statute of the Warsaw Treaty Unified Command’ was presented by Soviet Marshall and Commander-in-Chief of the WP’s unified armed forces, Ivan Konev, and approved by all members.⁷⁰ Like in NATO, the military contents had been added as an afterthought in September 1955, in a statute, which was drawn up by the Soviet Union with no input by its allies, who were simply expected to sanction it during the PCC meeting.⁷¹ The Statute of the Unified Command, which was kept secret throughout the WP’s existence, was considerably more vague than the Warsaw Treaty, and ‘left the military dimensions of the alliance entirely at Moscow’s discretion.’⁷² It catered for a ‘Chief of Staff’ and a ‘Supreme Commander’, to whom the ‘Unified Armed Forces’, consisting *inter alia* of the ‘permanent representatives of the General Staff from the Warsaw Treaty states’, would be ‘subordinated’.⁷³ Since the WP ministers of defence would serve as the Supreme Commander’s deputies, the national defence ministers would be subordinated to the Supreme Command,⁷⁴ which accordingly functioned as a supranational organ. With Soviet Marshall Konev as the Supreme Commander, Soviet General A. I. Antonov as the Chief of Staff, and Moscow as the seat of the Staff of the Unified Command the WP had gained a military dimension under Soviet tutelage.⁷⁵ The military dimension was, meanwhile, not institutionalised within any multilateral structure, but led a kind of parallel existence in relation to the rest of the WP.

Moreover, in the wake of the integration of the West-German army into NATO ‘it was decided that the German Democratic Republic [would] be included in the Unified Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty Member-States’.⁷⁶ This East German military integration into the alliance would facilitate the remilitarisation of the GDR, while giving the East German leadership a particular stake in the Warsaw Pact. The East German leader Walter Ulbricht was especially relieved about this development, since he regarded the FRG’s rearmament as a ‘significant threat’, and continued to emphasise that ‘[t]he conversion of West Germany into a main NATO military base and the implementation of NATO’s plans threaten the German people with horrible consequences.’⁷⁷ The Polish participants strongly agreed with Ulbricht’s assessment,

<http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17533&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Mastny, ‘“We are in a bind”’, 230.

⁷² Mastny, ‘The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Warsaw Pact’.

⁷³ ‘Statute of the Warsaw Treaty Unified Command’, 7 September 1955, in Mastny and Byrne (eds.), *Cardboard Castle*, 80-82.

⁷⁴ ‘Text for publication about the creation of a Unified Command, strictly confidential’, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3385, 25-26.

⁷⁵ ‘Protocol about the creation of a Unified Command, strictly confidential’, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3385, 19-21.

⁷⁶ ‘Draft of the Decision to Hold a Meeting of the Political Consultative Committee’, 11 January 1956, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17489&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

⁷⁷ ‘Declaration by the First Deputy Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic (Walter Ulbricht) at the Meeting of the Political Consultative Committee’, 27 January 1956, PHP,

since West German rearmament also posed a threat to Polish security. Thus the German Question immediately occupied a central position in the first PCC meeting, which the Polish and East German leaderships gladly used to emphasise the West German threat.

Each PCC meeting would be concluded by a declaration and a communiqué, which initially served to emphasise the Warsaw Pact's strength and unanimity to the Western world. At this stage the declarations and communiqués were largely drafted beforehand by the Soviet leadership and accepted by its allies without question. They therefore served to uphold the facade of complete unity in the Soviet bloc. The declaration, which concluded this meeting, neatly summed up all the achievements in Soviet foreign policy, thus turning the WP into a propaganda-platform for the Soviet Union, and corroborating the Western view of the WP as a 'useful forum for the articulation of (...) the bloc's support of Soviet foreign policy initiatives versus the West.'⁷⁸ Not only the Soviet satellites, but also the Chinese participants, who were present at each PCC meeting in the 1950s as observers, sang the praises of the Soviet Union.

The signing of the declaration became particularly festive because the Chinese observer, Chen Yun, underlined the 'firm solidarity and full consensus of opinions', which tied China and the Soviet Union together, and which formed 'the main guarantee for the preservation of peace in Europe and throughout the world.'⁷⁹ With support from both its Warsaw Pact allies and the Chinese leadership, the correlation of forces did indeed seem to be in the Kremlin's favour. The Albanian prime minister Mehmet Shehu, who had chaired the meeting, also considered the meeting a 'complete success', and stressed the 'sincere friendship' between all participants.⁸⁰ Although the praises of Soviet foreign policy seemed to confirm the traditional view of the Soviet Union as undisputed hegemon, with the Warsaw Pact as a transmission belt for its foreign policy initiatives, it is important to bear in mind that this was the second time since the foundation of the alliance that the WP members convened in this context. The mere convention of a multilateral meeting would have been unthinkable under Stalin.

<http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17508&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

⁷⁸ Z. K. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict. Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Harvard, 1967), 458-459.

⁷⁹ 'Statement by Chen Yun at the Signing of the Declaration of the Participating States of the Warsaw Treaty',

28 January 1956, PHP,

<http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17523&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

⁸⁰ 'Closing Words of the Presiding Chairman of the Albanian Council of Ministers (Mehmet Shehu)', 28 January 1956, PHP,

<http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17522&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

THE ECHOES OF KHRUSHCHEV'S SECRET SPEECH

The glorious role of the Soviet Union as international peacemaker outlasted the PCC meeting only briefly. Khrushchev was still riding on a wave of successful foreign policy initiatives when he reinforced the New Course the post-Stalinist leadership was sailing during a four hour long speech at the twentieth party congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) on 25 February 1956, a month after the PCC meeting.⁸¹ In this so-called 'secret speech' Khrushchev officially distanced himself from Stalin by denouncing Stalin's crimes and preaching peaceful coexistence. Although Khrushchev's appeal for a European Security System thus gained credibility, he had pushed his luck too far with his formal break with Stalin. Most WP leaders still owed their power to Stalin, and had also copied his methods, and the Chinese party leader Mao Zedong in particular regarded Stalin as "a great Marxist, a good and honest revolutionary".⁸² The speech, which was sent in full to all Eastern European party leaders, had thus undermined the legitimacy of their rule, too, while questioning the foundations of the entire world communist movement. Khrushchev had, accordingly, taken an enormous gamble: by denouncing Stalin, he had indirectly denounced many of the WP leaders, as well as antagonising Mao, the leader of the world's largest communist country.

Mao, a Stalinist himself, was enraged.⁸³ The Chinese leader had officially allied himself to Stalin with a friendship treaty in 1950, a year after the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. Although relations with Stalin had been troublesome during the Chinese Revolution, the Soviet leadership had provided the PRC with substantial loans for Soviet technology and equipment and hundreds of Soviet advisers. Khrushchev had initially striven to improve relations with China still further, and China was the first foreign country he visited in 1954. In April 1955 Khrushchev even agreed to provide China with the technology to develop a nuclear research programme, and in May 1955 a number of Chinese observers witnessed and approved the foundation of the Warsaw Pact.⁸⁴ The fact that Khrushchev had failed to consult Mao and other communist leaders before delivering the secret speech therefore infuriated the Chinese leadership. Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese delegate at the CPSU's twentieth party congress, accordingly accused Khrushchev of "big state chauvinism", and the Chinese leadership was quick to identify other examples of the Soviet "big

⁸¹ Cf. Kenez, *History of the Soviet Union*, 192.

⁸² S. Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967* (Stanford, 2009), 10.

⁸³ Mastny, 'Soviet Foreign Policy', 320.

⁸⁴ Q. Zhai, 'Coexistence and Confrontation: Sino-Soviet Relations after Stalin', in Larres and Osgood (eds.), *The Cold War after Stalin's Death*, 178-179.

state chauvinism".⁸⁵ This marked the birth of the antagonism between the two communist great powers, as Mao himself emphasised retrospectively.⁸⁶

During a session of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) shortly after the Soviet congress Mao also identified some positive aspects of Khrushchev's secret speech. He was particularly pleased that the speech implied that the Soviet leadership had made mistakes in the past, and that it allowed other communist parties more scope for manoeuvre.⁸⁷ Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's personality cult nevertheless posed a particular threat to him, since his power was built on the cult around his persona. The Chinese leadership was also vexed by Khrushchev's doctrine of peaceful coexistence, since it still considered a war with the capitalist countries inevitable, and also justified the power of the CCP on this basis.⁸⁸ Mao was therefore left with two alternatives: either to denounce Stalin, or to denounce Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation, and lay a claim to the leadership of the world communist movement. The fact that Mao chose to do the latter would considerably complicate Khrushchev's foreign policy.

In the wake of his secret speech Khrushchev also 'roused [the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance] from dormancy in the spring of 1956.'⁸⁹ The COMECON, founded by Stalin in January 1949 in reaction to the Marshall Plan in order to coordinate the economy of the Soviet bloc countries, had been largely inactive as a multilateral organisation during Stalin's reign. Consisting of exactly the same countries as the WP, the COMECON provided Khrushchev with an instrument to also integrate Eastern Europe in economic terms. Khrushchev's foundation of ten permanent standing committees to facilitate economic coordination within Eastern Europe testifies to his zeal to use multilateral and intergovernmental organisations for Eastern European integration, instead of using coercion to suppress the Soviet bloc countries. As the Hungarian historian Csaba Békés puts it, 'Nikita S. Khrushchev wanted to remake the basic foundations of intrabloc relations essentially by modifying the terms of those relations from those of *colony* to *dominium*.'⁹⁰ Khrushchev's secret speech was accordingly symptomatic for his new foreign policy offensive, which had already started in 1955.

The secret speech nevertheless caused considerable unrest in Eastern Europe, since the speech had undermined the legitimacy of Eastern Europe's 'little Stalins', too. The first country where this affected the leadership was Bulgaria, where the Stalinist prime minister Chervenkov was replaced by the more moderate Anton Iugov in April 1956. This consolidated the power of the party leader Todor Zhivkov, who used his

⁸⁵ Zhai, 'Coexistence and Confrontation', 180.

⁸⁶ 'Reply of the CC of the CCP to information of the CPSU CC on 21 June 1960 (top secret)', 10 September 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3604, 22.

⁸⁷ Zhai, 'Coexistence and Confrontation', 179.

⁸⁸ 'Reply of the CC of the CCP to information of the CPSU CC on 21 June 1960 (top secret)', 10 September 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3604, 53-54.

⁸⁹ Békés, 'East Central Europe', 342.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

loyalty to Khrushchev to boost his status within Bulgarian politics.⁹¹ While ostensibly treading in the footsteps of Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation, the Bulgarian party kept the people under tight control in order to prevent any unrest reminiscent of the Plovdiv protests in May 1953. The Czechoslovak leadership also took a firm stance in the wake of Khrushchev's secret speech, without allowing any liberalisations, so as to prevent a repetition of the riots in Pilsen in June 1953. When the Czechoslovak president Zapotocky died in November 1957, the party leader Novotny consolidated his power by also assuming the presidency. Reducing de-Stalinisation to a minimum and continuing his hard line, Novotny, too, professed complete loyalty to the Soviet leadership, which praised "the total identity of views" between the two parties in turn.⁹² Thus the Bulgarian and Czechoslovak leaders, who took the implications of Khrushchev's secret speech least seriously, remained ironically closest to Moscow.

Meanwhile, Khrushchev stuck to the contents of his own speech, in which he had also blamed Stalin for the break with Yugoslavia, and signed another declaration, which enshrined the principle of equality between communist parties, during Tito's visit to Moscow in June 1956. During this same visit Khrushchev dissolved the COMINFORM, the institution, which had been used to expel Yugoslavia, and replaced Molotov, the foreign minister who had assisted Stalin in excommunicating Tito.⁹³ These moves did not only herald the official normalisation of party relations between Yugoslavia and the SU, but they also illustrate that Khrushchev seriously intended to allow other communist countries more leeway. Moreover, the Warsaw Pact now remained as the only multilateral political institution in Eastern Europe, instead of the much more authoritarian COMINFORM. The fact that the Soviet leadership had become less authoritarian did, however, little to ensure stability in Eastern Europe, and the Warsaw Pact did not facilitate the implementation of de-Stalinisation either. The developments in Poland and Hungary in 1956 prove that Stalin's legacy was too firmly entrenched in Eastern Europe to be denounced with impunity.

THE POLISH ROAD TO EMANCIPATION

Poland was the first country in Eastern Europe where the situation threatened to escalate in the wake of Khrushchev's Secret speech. The Polish leader, Boleslaw Bierut, had suddenly died of a heart attack on 12 March 1956 in Moscow, during the very party congress at which Khrushchev had delivered his speech. Unlike Ulbricht, Bierut had not resisted the Soviet trend of liberalisations after Stalin's death, and had introduced the 'New Course' in October 1953.⁹⁴ He had raised living standards and

⁹¹ Crampton, *Short History*, 180.

⁹² Skilling, *Czechoslovakia's Interrupted Revolution*, 36.

⁹³ Rajak, 'Cold War in the Balkans', 218.

⁹⁴ A. Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours. Poland and the Poles from Occupation to Freedom* (Pennsylvania, 2003), 266.

abandoned mass repression, *inter alia* by reducing the security ministry personnel of his own accord, which triggered a period known as the Polish ‘thaw’.⁹⁵ These liberalisations ultimately resulted in a kind of de-Stalinisation *avant la lettre*, during which the prominent Polish communist and former first secretary, Władysław Gomułka, was rehabilitated and released from house arrest on 13 December 1954.⁹⁶ Gomułka, who was considered a ‘national communist’ himself, had supported Tito after his break with Moscow in 1948, and had been expelled from the Polish communist party in 1949 and arrested in August 1951 as a consequence. Gomułka and other Stalinist victims had already been readmitted to the party in August 1955, which facilitated a major shift in Polish politics after Bierut’s death.

Eight days after Bierut’s death Khrushchev personally sanctioned his replacement by the Muscovite communist Edward Ochab, who was known as a ‘middle-of-the-roader’.⁹⁷ Bierut’s death nevertheless exposed a division within the Polish leadership, between a relatively conservative and a reformist faction.⁹⁸ At the same time the secret speech inspired the Polish people with demands for national sovereignty and more political freedom. Ochab continued to occupy the middle-ground, and attempted to control the radicalising situation, both within and outside the party, through rehabilitations on the one hand and personnel changes on the other.⁹⁹ The leadership’s weakened grip on society nevertheless resulted in workers’ riots in Poznań, on 23 June 1956, almost exactly three years after the ones in the GDR. The economic demands soon turned political. Although the rioting was successfully suppressed within a day, it increased the divisions within the leadership and underscored that concrete changes were imperative.¹⁰⁰ The leadership ultimately chose the most rigorous measures to extinguish the public unrest, and on 19 October the Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee was convened in order to elect Gomułka to the office of First Secretary of the Polish United Workers’ Party (PUWP). In contrast to Ulbricht’s obsessive clinging to power, Ochab voluntarily yielded his power to Gomułka, who ‘claimed not to notice “groups and factions” in the Party’.¹⁰¹

The Kremlin was taken by surprise by this unprecedented manoeuvre, and was particularly “concerned about the situation created within the leadership of the [Polish] Party because of the special importance of the Polish position for the camp of socialism, and especially for the Soviet Union”.¹⁰² The Soviet leadership had not seen it fit to intervene in the Poznań riots (unlike in the GDR in 1953), but Khrushchev immediately and unexpectedly flew to Moscow so as to criticise and control the

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 267, and J. Granville, *The First Domino. International Decision-making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956* (Texas, 2004), 48.

⁹⁷ Granville, *The First Domino*, 48.

⁹⁸ Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, 271.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 272.

¹⁰⁰ Granville, *The First Domino*, 60.

¹⁰¹ A. Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (Cambridge, 2008), 96.

¹⁰² Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, 97.

unstable situation, and possibly reverse Gomulka's election. Although Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation had facilitated the rise of Gomulka, Khrushchev panicked when confronted with the unexpected and potentially uncontrollable repercussions of his own policies out of fear lest Gomulka's election would pave the way for Poland's potential departure from the communist camp.

The Soviet leadership was so afraid that the situation would spin out of control that it immediately sent a telegram to the Chinese leadership, asking advice about sending troops to Poland in order to prevent it from leaving the socialist camp.¹⁰³ Mao and his comrades advised against the deployment of troops, since the situation in Poland was an internal affair of the Polish leadership.¹⁰⁴ Although Soviet troops were already moving towards Warsaw, Gomulka was allowed to stay on. The decisive factor in Khrushchev's decision to support Gomulka is not only a subject of a controversial debate in historiography, but also exacerbated the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations.¹⁰⁵ The Chinese leadership later insisted that it had prevented Khrushchev from embarking on a potentially disastrous course in Poland and had thus single-handedly undermined another instance of Soviet 'great power chauvinism',¹⁰⁶ although the Kremlin denied this with vigour.¹⁰⁷

Gomulka's attitude was also of paramount importance in preventing a Soviet invasion and gaining the top position in the party with Moscow's grudging approval. He managed to convince Khrushchev of his loyalty to the Soviet bloc, by 'swear[ing] that Poland needs Russian friendship more than Russians need Polish friendship', since 'without you we won't be able to exist as an independent state'.¹⁰⁸ The fact that he convinced his Soviet comrades of complete loyalty to the Soviet Union and his capacity to control the rapidly escalating situation consolidated his position, too.¹⁰⁹ It was indeed the case that the Soviet security guarantee was essential to Poland, since the Polish-German Oder-Neisse border had never been recognised by the FRG. It is, however, interesting to note that Gomulka also 'emphasised that Polish-Soviet relations "ought to be based on mutual trust and equality" and that each country ought "to possess complete autonomy and independence"'.¹¹⁰ He thus managed to negotiate with the Soviet leadership from a position of strength, which would stand him in good stead within later consultations in the WP. Moreover, Gomulka also enjoyed great popular support, which bestowed on his power a legitimacy Ulbricht lacked.

¹⁰³ Zhai, 'Coexistence and Confrontation', 181.

¹⁰⁴ 'Reply of the CC of the CCP to information of the CPSU CC on 21 June 1960 (top secret)', 10 September 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3604, 25.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, 275 and Granville, *The First Domino*, 52-3.

¹⁰⁶ E.g.: 'Meeting of a delegation of the CPSU and the CCP', July 1963, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3608, 71.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from CPSU CC to CCP CC, 5 November 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3605, 190.

¹⁰⁸ Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, 98.

¹⁰⁹ Letter from CPSU CC to CCP CC, 5 November 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3605, 189.

¹¹⁰ Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, 275.

Meanwhile, the Soviet reliance on Chinese advice remains remarkable. On 21 October, after Khrushchev had left Warsaw empty-handed, he asked his Chinese comrades to send a delegation to Moscow in order to mediate in the negotiations between the Polish and the Soviet leadership.¹¹¹ The Chinese delegates Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, who had been so critical of Khrushchev's secret speech, visited Moscow from 23 to 31 October, by which time the situation in Hungary had begun to escalate, too. Although Sino-Soviet relations had suffered from Khrushchev's secret speech, the Kremlin was still interested in the Chinese assessment, allegedly because 'they were further away from events in Poland and Hungary, and were not directly involved'.¹¹² Khrushchev, who preferred a political solution, might also have needed Chinese support in withstanding East German and Czechoslovak pressure to intervene in Poland in order to "restore order".¹¹³ A potential collapse of Poland would leave the GDR and Czechoslovakia exposed to West German revanchism.

Khrushchev's reluctance to resolve the situation unilaterally also led to the convention of a meeting with party leaders from Czechoslovakia, the GDR, and Bulgaria in Moscow on 24 October. The leaders of the countries, which had already experienced riots in the wake of Stalin's death in 1953, were interestingly the most eager to be consulted in the control of unrest in the Soviet bloc. Although their invitation illustrates Khrushchev's departure from an authoritarian style of leadership, it also underscores the fact that he had not considered using the Warsaw Pact as an instrument to resolve the crisis in Eastern Europe. The Romanian and Hungarian allies had been invited, too, but did not attend, but the Albanian leaders, who were also members of the WP, had not been invited at all. The alliance accordingly remained dormant. During this meeting Khrushchev explained that Gomulka had managed to 'assure the Soviet delegation that the measures being taken would not have an adverse effect on Poland's relations with the Soviet Union and the CPSU', and 'emphasised that the presence of Soviet troops on Polish territory was necessary because of the existence of NATO', which 'was greeted with loud and long applause'.¹¹⁴ Although Khrushchev was reassured by the situation in Poland, he soon turned his allies' attention to Hungary, where matters were rapidly spinning out of control.

EQUALITY ON MOSCOW'S TERMS

The stability of the Hungarian leadership had suffered greatly from changes in Soviet policy in the wake of Stalin's death. By the time Stalin died, Hungary was plagued by a

¹¹¹ 'Reply of the CC of the CCP to information of the CPSU CC on 21 June 1960 (top secret)', 10 September 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3604, 25. Cf. Zhai, 'Coexistence and Confrontation', 182.

¹¹² Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism*, 102.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Jan Svoboda's Notes on the CPSU CC Presidium Meeting with Satellite Leaders', 24 October 1956, in Békés et al (eds.), *Hungarian Revolution*, 223-224.

social, political, and economic crisis, which the new Soviet leadership tried to forestall by replacing the Stalinist prime minister Matyas Rakosi with the reform-minded Imre Nagy on 16 June 1953. Hungarian leadership struggles nevertheless complicated the implementation of the New Course, since the rivalry and conflicting interests between Rakosi, as party-leader, and Nagy, as prime minister, held the Hungarian Workers' Party (HWP) in a deadly embrace. When the New Course had failed to remedy the tensions in Hungary, Khrushchev finally disassociated himself from Hungary's New Course in a report on 8 January 1955.

Khrushchev's criticism of the New Course facilitated Nagy's replacement by the ex-Stalinist Andras Hegedus in April 1955. The new Hungarian Stalinist leadership was, however, totally incongruous with the de-Stalinisation, advocated in Khrushchev's secret speech in February 1956. This ultimately made its position untenable, and forced Rakosi to resign in July 1956.¹¹⁵ The Hungarian people nevertheless became particularly disgruntled about the fact that Rakosi's removal had not led to any significant concessions by the Hungarian leadership, and Hungarian discontent culminated in a series of demonstrations in October 1956. On 22 October university students in Budapest published a list of sixteen demands of the Hungarian leadership, such as freedom of speech and the withdrawal of Soviet troops, and one day later the same students organised a demonstration in solidarity with the reform movement in Poland. When this demonstration escalated into an armed uprising by the evening, the Hungarian leadership asked the Soviet leaders to put down the revolt by intervening with the Soviet troops stationed in Hungary.¹¹⁶ The Kremlin very reluctantly agreed to intervene after vehement discussions in the politburo, which proved counterproductive.¹¹⁷ The intervention of Soviet troops on 24 October only exacerbated anti-Soviet sentiments, and the uprisings turned into a fully-fledged anti-Soviet liberation struggle.

Upon the arrival of Soviet troops Imre Nagy was reappointed as prime minister in order to assuage the Hungarian people, and gain control over the situation. Nagy was compelled to do so by placing the party at the head of the revolutionary developments, and by enticing the Kremlin to agree to a new government programme, which entailed the dissolution of the security forces, and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary altogether. Although the Soviet leadership sanctioned Nagy's measures on 28 October in exchange for his promise to stabilise the situation, the Hungarian party leadership was divided on his policies.¹¹⁸ Already on 26 October,

¹¹⁵ See P. Kenez, 'Khrushchev and Hungary in 1956', in C. Fink et al. (eds.), *1956: European and Global Perspectives* (Leipzig, 2006), 108.

¹¹⁶ Békés, 'East Central Europe', 348.

¹¹⁷ 'Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium', 23 October 1956, in Békés et al. (eds.), *Hungarian Revolution*, 217-218.

¹¹⁸ Békés, 'East Central Europe', 349.

politburo member Janos Kadar was reported to have shaken 'his head as a sign of disagreement', after Nagy had suggested to dissolve the security forces.¹¹⁹

Khrushchev was, however, prepared to go still further, and on 30 October the Kremlin formulated a declaration, in which it unprecedentedly claimed to be 'prepared to review with the other socialist countries which are members of the Warsaw Treaty the question of Soviet troops stationed on the territory of [the Hungarian, Romanian and Polish republics]'.¹²⁰ This 'Declaration by the Government of the USSR on the Principles of Development and Further Strengthening of Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and Other Socialist States' had already been drafted for several weeks, and its revision happened to coincide with the Hungarian revolution. The declaration sealed the Soviet decision to withdraw its troops from Hungary. Its proclaimed commitment to 'the principles of non-interference',¹²¹ although exercised in Poland, hardly seems to ring true in the case of Hungary, considering the fact that Soviet troops intervened in Hungary for a second time on 4 November 1956. This nevertheless does not mean that the declaration was purely a cynical attempt to cover up the real Soviet intentions, as some historians argue.¹²² It was rather an attempt to keep all options open.

Reform-socialism, such as in Poland, had not compromised the newly formulated Soviet principle of non-interference, but the disintegration of communism altogether, which seemed imminent in Hungary, warranted intervention as a last recourse.¹²³ As Békés, Byrne and Rainer argue, 'in Soviet eyes, cracking the East European buffer zone would create an intolerable security threat'.¹²⁴ Despite appearances to the contrary, the Soviet leaders had therefore not ruled out intervention in their declaration by emphasising that it was everyone's 'chief and sacred duty' to 'guard the communist achievements of people's democratic Hungary'.¹²⁵ This almost seems a Brezhnev doctrine *avant la lettre*: upon closer reading of the document, it appears that the principle of non-interference only applied to states which were both communist and members of the Warsaw Pact. When Nagy decided to establish a multi-party system on 31 October 1956, thus relinquishing the communist monopoly

¹¹⁹ 'Report from Anastas Mikoyan and Mikhaik Suslov to the CPSU CC Presidium on Talks with HWP Leaders', 26 October 1956, in Békés et al. (eds.), *Hungarian Revolution*, 239.

¹²⁰ 'Declaration by the Government of the USSR on the Principles of Development and Further Strengthening of Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and Other Socialist States', 30 October 1956, in Békés et al. (eds.), *Hungarian Revolution*, 301.

¹²¹ 'Working Notes from the Session of the CPSU CC Presidium', 30 October 1956, in *Hungarian Revolution*, 296.

¹²² Cf. A. Kyrow and B. Zselicky, 'Ungarnkrise 1956. Lagebeurteilung und Vorgehen der sowjetischen Führung und Armee', in W. Heinemann and N. Wiggershaus (eds.), *Das internationale Krisenjahr 1956: Polen, Ungarn, Suez* (München 1999) 112-113.

¹²³ C. Békés, 'Cold War, Détente, and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution', in Larres and Osgood (eds.), *The Cold War after Stalin's Death*, 223.

¹²⁴ Békés et al. (eds.), *Hungarian Revolution*, 210.

¹²⁵ 'Declaration by the Government of the USSR on the Principles of Development and Further Strengthening of Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and Other Socialist States', 30 October 1956, in Békés et al. (eds.), *Hungarian Revolution*, 302.

on power, the Soviet leaders could embark on the second intervention without violating their own principles.

The decision for a second Soviet intervention on 4 November was, however, not a unilateral Soviet one. After the Chinese delegates in Moscow had informed Mao of the Soviet decision to withdraw its troops from Hungary on 30 October, the Chinese leadership decided to strongly advise the Kremlin *against* the troop withdrawal, since the Kremlin should 'prevent the imperialist attack on the big socialist family'.¹²⁶ The so-called 'counterrevolutionary Putsch in Hungary' was, accordingly, *not* an internal affair, unlike the situation in Poland, where the survival of socialism did not seem to be at stake.¹²⁷ The Chinese delegate Liu Shaoqi even accused the Soviet leaders of becoming "historical criminals" if they did not defend socialism in Hungary,¹²⁸ while his comrades retrospectively accused the Soviets of 'capitulation'.¹²⁹ Even within the Hungarian leadership some politburo members began to view the events in Hungary in a more negative light, most notably Janos Kadar, who was invited to Moscow on 1 November. Despite Kadar's attempt upon arrival in Moscow on 2 November to convince the Kremlin not to intervene, Kadar ultimately changed sides by promising Khrushchev the next day to provide his assistance 'in order to stabilize the situation' and by agreeing to form a new Hungarian government.¹³⁰ Kadar's assessment of the situation in Hungary as a 'counterrevolution' contributed to tipping the balance in favour of intervention.¹³¹ Subsequently ruling Hungary as a party leader from November 1956 till his retirement in 1988, Kadar continued to attempt a delicate balancing act between moderate internal reforms and loyalty to the Soviet bloc.

The Kremlin had already reached a similar conclusion after Nagy's proclamation of a multi-party system. Since Khrushchev's desire for a further demilitarisation of the Cold War had been genuine, he embarked on a very quick tour of Eastern Europe on 2 November in order to legitimise the intervention. Within one day the Chinese, Czechoslovakians, Romanians, Poles, and even the Yugoslavians rallied behind Khrushchev on 2 November. The communist leaders fully realised that the loss of Hungary would weaken the communist bloc, which would threaten their own security, too. The fact that Khrushchev travelled Eastern Europe to solicit advice from his least likely and most independent allies – such as the national communists Tito and Gomulka – indicates his insecurity about invading Hungary and his zeal to justify the invasion. Khrushchev's travels prove that he sought a justification for what

¹²⁶ 'Reply of the CC of the CCP to information of the CPSU CC on 21 June 1960 (top secret)', 10 September 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3604, 25-26.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹²⁸ Zhai, 'Coexistence and Confrontation', 182.

¹²⁹ Meeting of a delegation of the CPSU and the CCP, July 1963, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3608, 72.

¹³⁰ 'Nikita Khrushchev's Recollections of Discussions between the CPSU CC Presidium and Hungarian Leaders János Kádár and Ferenc Münnich in Moscow', 3 November 1953, in Békés et al. (eds.), *Hungarian Revolution*, 355.

¹³¹ 'Working Notes from the CPSU CC Presidium Session with the Participation of János Kádár and Ferenc Münnich', 2 November 1956, in Békés et al. (eds.), *Hungarian Revolution*, 337.

could otherwise have been regarded as Soviet imperialism; with Eastern European consent it turned into the salvation of communism instead. Moreover, Tito managed to convince Khrushchev against the wishes of some of his Soviet comrades to allow Kadar to form the new Hungarian government, and accordingly had some stake in Hungarian affairs after all.¹³² Moscow did indeed call the shots, but the Eastern European assistance in pulling the trigger strengthened its cause.

It is, however, important to note that the reason for the intervention on 4 November was *not* Nagy's declaration of neutrality and Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact on 1 November, as is often assumed.¹³³ Recently disclosed archival evidence has shown that Nagy's withdrawal from the Eastern European alliance was a reaction to the realisation that Soviet troops were still entering Hungary in an attempt to gain support from the UN.¹³⁴ He could, after all, only ask the UN for support *after* withdrawing from the WP, since he would otherwise invoke the UN against one of Hungary's formal allies. Hungary's lack of commitment to the Warsaw Pact was accordingly *not* the determining factor in the second Soviet intervention. On the contrary, it was the imminent second intervention, which compelled Hungary to withdraw from the WP, not vice versa. In fact, the alliance did not loom large in the Soviet decision-making at all, since the WP did not cater for one member invading the other. The Warsaw Pact did, accordingly, not enter the equation during the Hungarian Revolution, nor did Hungary's attempted withdrawal from the WP cause the second intervention.

The Warsaw Pact was not even used as an instrument to sanction the Soviet intervention. Although Khrushchev had consulted many of his WP allies, he had not done so within the institutional framework of the alliance, and he had forgotten about Albania altogether. The most important consultations had occurred with the Chinese and with Tito, neither of whom were members of the WP, although the Chinese joined the PCC meetings as observers. The Hungarian Revolution therefore highlights the extent to which the Warsaw Pact was still dormant. 'Betraying a certain apprehension about his brainchild, Khrushchev did not rely on the Warsaw Pact in crushing the Hungarian revolution or restoring Soviet control in the region afterward', as Mastny eloquently puts it.¹³⁵ This was, however, not as surprising as it may seem. Although Khrushchev could have used the WP as a framework for multilateral consultations, it could not have served to justify the invasion in either political or military terms: the WP was, after all, intended to provide mutual assistance in case of 'an armed attack', instead of facilitating such an attack. The alliance was certainly not founded as an

¹³² 'Notes of Yugoslav Ambassador to Moscow Veljko Micunovic on Negotiations between Yugoslav and Soviet Leaders at Brioni', 3 November 1956, in Békés et al. (eds.), *Hungarian Revolution*, 350.

¹³³ E.g. A. Kemp-Welch, 'Eastern Europe: Stalinism to Solidarity', in M. Leffler and O.A. Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume II: Crisis and Détente* (Cambridge, 2010), 219.

¹³⁴ See 'Telegram from Imre Nagy to Diplomatic Missions in Budapest Declaring Hungary's Neutrality', 1 November 1956, in Békés et al. (eds.), *Hungarian Revolution*, 332.

¹³⁵ Mastny, 'The Warsaw Pact', 145.

instrument of coercion within Eastern Europe. Khrushchev had abolished the COMINFORM exactly because he considered the time ripe for a more equal and intergovernmental relationship with his allies.

The 30 October declaration illustrates the extent of this new kind of 'equality'. On the one hand its contents suggest that Khrushchev genuinely strove to take the Eastern European leaders more seriously, but on the other hand the NSWP members had not been involved in drafting the declaration, which still separated the Soviet Union from 'Other Socialist States'. The fact that the Soviet leadership unilaterally decided about matters, which affected the security of the Soviet bloc, through a Soviet declaration, indicates that its allies were still at the receiving end of Soviet directives, which confirms the traditional assumptions. There was, however, a new kind of equality, but it was one on Moscow's terms. Khrushchev's reference to the Warsaw Treaty's 'obligation to take "concerted measures necessary (...) to guarantee the inviolability of their borders and territory"' therefore seems a vain attempt to uphold the provisions of the treaty in theory, while being unable to do so in practice, since the tension between the security of the pact on the one hand and that of its individual members on the other was unresolvable.¹³⁶ If anything, the Hungarian Revolution had highlighted what the WP was *not*.

ALBANIAN REACTION TO THE THAW

Khrushchev's failure to involve all WP members in the decision-making about the Hungarian Revolution was particularly painful to the Albanian leadership, since it had been the only WP member that had not been consulted at all in the autumn of 1956. Although Albania was both geographically and culturally an anomaly within the alliance, since the tiny country was geographically isolated from the Soviet bloc, and predominantly inhabited by Muslims instead of Slavs, the Albanian leadership had generally been on good terms with its Soviet comrades. The authoritarian party leader, Enver Hoxha, had greatly applauded Stalin's break with Tito in 1948, since he was afraid to be swallowed by his neighbouring country Yugoslavia. Moreover, Tito's excommunication from the socialist camp enabled Hoxha to prevent being unseated by more 'right-wing' colleagues, by purging them in the wake of the anti-Titoist witch-hunts. Hoxha was, therefore, particularly enthusiastic about joining the Warsaw Pact in May 1955 as a bulwark against the Yugoslav menace.

Albanian accession to the alliance was, however, controversial from the start, since Soviet foreign minister Molotov had 'proposed that in the composition of the Warsaw Pact Albania and the German Democratic Republic should not be included.

¹³⁶ 'Declaration by the Government of the USSR', 300-301.

He said: “Why should we wage war on behalf of Albania and the GDR?”¹³⁷ In a slight tinge of irony these geopolitically insecure countries would determine the dynamics of the Warsaw Pact at the beginning of the 1960s. Khrushchev had, however, insisted on admitting Albania to the alliance for exactly this reason, since ‘it would be swallowed whole’ if it was not included.¹³⁸ Initially Albania was one of its most loyal members, and Hoxha even managed to convince Khrushchev of the necessity to build an international military support base at Vlorë on the island of Sazan, which Stalin had not approved. In this way the Albanian leadership both wanted to show its loyalty to the SU, and safeguard its own security interests, situated between the non-aligned Yugoslavia and the NATO-member Greece.

Khrushchev’s de-Stalinisation and his rapprochement with Yugoslavia were, therefore, viewed with increasing anxiety, since de-Stalinisation did not only ‘threaten Hoxha’s own position at home, but Khrushchev’s review of Stalin’s Yugoslavia policy undermined the Albanian *raison d’être* for improved relations with the Soviet Union.’¹³⁹ The Albanian leadership became so displeased with the Kremlin’s revision of Stalin’s policies that the Albanian prime minister Mehmet Shehu told Soviet politburo member Anastas Mikoyan that ‘Stalin made two mistakes. First, he died too early, and second, he failed to liquidate the entire present Soviet leadership.’¹⁴⁰ Two months after Khrushchev’s Secret Speech the Albanian leaders even invented a plot at the third Municipal Party Conference in Tirana, which enabled them to purge the party of pro-Soviet members, consolidate their power, and thwart de-Stalinisation.¹⁴¹

The Hungarian Revolution in the autumn of 1956 made the Albanian leadership painfully aware of the undermining consequences of de-Stalinisation for its own position, and Hoxha still blamed Khrushchev for failing to consult Albania in a speech at the conference of communist parties in Moscow four years later, on 16 November 1960. Hoxha pointed the ‘injustice’ out of the fact that Khrushchev had consulted the ‘renegade’ Tito, ‘the traitor of Marxism Leninism’, the leader of independent Yugoslavia, about whether or not to intervene in Hungary during the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, while failing to convene the WP countries. According to Hoxha Albania should have been consulted, since it was a member of the Warsaw Pact, common security was at stake, and ‘from the moment we created the Warsaw Pact, we should have decided together, otherwise it makes no sense to talk about an alliance,

¹³⁷ ‘Minutes of a conversation between a delegation of the CPSU CC and the AWP CC’, 12 November 1960, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 76/1960, 130.

¹³⁸ Lalaj, A., “‘Albania is not Cuba.’ Sino-Albanian Summits and the Sino-Soviet Split’, in C.F. Ostermann (ed.), *Inside China’s Cold War*, CWHIP Bulletin No. 16 (Washington, 2007/2008), 194.

¹³⁹ L. M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, 2008), 201.

¹⁴⁰ Biberaj, *Albania*, 34.

¹⁴¹ Letter from Albanian CC to all party organisations, April 1956, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3589, 32-35.

about comradeship, about collaboration between parties.¹⁴² The Hungarian Revolution had thus painfully underlined the irrelevance of the WP, which remained dormant during the first Soviet bloc crisis since its creation, and Hoxha reminded the Kremlin of the implications of its own creation.

Despite their predicament, the Albanian leaders continued to tread their ground carefully vis-à-vis the Kremlin. They decided to be 'careful', since it would be 'very dangerous (...) to expose our ideas', because 'without the Soviet Union our country is unable to build socialism; we cannot defend the freedom of our country by ourselves'.¹⁴³ Moreover, the Albanian leadership had calculated that 'Albania can stand on its own feet in economic terms around 1970'.¹⁴⁴ In the latter half of the 1950s the Albanian leadership was ideologically, geopolitically, and economically dependent on the SU, without an alternative communist protector of their interests. Albanian extremism in internal politics and scepticism about Khrushchev's peaceful coexistence, which facilitated his rapprochement with Tito, drove the Albanian leaders gradually into the arms of their Chinese comrades, whose financial support of Albania rose substantially after 1956.¹⁴⁵ The Hungarian Revolution slowly set a trend of Sino-Albanian opposition to Soviet positions.¹⁴⁶ According to Li Fenglin, the Chinese Ambassador to Moscow at the time, Albania even took the initiative in 'inciting Beijing's opinions'.¹⁴⁷ The Hungarian Revolution had thus inadvertently forged a bond between Moscow's largest and smallest ally. Although neither Mao nor Hoxha had irreversibly turned against Khrushchev at this stage, both had become increasingly critical of his policies, and Hoxha had linked his criticism to Khrushchev's mismanagement of the WP.

THE POLISH PUSH FOR REFORMS

Enver Hoxha was not the only Eastern European leader to question the provisions of the Warsaw Pact in the wake of the Hungarian Revolution. Possibly emboldened by the fact that Khrushchev had solicited his advice in relation to the Hungarian Revolution, Gomulka sent a Polish delegation to Moscow in January 1957 to voice Polish criticism of the Warsaw Treaty and the 'Statute of the Unified Command'. The

¹⁴² 'Speech of comrade Enver Hoxha, First Secretary of the CC of the Albanian Workers' Party, at the conference of representatives of the communist and workers' parties in Moscow', 16 November 1960, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 76/1960, 46.

¹⁴³ Lalaj, 'Albanien und der Warschauer Pakt', 32.

¹⁴⁴ Letter from Hoxha to Ulbricht, Tirana, 7 October 1958, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3589, 43.

¹⁴⁵ W.E. Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift* (Massachusetts, 1963), 28.

¹⁴⁶ 'Parallels in Sino-Soviet-Albanian Ideological Positions, 1956-1959', Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift*, 29-34.

¹⁴⁷ X. Liu and V. Mastny (eds.), 'China and Eastern Europe, 1960s-1080s. Proceedings of the International Symposium: Reviewing the History of Chinese-East European Relations from the 1960s to the 1980s. Beijing, 24-26 March 2004', *Beiträge zur Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktforschung* Nr. 72 (Zürich, 2004), 36.

criticism followed an internal Polish memorandum, which was drafted on 3 November 1956 – one day before the second Soviet intervention in Hungary – and which stated that ‘the document in its present form grants the Supreme Commander of the United Armed Forces certain rights and obligations, which contradict the idea of the independence and sovereignty of member-states of the Warsaw Treaty.’¹⁴⁸ The Polish leadership had problems with the statute’s ‘military provisions, as well as different bilateral agreements’, which ‘require a thorough analysis and revision’,¹⁴⁹ but it did not question the existence of the alliance itself, which also served Polish security. The Polish leadership, however, criticised the ‘supranational character of the Supreme Commander and his Staff, which does not correspond to the idea of independence and sovereignty of the Warsaw Treaty participating countries’, and questioned ‘[t]he authority of the Supreme Commander’, and thus the authority of the Soviet leadership itself.¹⁵⁰

There was, accordingly, a tension between the Warsaw Treaty’s rhetoric of sovereignty, which was modelled after the North-Atlantic Treaty, and the statute of the Unified Command, which in practice served to consolidate Soviet hegemony, while reinforcing the bilateral treaties already in place. The Polish proposals were based on a detailed study of NATO’s structures, and aimed to clarify the structure within the Joint Command, while curtailing Soviet power. The reaction of the Soviet Supreme Commander, Marshal Konev, to the Polish proposals clearly indicates that the Warsaw Pact was not *really* supposed to function like NATO, so far as he was concerned: “What do you imagine, that we will make some kind of NATO here?”¹⁵¹ Its likeness to NATO was in military terms still a mere facade, which had no bearing on reality, and the Polish proposals temporarily vanished into oblivion. They would not enter the WP platform until almost ten years later, when they would return with a vengeance. Although the Kremlin still managed to cover up the Warsaw Treaty’s discrepancy between rhetoric and reality, it would not succeed in doing so in the long run.

The Polish proposals testify to the fact that Gomulka did not envisage the Polish role in the WP as a subservient one.¹⁵² The Polish leadership continued developing diplomatic initiatives, the most famous of which was the so-called ‘Rapacki plan’ in 1957, which was a plan by the Polish minister of foreign affairs, Adam Rapacki, to create a nuclear free zone in the centre of Europe, according to which both

¹⁴⁸ ‘Gen. Jan Drzewiecki’s Critique of the Statute of the Unified Command’, 3 November 1956, in Mastny and Byrne (eds.), *Cardboard Castle*, 84–86.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Polish Memorandum on Reform of the Warsaw Pact’, 10 January 1957, in Mastny and Byrne (eds.), *Cardboard Castle*, 87–90.

¹⁵⁰ Mastny, “We are in a bind”, 231.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁵² W. Jarzabek, *Poland in the Warsaw Pact 1955–1991: An Appraisal of the Role of Poland in the Political Structures of the Warsaw Pact*, Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security, 2010, http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll_poland/Introduction.cfm?navinfo=111216, accessed 20 August 2013.

They did, however, not go unpunished: ‘In retaliation, Moscow forbade Poland to produce certain Soviet arms.’

Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland would agree not to store nuclear weapons.¹⁵³ Although the Polish leadership might in the first place have had its own security at heart, and especially the recognition of the much contested Oder-Neisse border, the 'Rapacki Plan' was indicative of the Polish propensity to develop initiatives which were both in their own interests *and* in the interests of the Soviet bloc at large: West Germany's abstention from nuclear weapons would, after all, also ensure the security of East Germany and Czechoslovakia.¹⁵⁴ The Polish historian Wanda Jarzabek has coined the phrase 'Gomulka Doctrine' for Gomulka's foreign policy strategy, which was aimed at influencing Soviet bloc policy on the German Question so as to ensure the recognition of the Oder-Neisse line.¹⁵⁵ Gomulka would prove particularly adept at doing so within the framework of the WP by linking Poland's foreign policy interests to those of the other WP members.

In the following years Gomulka trod a fine line between appeasing the Polish people on the one hand and the Soviet leadership on the other.¹⁵⁶ Fully aware of the need for the Soviet security guarantee to safeguard the Oder-Neisse border, Gomulka also managed to continue emphasising Polish sovereignty.¹⁵⁷ In order to underscore the Polish independence from Moscow, most of the Soviet officers in the Polish Army were sent with a one-way ticket to Moscow and the number of Soviet advisers was substantially reduced. Meanwhile, the fact that Gomulka had insisted on the continued presence of Soviet troops, and had prevented the situation from spinning out of control as in Hungary, while safeguarding the monopoly of the communist party and adhering to its principles, also inspired confidence on the Soviet part.¹⁵⁸ Gomulka thus skilfully explored his room for manoeuvre between Soviet and popular demands. The divisions in the leadership diminished, the economy improved and de-Stalinisation took place gradually, but peacefully. Gomulka's successful balancing act and his purges of 16 percent of the party members enabled him to gain complete control of the party and the state by 1958. By the time the Polish United Workers Party held its third congress on 10-19 March 1959 Gomulka's power had been firmly consolidated.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ Cf. W. Jarzabek, *Hope and Reality. Poland and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1964-1989*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 56 (Washington, 2008), 4. Although this plan is often presented as a Soviet initiative, according to Jarzabek 'Polish documents support the idea that it was a Polish initiative' (*ibid.*).

¹⁵⁴ The ambivalent East German reaction to this plan was indicative of the genius of the proposal: on the one hand the East German leadership rejected it, and on the other hand they pretended it was actually their own idea. Cf. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall* and Selva, *The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Nonproliferation, 1963-1965*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 32 (Washington, 2001).

¹⁵⁵ Jarzabek, *Hope and Reality*, 7.

¹⁵⁶ D. Selva, 'Khrushchev's November 1958 Ultimatum: New Evidence from the Polish Archives', in C. Ostermann (ed.), *Cold War Flashpoints*, CWIHP Bulletin No. 11 (Washington, 1998), 201, for a description of his ambivalent relationship with Khrushchev.

¹⁵⁷ Granville, *The First Domino*, 119.

¹⁵⁸ Paczkowski, *The Spring Will Be Ours*, 277.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 286.

DEMILITARISING ROMANIA

Meanwhile, the Romanian leaders negotiated with their Soviet comrades on altogether different terms. They expressed no interest in reforming the Warsaw Pact, but wanted instead to use the treaty as an instrument for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romanian territory. Although the Romanian party leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej had been a great admirer of Stalin, and had successfully purged his party of any opponents in Stalinist fashion, he had managed to remain on good terms with Moscow. Khrushchev's secret speech in February 1956 was nevertheless a particularly unpleasant surprise for Gheorghiu-Dej, who first tried to keep it secret and then convened a secret meeting for the party elite in March in order to 'fix the Party line for the next few years' by denouncing not Stalin, but de-Stalinisation.¹⁶⁰ Gheorghiu-Dej accordingly made a virtue out of necessity, since this move enabled him 'to reinforce his own control of the Party and to bind it more closely to his person.'¹⁶¹ Gheorghiu-Dej's recourse to a paradoxically Stalinist brand of 'national communism' served as an attractive alternative, since it would both appeal to the broader public and enable him to secure his power.¹⁶²

Meanwhile, the Hungarian revolution in October/November 1956 enabled Gheorghiu-Dej to prove his loyalty towards Moscow. Motivated by self-interest instead of subservience, he went out of his way to provide the Kremlin with any military and strategic support it desired, considering it 'a necessary international duty.'¹⁶³ The Hungarian revolution posed a particular threat to both his internal and external security: Gheorghiu-Dej not only feared contagion from the Hungarian liberalisation, which would undermine his own power, but he was also concerned about any claims to parts of Transylvania by a non-communist Hungary. The Romanian leadership had therefore been a staunch supporter of the Soviet intervention in Hungary, which it had regarded as a great 'source of satisfaction', since the escalation of the Hungarian Revolution confirmed the Romanian Stalinist course, while discrediting de-Stalinisation.¹⁶⁴

The Romanian loyalty was amply rewarded when Khrushchev agreed to withdraw Soviet troops from Romania in 1958. It had been an explicit request by defence minister Emil Bodnaras, who had already attempted to convince Khrushchev of this policy in 1955, arguing that it entailed no security risks.¹⁶⁵ It also followed

¹⁶⁰ D. Deletant and M. Ionescu, *Romania and the Warsaw Pact: 1955-1989*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 43 (Washington, 2004), 9.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² See for an analysis of Gheorghiu-Dej's personal motives behind national communism: M. Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring: Romanian Foreign Policy and the Crisis of Czechoslovakia, 1968* (Oxford, 2000), 22, and V. Tismaneanu, *Gheorghiu-Dej and the Romanian Workers' Party: From De-Sovietization to the Emergence of National Communism*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 37 (Washington, 2002).

¹⁶³ Deletant and Ionescu, *Romania and the Warsaw Pact*, 61.

¹⁶⁴ Tismaneanu, *Gheorghiu-Dej*, 20-21.

¹⁶⁵ Deletant and Ionescu, *Romania and the Warsaw Pact*, 13-14.

logically from the Soviet declaration, which was formulated on 30 October 1956, according to which the Soviet Union was prepared to 'review' the stationing of Soviet troops on Romanian territory. It was in line with Khrushchev's policy of unilateral troop reductions in order to foster peaceful coexistence, and it seemed to entail no risk for either internal or external security, since Gheorghiu-Dej's power was firmly established and the country was surrounded by other Warsaw Pact states and Yugoslavia, which was, by now, on friendly terms with the Soviet Union. Moreover, Khrushchev could afford to do so, since he had definitively consolidated his power after surviving an attempted coup in June 1957. The former foreign minister, Molotov, had participated in the so called 'anti-party coup', and was expelled as ambassador to Ulan Bator, the capital of Mongolia. Molotov was replaced by his former deputy, Andrei Gromyko, and Khrushchev had assumed the office of premier as well as party leader.¹⁶⁶ Khrushchev thus had his hands free to execute foreign policy according to his own insights, and to continue demilitarising the Cold War by withdrawing troops from Romania.

Possibly mistaking Romanian self-interest for subservience during the Hungarian revolution, Khrushchev seemed to overlook that the withdrawal of the red army would be considered a Soviet concession to Romanian autonomy, and would accordingly increase the Romanian scope for manoeuvre. National communism could now be raised to a higher level. The withdrawal of the Soviet forces also necessitated a tighter grip by the Romanian security forces on the population, since the external threat of Soviet intervention had been removed. The ensuing terror did little to increase the support of Gheorghiu-Dej's regime, so he needed to look elsewhere in order to prop up his popularity and reduce the number of opponents. Openly professing a more autonomous course vis-à-vis Moscow was the ideal solution, since it enabled him to kill two birds with one stone: as the expert on Romania Dennis Deletant puts it, '[d]rawing on the inherent anti-Russian sentiment offered Gheorghiu-Dej a simple way of increasing the regime's popularity whilst at the same time putting a distance between himself and his Soviet master.'¹⁶⁷ The withdrawal of the Soviet army from Romanian territory thus enabled the Romanian leadership to follow the Soviet model without following the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁸ Khrushchev had once more underestimated the repercussions of his own policy measures.

FURTHER DEMILITARISATION

On 24 May 1958 the second PCC meeting was convened in Moscow to rubberstamp the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania as well as other Soviet troop

¹⁶⁶ Kenez, *History of the Soviet Union*, 116.

¹⁶⁷ Deletant and Ionescu, *Romania and the Warsaw Pact*, 19.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.

reductions. The Polish criticism, however striking, still remained outside the confines of the Warsaw Pact as a matter for bilateral consideration between the Soviet Union and Poland. The Kremlin was at liberty to ignore the Polish criticism, which accordingly gained no force, but it also used the WP as an instrument to approve Poland's 'Rapacki plan' as a 'valuable initiative for the elimination of the danger of the rise of a nuclear war in Europe'. The unanimous support for the Polish contribution to 'détente', and the general praise of the 'realism of the proposal' inadvertently invested the Polish leadership with power.¹⁶⁹ Although dissent was carefully contained and shelved beyond the alliance's confines, whose unity could therefore remain intact, the alliance had already provided its Polish member with an instrument to increase its influence over Soviet bloc policy.

The fact that the PCC was convened almost two and a half years after the PCC meeting in January 1956 was, however, particularly embarrassing, since it had been decided to meet at least every six months at that meeting. In this respect the decision-making in the WP thus seemed a mere formality, which bore no relation to reality. The secretariat, which was supposed to be established, had not materialised either, nor had the standing-committee of foreign affairs experts. The absence of a secretariat or a standing committee seemed convenient for the Soviet leaders, who could turn something into a Warsaw Pact matter, or keep it out of its framework, according to their own wishes. The alliance thus remained a rather empty shell, which was temporarily filled on a biennial basis with Soviet-directed decision-making, and then dissolved again. It was, as such, an institution that only existed when the PCC meeting convened; a kind of sleeping beauty, which was waiting to be kissed, but failed to attract any suitors on a regular basis.

With the military intervention in Hungary disappeared into the background, Khrushchev now hoped to curry favour with his allies by *demilitarising* the Cold War and by finally carrying out some of the promises of the Soviet resolution on 'Friendship and Cooperation', which was drawn up in the heat of the Hungarian Revolution. Thus Khrushchev aimed to also signal to the NATO countries, which were involved in a military build-up, that he was serious in his quest for a de-escalation of international tensions. Aware of the fact that the dissolution of both NATO and the WP was beyond his reach, Khrushchev now used the Warsaw Pact as a diplomatic ploy to make a statement towards the West, by proposing a non-aggression treaty between NATO and the WP.¹⁷⁰ Although the Hungarian Revolution had eroded Soviet power to the extent that some discussion took place within the PCC meeting, the abovementioned Soviet foreign policy initiatives were unanimously approved and

¹⁶⁹ Draft declaration of the member states of the Warsaw Pact, May 1958, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3392, 34.

¹⁷⁰ Draft of a non-aggression pact, 1958, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3392, 19-22.

eloquently explained in the ensuing communiqué, which underlined the ‘complete unity, unbreakable fraternal friendship and cooperation of the socialist countries.’¹⁷¹

In the 1958 PCC meeting Khrushchev accordingly seemed to have picked up the thread he was forced to let go of during all the upheavals in 1956. Posing once again as Europe’s peacemaker, the Soviet leader rallied his allies behind him in another Soviet initiative for a de-escalation of the Cold War. The other allies had little scope for initiative, and unquestioningly agreed with a new, but controversial, move on the German Question, according to which ‘a summit conference should discuss that part of the German problem which is the responsibility of the four powers, namely, the question of a German peace treaty.’¹⁷² After Khrushchev had once again transmitted his foreign policy directives through the platform provided by the Warsaw Pact, the alliance remained largely dormant till February 1960. The German Question, which was, after all, the alliance’s *raison d’être*, nevertheless remained on the Kremlin’s agenda throughout the 1950s.

ULBRICHT AND THE SECOND BERLIN CRISIS

The prominence of the German Question on the Warsaw Pact’s agenda had provided Ulbricht with enormous leverage over Khrushchev, since Khrushchev needed Ulbricht’s cooperation to execute his own foreign policy initiatives. According to the influential account of the American historian Hope Harrison this even facilitated the birth of the GDR as the Soviet Union’s ‘super ally’.¹⁷³ Although the declaration of the end of the state of war with Germany on 25 January 1955, East Germany’s role as co-founder of the Warsaw Pact on 15 May 1955, the Soviet-East German ‘Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation’ in December 1955, and the creation of an East German National People’s Army and its integration into the WP in January 1956 seemed to bode well for relations between the SU and the GDR, Khrushchev’s ‘Secret Speech’ in February 1956 underlined the fundamentally different outlooks of Khrushchev and Ulbricht. The criticism of Stalin’s personality cult and the heralding of peaceful coexistence did not serve Ulbricht’s aims at all, since he cultivated his personality with relish and preferred the largest possible distance to the FRG to peaceful coexistence.

The uprisings in Poland and the revolution in Hungary seemed to vindicate Ulbricht’s scepticism of Khrushchev’s conciliatory course, and the ‘anti-party coup’ in

¹⁷¹ ‘Record of the Decisions of the Political Consultative Committee’, 24 May 1958, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17642&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹⁷² ‘Declaration’, 24 May 1958, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17545&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹⁷³ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 12.

June 1957 further undermined his authority in East German eyes.¹⁷⁴ The ‘anti-party coup’ had nevertheless enabled Khrushchev to sack his rivals Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich, which made Khrushchev the Soviet Union’s ‘undisputed leader’.¹⁷⁵ Ulbricht had, however, managed to rise to the same position *without* having to survive a coup first. The escalation of Khrushchev’s liberalising tendencies enabled Ulbricht to assert his own power and weaken his more liberal opposition, and on 3-6 February 1958, during the SED’s thirty-fifth plenum, he managed to oust his opponents altogether. The failure of Khrushchev’s de-Stalinisation had inadvertently served Ulbricht’s Stalinisation, and thus seemed to provide him with extra leverage over Khrushchev. Ulbricht had, after all, been essential in ensuring the stability of the GDR in the wake of Khrushchev’s secret speech, and he also used this feat to obtain more economic and political support from the Soviet leadership.¹⁷⁶

The abovementioned PCC meeting was an attempt to use the German Question in order to pave the way for Khrushchev’s new foreign policy outlook. The conclusion of a German peace treaty had never materialised after World War II because of the division of Germany. Although the conclusion of a peace treaty with a unified Germany was merely hypothetical, a peace treaty with both Germanys would significantly boost the status of the GDR, as well as underlining Khrushchev’s quest for peace. Khrushchev combined his campaign for a German peace treaty with an onslaught on the occupied status of West Berlin, which was a capitalist bulwark in the middle of communist East Germany. Khrushchev formulated this on 10 November 1958 in a speech he delivered in Moscow, in which he partly conceded to Ulbricht’s repeated requests to grant the control of the whole of Berlin and its access routes to the GDR, if the West failed to agree to a peace treaty. On 27 November Khrushchev even issued a six-month ultimatum according to which ‘the Soviet Union would unilaterally transfer its authority in Berlin and over the access routes to the GDR’, if the Western powers did not turn it into a demilitarised ‘free city’, by withdrawing their forces from West Berlin, and by signing a German peace treaty.¹⁷⁷

By doing so, Khrushchev actually outwitted Ulbricht, since Khrushchev’s idea of a ‘free city’ was less desirable from Ulbricht’s point of view than the transfer of control to the GDR. In an act of brinkmanship characteristic for Khrushchev he confidently declared that the Western powers’ failure to recognise the Soviet transfer of power over the access to Berlin to the GDR would ‘result immediately in appropriate retaliation’ by members of the Warsaw Pact.¹⁷⁸ Thus Khrushchev’s adversarial stance on the German Question inadvertently raised the stakes of the recently created alliance too, since its members might have to be involved in a

¹⁷⁴ See for the anti-party coup W. Taubman, *Khrushchev. The Man and his Era* (London, 2003), 317-323.

¹⁷⁵ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 364.

¹⁷⁶ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 92-94.

¹⁷⁷ W.R. Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin. The Cold War Struggle over Germany* (London, 1999), 138-139.

¹⁷⁸ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 106.

superpower confrontation. This marked the beginning of the so-called 'second Berlin Crisis'.

Khrushchev nevertheless told the Soviet ambassador in Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin, that 'war with the United States was inadmissible', but also complained of the potential American nuclear reach to West Germany and said: "It's high time that their long arms were cut shorter."¹⁷⁹ Khrushchev's Berlin ultimatum was primarily a reaction to the rearmament of West Germany, and the Soviet fear of West German access to nuclear arms. As the American historian Marc Trachtenberg convincingly argues, the Kremlin 'wanted [its former allies] to keep West Germany from becoming too powerful', especially by preventing its nuclearisation, and the 'German nuclear question thus lay at the heart of Soviet policy during the Berlin Crisis.'¹⁸⁰

Khrushchev's interests in the Berlin Crisis accordingly did not coincide with Ulbricht's: whereas the former regarded the crisis as a means to prevent the Americans from facilitating the West German nuclear ambitions, the latter considered it a way to consolidate the status of East Germany, while also boosting his own power vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. For Khrushchev the Berlin Crisis was a way to control the power of West Germany within Europe at large, whereas Ulbricht perceived it as a way to increase East German power. Although Harrison convincingly portrays Ulbricht's vested interest in the Berlin Crisis, she fails to acknowledge that the German Question meant something different for both leaders. As Khrushchev's biographer William Taubman puts it, for Ulbricht 'West Berlin was the prize, whereas for Khrushchev it was a lever to break the international deadlock.'¹⁸¹

Khrushchev's treatment of the Western powers in the second Berlin Crisis nevertheless provided Ulbricht with an example of how to exercise leverage in an asymmetric position of power: just as West Berlin was the 'Achilles heel of the West', so the GDR was the Achilles heel of the Soviet bloc, which in turn invested Ulbricht with power.¹⁸² Indirectly passing messages to the American administration that 'there is not going to be any war over Berlin', Khrushchev himself was less eager to force the issue.¹⁸³ In exchange for dropping his 27 May deadline, Khrushchev agreed to a conference of the foreign ministers of the four occupying countries, which would convene in Geneva on 11 May 1959.¹⁸⁴ He also convened a meeting of the foreign ministers of the WP countries and China on 27-28 April 1959 in order to prepare the conference in a multilateral setting. The Berlin Crisis thus proved a stimulus to multilateral consultations, whereas the WP facilitated a kind of Soviet bloc foreign

¹⁷⁹ A. Dobrynin, *In Confidence. Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents (1962-1986)* (New York, 1995), 51-52. Cf. Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 403: "The prospect of West Germany's getting nuclear weapons was the last straw."

¹⁸⁰ M. Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace. The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, 1999), 252-253.

¹⁸¹ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 405.

¹⁸² Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 111.

¹⁸³ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 408.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 412.

policy. Before the meeting the Soviet ambassador Pervukhin asked the East German foreign ministry to agree with the Soviet tactics 'not to go public with the already completed statute for a demilitarised free city of West Berlin'.¹⁸⁵ Khrushchev clearly wanted to prevent the East German delegation from moving too fast.

The East German delegation demurred and accepted the meeting's communiqué, which was in its favour since it expressed the unanimous support for 'the proposals of the Soviet Union for the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany and for the elimination of the occupation regime in West Berlin', while underlining the East German participation in the conference.¹⁸⁶ The foreign ministers conference in Geneva was unprecedented in that both an East and a West German delegation were allowed to participate, albeit at a separate table, which constituted *de facto* recognition of the East Germany as well as 'equal status' for both Germans, much to the resentment of the West German chancellor, Konrad Adenauer.¹⁸⁷ Since the conference dragged on till August, Eisenhower attempted to force a breakthrough by inviting Khrushchev to visit the United States. Delighted with the invitation,¹⁸⁸ Khrushchev acquiesced in the status quo when the conference did not yield any concrete results either, much to Ulbricht's frustration, and dropped the ultimatum. Khrushchev's explanation for his patience must have particularly annoyed Ulbricht: "They didn't recognise us for 16 years, and you want them to recognise you after 10 years. You need to wait at least 17 years."¹⁸⁹

Just as Khrushchev kept Ulbricht at bay by the prospect of a resolution of the German Question that was favourable to the GDR, so the Western Powers kept Khrushchev on a leash by pacifying his quest for reputation by continuing negotiations at superpower level and an invitation to the USA. While occasionally threatening the West with nuclear annihilation, Khrushchev's trip to the USA in September 1959 inspired him with such confidence that he added insult to injury by questioning the Chinese leadership on its treatment of American prisoners during a stop-over in China on his way back from the USA.¹⁹⁰ The fact that Khrushchev visited his Chinese comrades *after* his visit to the capitalist super power was a profound insult to Mao, who had considerably raised Chinese production goals and precipitated 'the socialist transformation of China' by launching the overambitious 'Great Leap Forward' in the spring of 1958.¹⁹¹ This radical shortcut to communism was considered 'an erroneous

¹⁸⁵ Letter from Winzer to Ulbricht et al., 23 April 1959, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3392, 3-4.

¹⁸⁶ Draft communiqué for the conference of foreign ministers, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3392, 7.

¹⁸⁷ Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin*, 144.

¹⁸⁸ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 416.

¹⁸⁹ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 124.

¹⁹⁰ V.M. Zubok and C. Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War. From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Harvard, 1996).

¹⁹¹ S. Guang Zhang, 'The Sino-Soviet Alliance and the Cold War in Asia, 1954-1962', in Lefler and Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History*, 366-7, and F. Dikötter, *Mao's Great Famine. The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-62* (New York, 2010), 84-87, and Zhai 'Coexistence and Confrontation', 183.

policy' by the Kremlin.¹⁹² Instead of being praised for his revolutionary zeal, Khrushchev rebuked Mao for his treatment of prisoners from the 'imperialist enemy'. Mao in turn regarded Khrushchev's enthusiasm about Eisenhower 'as a peace-loving man' as totally misplaced.¹⁹³ In Mao's eyes Khrushchev's behaviour indicated that he had abandoned Marxism-Leninism altogether.¹⁹⁴ It is thus no coincidence that there was, according to the US State department, "considerable evidence that in 1959 and early 1960 the Chinese encouraged the East Germans in their desire for a stronger line on the Berlin question than the Soviets were willing to take."¹⁹⁵ If Khrushchev's Berlin ultimatum was meant to prove to his friends and foes that he was not growing soft on the West, then his behaviour after his trip to the USA did much to undermine that intention.

Ulbricht was able to exercise some leverage while the Soviet leadership was still divided after Stalin's death and when Khrushchev was in a weak position after the unrest in the Soviet bloc created by his secret speech. But even though this helped Ulbricht in ousting his opposition in 1958 altogether and compelled Khrushchev to take a tougher stance on the German Question, Ulbricht's capacity to influence Khrushchev in the period from 1958-1960 seemed to have decreased significantly, *pave* Harrison. Khrushchev's procrastination resulted in several summit conferences and an invitation to be the first Soviet leader to visit the USA, but it left Ulbricht empty-handed. While Khrushchev was travelling the world, the East Germans kept fleeing from the GDR. The 'super-ally' had overplayed its hand, and the German Question in nuclear terms still remained unsolved.

CONCLUSION: AN ALLIANCE BY DEFAULT?

In the first five years of its existence the Warsaw Pact did, indeed, seem more akin to a 'cardboard castle' than a genuine alliance, particularly considering the way in which the decisions, which were made in 1956, such as the establishment of a secretariat and a standing committee for foreign affairs, never materialised. This cardboard castle seemed to disappear from the scene altogether in between PCC meetings, to enter the stage only when it suited the Soviet leadership. Considering the functioning of the alliance in the 1950s, the views prevailing in Western diplomatic circles at the time and in current historiography seem vindicated. It was, indeed, an instrument of the Soviet leadership, who used it as a 'transmission belt' for its foreign policy directives, such as unilateral force reductions and the proposal of a non-aggression treaty, which served as

¹⁹² Minutes of a session of the leadership of the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI), 8 July 1960, *Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivio del Partito Comunista Italiano* (FIG APC), Leadership, 1960, mf 024, 754.

¹⁹³ Second intervention by Den Xiaoping, 24 November 1960, FIG APC, Moscow Conference, November 1960, III, mf 0474, 2933.

¹⁹⁴ Zhai 'Coexistence and Confrontation', 186.

¹⁹⁵ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 134.

Soviet propaganda. 'Unanimity' and 'unity' were fanciful phrases to ornate a Soviet facade, which no one dared to demolish.

Everything that could undermine Soviet authority was carefully kept outside the scope of the alliance, and only addressed on unilateral or bilateral terms. Neither the Hungarian Revolution, nor the Polish criticism on the contradiction between the rhetoric of the Warsaw Treaty and the statute of the Unified Command were allowed to spill over into WP procedures. Despite Khrushchev's new foreign policy, with more input by the Soviet allies, multilateralism seemed conspicuous by its absence. When it became clear that the alliance would not be replaced by a European Security System, 'the Warsaw Pact came to stay by default', as Vojtech Mastny puts it.¹⁹⁶

The WP's replacement by a European Security System was, however, not its primary *raison d'être*. It was, after all, founded in reaction to the integration of West Germany into NATO, and its existence was therefore of vital importance to the GDR, and to other countries with a stake in the German Question, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia. The German Question accordingly featured not only during its foundation, but also in both PCC meetings, and both Khrushchev and Ulbricht began to use the alliance as an instrument to define a policy on the German Question. Through the foundation of the Warsaw Pact the German Question thus became an important topic for all Soviet allies. This also induced a critical analysis of the Polish leaders on the military provisions of the treaty, since the geographical proximity of West Germany raised the Polish stake in a potentially military confrontation. Although the Polish proposals for reforms were shelved, the mere existence of the WP did, at the very least, provide them with a platform to critically examine Soviet foreign policy. Moreover, the Polish Rapacki plan was approved within the WP's framework, which boosted the status of the Polish leadership. The treaty thus began to gain a dynamics of its own.

Moreover, the Warsaw Pact was a product of a genuine change in Soviet foreign policy. The fact that its foundation in 1955 coincided with the Austrian State Treaty, Khrushchev's rapprochement to Tito, and a disarmament proposal illustrates that Khrushchev was serious about establishing international relations on a new footing. The year 1955 represented, in fact, a fundamental paradigm shift in the evolution of the Soviet bloc, which is often ignored in historiography - even more so than Stalin's death in 1953 or the repercussions of de-Stalinisation in 1956. The WP, too, was part of Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation programme, since the foundation of a multilateral alliance that was more than a mere instrument of coercion would have been inconceivable under Stalin. Although the WP was largely dormant in the first five years of its existence, the mere fact that the Eastern European allies could gather in a multilateral setting, and were involved, however passively, in Soviet foreign policy, was already a remarkable departure from Stalin's authoritarianism, and the NSWP members also regarded it as such.

¹⁹⁶ Mastny, *Learning from the Enemy*, 11.

Khrushchev's decision to abolish the COMINFORM in 1956 indicates that he intended to treat his Eastern European comrades in a different manner. The mere existence of an Eastern European alliance at least facilitated the promotion from Soviet satellites to 'junior allies'.¹⁹⁷ The simple fact that multilateral meetings were convened, 'constituted a qualitative change with respect to former conditions', as the Hungarian historian Csaba Békés puts it, which would allow the WP to become 'the catalyst for a new era in Soviet-East Central European relations'.¹⁹⁸ This was exactly why the NSWP members genuinely welcomed the foundation of the Warsaw Pact.

The issue has, however, become somewhat clouded, since Soviet-East Central European relations spun out of control after Khrushchev's secret speech in February 1956. The image of Soviet tanks in Hungary is difficult to understand in relation to Khrushchev's attempts to establish a more equal kind of international relations. It is, accordingly, easy to conclude, as John Lewis Gaddis does, that there was 'little sense of mutual interest' in the WP after the Hungarian Revolution.¹⁹⁹ The Soviet declaration on 30 October 1956 was, however, more than a mere propaganda stunt, and led *inter alia* to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania in 1958. Moreover, the fact that the WP was *not* used to quench the Hungarian Revolution does not primarily show that the alliance was irrelevant, but rather that it was not meant as an instrument of coercion. Khrushchev's consultations of most of his allies during the crisis also indicate a farewell to Soviet unilateralism. His failure to do so within a multilateral framework illustrates both that he still had to grow accustomed to the use of a multilateral institution, and that the WP was simply not intended for *internal* control.

Khrushchev's departure from a Stalinist type of foreign policy turned matters upside down within the communist movement. The rapprochement with Tito went hand in hand with an estrangement from Mao, and raised considerable doubts in the eyes of the Albanian leadership. Since the communist movement gradually began to grow apart, the seeds were sown for a more important role of the Warsaw Pact in the next decade. Although the stigmas traditionally imposed upon the Warsaw Pact were to some extent valid up to 1960, the sleeping beauty would suddenly gain a life of her own in the early sixties and Khrushchev's brainchild would become a recalcitrant adolescent. The conventional view of the Warsaw Pact only applies in part to its infancy, and does little to explain what happened in the next three decades. In fact, it has prevented a convincing explanation from materialising in the historiography to date. The following chapters serve to address this hiatus by closely analysing the Warsaw Pact's growth into adulthood from 1960 onwards. Despite its conception as a cardboard castle the Warsaw Pact was there to stay. This makes an inquiry into its transformation into a genuine alliance all the more imperative.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Z. K. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict. Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Harvard, 1967), 433.

¹⁹⁸ Békés, 'East Central Europe', 341.

¹⁹⁹ Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 289.



Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Nikita Khrushchev at the Bucharest Conference, 28 June 1960.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5c/Gheorghiu-Dej_%26_Khrushchev_at_Bucharest%27s_Baneasa_Airport_%28June_1960%29.jpg

2

THE WARSAW PACT IN THE SHADOW OF THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT

Better be dead on your feet than alive on your knees.
(Albanian proverb)¹

At the beginning of the 1960s the Soviet Union was confronted with a simultaneous challenge from two opposite ends of the spectrum: on the one hand the Soviet leadership was increasingly undermined by the adversarial, extremist stance of its Chinese ‘comrades’, who regarded themselves as Lenin’s real heirs, and on the other hand it had to deal with the increasing defiance of its smallest Warsaw Pact comrade, Albania. United in their criticism of Soviet ‘revisionism’ the Chinese behemoth and the Albanian dwarf turned against their official ally in tandem. Caught in the middle of this unlikely partnership, the WP became an increasingly important base for support of the Soviet Union, and the Soviet leadership had to tread its ground carefully in order not to alienate any more allies and end up in isolation. Although Khrushchev also had to deal with the second Berlin Crisis in this period, ‘the German Question was not considered pressing’ in relation to the potential repercussions of a schism between China and the Soviet Union.² This chapter will therefore examine the impact of the Sino-Soviet split on the dynamics within the WP in the first half of the 1960s, before returning to the German Question in the next chapter.

According to the American foreign policy advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, ‘it is difficult to exaggerate the historical significance of the Sino-Soviet conflict,’ and this certainly applies to the Sino-Soviet split in relation to the Warsaw Pact.³ Although several excellent monographs have been published recently on the Sino-Soviet split as well as during the time, the interplay between the Sino-Soviet split on the one hand and the increased room for manoeuvre within the Warsaw Pact on the other has not yet been studied in detail.⁴ A number of articles have analysed the impact of the Sino-

¹ ‘Information on the Meeting with Comrade Chen Yi, 27 July 1961’, in Lalaj, A., ‘“Albania is not Cuba.” Sino-Albanian Summits and the Sino-Soviet Split’, in C. F. Ostermann (ed.), *Inside China’s Cold War*, CWHIP Bulletin No. 16 (Washington, 2007/2008), 228.

² Minutes of a session of the leadership of the PCI, 8 July 1960, FIG APC, Leadership, 1960, mf 024, 757.

³ Cf. Z. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict. Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Harvard, 1967), 397.

⁴ Cf. W.E. Griffith, *The Sino-Soviet Rift* (London, 1964), and D. S. Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict 1956-1961* (Princeton, 1962) for books dating from the Sino-Soviet Split. Cf. L. M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet*

Soviet split on either Mongolia, Romania, or Poland, or even the Balkans in general, but they have not attempted to place this within the wider context of the Warsaw Pact at large.⁵ The significant role of Albania has not gained any attention at all, apart from one short article, which considers Albania in isolation.⁶

This chapter aims to look at the repercussions of the Sino-Soviet split for the dynamics within the Warsaw Pact from January 1960 to December 1964, while focusing on the two countries, which most successfully managed to use the Sino-Soviet to their advantage: Albania and Romania. It will also treat Mongolia's application for accession to the WP in July 1963, since this was directly linked to the Sino-Soviet split, too. In the next chapter the same period will be covered from the perspective of the German Question. Although the relatively autonomous role of Romania vis-à-vis the Soviet Union is widely known, the impact of the Albanian defiance on WP dynamics has not been studied.⁷ In order to comprehend the motives and consequences of the Albanian and Romanian courses of action it is imperative to place their attitude in a wider context. The developments within the communist movement at large, particularly in 1960, will therefore be discussed, as well as the Albanian course in foreign policy in 1961, the Romanian mediation in the Sino-Soviet Split and the ensuing 'Declaration of Independence' in April 1964. Although the WP as an institution remained largely dormant in the first half of the sixties, exactly these developments brought it to life.

COMMUNIST UNITY UNDER PRESSURE

At the beginning of the 1960s Khrushchev still viewed the international position of the communist bloc through somewhat rose-coloured glasses. He regarded his talks with US president Dwight Eisenhower at Camp David in the autumn of 1959 as a breakthrough, since 'the cold war ice was broken',⁸ and he was eager to share the

Split: Cold War in the Communist World (Princeton, 2008), and S. Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967* (Stanford, 2009) for recent books.

⁵ E.g. S. Radchenko, *The Soviets' Best Friend in Asia: The Mongolian Dimension of the Sino-Soviet Split*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 42 (Washington, 2003), D. Selvage, *Poland and the Sino-Soviet Split, 1963-1965*, CWIHP E-Dossier No. 10, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/e-dossier-no-10-poland-and-the-sino-soviet-rift-1963-1965>, accessed 23 August 2013, C. Rijnoveanu, *A Perspective on Romania's Involvement in the Sino-Soviet Conflict (1960-1965)*, Cold War History Research Centre, Budapest, http://www.coldwar.hu/html/en/publications/Rom_Sino_Riv.pdf (May 2009), accessed 21 August 2013, and J. Baev, 'The Warsaw Pact and Southern Tier Conflicts, 1959-1969', in M. A. Heiss and S. V. Papacosma (eds.), *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intrabloc Conflicts* (Ohio, 2008), 193-205.

⁶ A. Lalaj, 'Albanien und der Warschauer Pakt', in T. Diedrich et al. (eds.), *Der Warschauer Pakt: Von der Gründung bis zum Zusammenbruch 1955 bis 1991* (Berlin, 2009), 27-42.

⁷ E.g. Opreș, P., *România în Organizația Tratatului de la Varșovia (1955-1991)*, (Bucharest, 2008), Deletant, D., 'Taunting the Bear: Romania and the Warsaw Pact, 1963-89', *Cold War History* 7:4 (2007), 495-507.

⁸ 'Declaration', 4 February 1960, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=17643&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

enthusiasm of his perceived diplomatic success with his Warsaw Pact allies at the third meeting of the Political Consultative Committee in Moscow on 4 February 1960. With the motto 'better to coexist, than not to exist'⁹ Khrushchev did not seem to have many ideological qualms about his rapprochement with the US president. On the contrary, he thought that the 'correlation of forces' had so obviously turned to the Soviet Union's advantage that a peace treaty with Germany and disarmament were within reach, and that 'peaceful coexistence' with the US would by no means undermine the 'increased unity within the framework of the united socialist camp'.¹⁰

Retrospectively, Khrushchev's upbeat assessment of the international situation and of communist unity seems little more than tragic irony, since the PCC meeting in question also marks the beginning of open polemics between the Soviet and the Chinese leadership. The rapprochement with the US went hand in hand with an estrangement from China, because the Chinese leadership regarded Khrushchev's optimism on relations with the US as a sell-out of the communist ideology.¹¹ There had already been frictions between both communist parties since Khrushchev's secret speech in February 1956, since de-Stalinisation and peaceful coexistence both contradicted Mao's increasingly radical politics at home, as we have seen in the previous chapter. It therefore hardly seems a coincidence that Mao had sent his most left-wing representative, Kang Sheng, as an observer to the PCC meeting, to formulate the Chinese position on world politics in a speech.

Sheng pretended to support the Soviet leadership on the surface, but his repeated emphasis on 'American imperialism' as 'the principal enemy of world peace' and his warning 'against U.S. double-dealing' profoundly undermined Khrushchev's stance towards the US and thereby his authority. Moreover, his conclusion 'that revisionism is the main danger in the present communist movement and that it is necessary to wage a resolute struggle against revisionism' sounded particularly ominous.¹² It is important to note that the Chinese leadership decided to openly

⁹ 'Report on PCC Meeting by the Bulgarian Prime Minister (Anton Iugov) to Bulgarian Politburo Session',

11 February 1960, PHP,

<http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17883&nnavinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹⁰ 'Declaration', 4 February 1960, PHP.

¹¹ Whether the Sino-Soviet split arose out of mainly ideological or geopolitical concerns is beyond the confines of this book. The Swiss scholar Lorenz Lüthi is the most recent proponent of the ideological emphasis in his book *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton 2008). The Chinese historian Dong Wang nevertheless disagrees with Lüthi and emphasises the Chinese security interests as well as 'China's strategic need to minimize the rift' in *The Quarrelling Brothers: New Chinese Archives and a Reappraisal of the Sino-Soviet Split, 1959-1962* (Washington, 2009), 2. See also letter from CPC CC to CPSU CC, 10/09/1960 (top secret), SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3604, 19-147, for a lengthy letter in which the Chinese leadership explains its estrangement from the Kremlin in great detail.

¹² 'Kang Sheng's Speech at the meeting of the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee', 4 February 1960, PHP, <http://php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?id=16320&lng=en>. Cf. 'Speech by comrade Kang Sheng at the meeting of the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee', 4 February 1960, SAPMO-BArch DY 30/3386, 87-99.

criticise the Soviet position for the first time within the context of the Warsaw Pact. The Soviet leaders were accordingly challenged within the confines of their own alliance, which painfully exposed its weakness.

Khrushchev also used the Warsaw Pact to outwit China, and on the same evening as Sheng's speech he openly denounced China at a banquet held in honour of the participants of the PCC in front of more than 500 people, while comparing the Chinese leadership with 'a worn out rubber boot, which one can only throw in a corner'.¹³ When the Chinese leadership flouted unwritten rules within the WP by publishing Sheng's speech in full in a Chinese editorial, a point of no return in Sino-Soviet relations seemed to have been reached. It was, however, not so much the publication of Sheng's speech that was 'a landmark in the evolving Sino-Soviet dispute going public',¹⁴ but rather Khrushchev's public denunciation of China at the banquet, which seemed a rehearsal of the Soviet stance at the third Romanian Party Congress in June 1960. By using the WP as a playing-field for their dispute, before it had reached the communist movement at large, both leaderships inadvertently increased the importance of the alliance.

In April of the same year the Chinese leadership astonished its Soviet colleagues by publishing the so-called 'Lenin Polemics' in Chinese newspapers, which amounted to a 'diatribe against Soviet revisionism'.¹⁵ Under the provocative title 'Long Live Leninism' Mao openly challenged Khrushchev's leadership of the communist camp by criticising de-Stalinisation and questioning the Soviet course towards world revolution, while claiming to be the true heir to Leninism himself.¹⁶ Khrushchev's continued belief in peaceful coexistence, even after the discovery of an American spy-plane on 1 May 1960 had nipped a scheduled super power summit in Paris in the bud, further contributed to Chinese scepticism about the Soviet course.¹⁷ It was in this potentially explosive setting that the third Romanian Party Congress in Bucharest, to which all communist parties were invited, took place from 20-22 June 1960. At this conference the Chinese delegation openly expressed its disagreement with the Soviet and most other delegations on peaceful coexistence and 'the non-inevitability of war'.¹⁸ Since the Soviet leadership seized the opportunity to openly criticise Chinese policies and

¹³ Letter from CPC CC to CPSU CC (top secret), 10 September 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3604, 30.

¹⁴ V. Mastny, 'Meeting of the PCC, Moscow, 4 February 1960, Editorial Note', PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=17885&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹⁵ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 163.

¹⁶ 'Vive le Leninisme, 1870-1960', Beijing, 1960, FIG APC, China, 1960, mf 0474, 1173.

¹⁷ Letter from CPC CC to CPSU CC (top secret), 10 September 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3604, 48. This is corroborated by V. M. Zubok, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis (1958-1962)*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 6 (Washington, 1993), 17: 'The Soviet embassy in Beijing reported that the Chinese "used the aggravation after the failure of the Paris summit" to oppose "for the first time directly and openly" the foreign policy of the CPSU.'

¹⁸ Intervention by the PCI, Bucharest, 25 June 1960, FIG APC, Bucharest Conference, 1960, mf 0474, 2535.

recover its authority, the conference turned into the first open confrontation between China and the Soviet Union.

At this stage, the Kremlin still seemed to have the upper-hand, since the North Korean, North Vietnamese and Albanian leaders were the only ones not to condemn the Chinese policies. The Albanian delegates were, however, careful not to support the Chinese position either, and approached both parties critically.¹⁹ The absence of their leader, Enver Hoxha, was, however, an unprecedented act of defiance vis-à-vis the Kremlin.²⁰ Despite the overwhelming support for the Soviet stance, the conference therefore did not bode well for the Kremlin: although the North Korean and North Vietnamese position could be explained in terms of its geographical proximity to China, the Albanian lack of support for the Soviet position implied not only that the communist bloc had ceased to be monolithic, but that the Soviet bloc lacked coherence, too.

ALBANIAN DEFIANCE

The Albanian stance at the Bucharest conference was particularly striking, since it was the only WP member that had not unequivocally rallied behind the Soviet Union in denouncing China. The Albanian leadership thus seemed to capitalise on its intensified relations with China since the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. The split within the communist movement threatened to turn into a split within the Warsaw Pact, too, in which the smallest Soviet ally played the largest role. The Albanian leadership was, nevertheless, still too divided at this stage to definitively side with China.²¹

Khrushchev nevertheless overlooked this nuance, and decided to cut economic aid for Albania and withdraw some of its specialists straight after the conference.²² This characteristically rash decision gave Hoxha's pro-Stalinist faction the upper-hand during inner-party struggles in the ensuing summer, in which the pro-Khrushchevite wing was decisively defeated.²³ Moreover, the party showed 'an ever increasing inclination (...) to the politics of the People's Republic of China', and those party-members who voiced criticism of the Chinese position, such as Lyri Belishova and

¹⁹ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 172.

²⁰ Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift* (Massachusetts, 1963), 41.

²¹ The Chinese ambassador to the SU Li Fenglin nevertheless considered the Bucharest Conference a key point in the Sino-Albanian relations, since '[t]he Workers' Party of Albania would get together with the CCP from the 1960 Bucharest Conference onwards, not only by embracing Beijing's point of view but also by associating itself actively in the campaign against the Soviet party.' X. Liu and V. Mastny (eds.), *China and Eastern Europe, 1960s-1080s. Proceedings of the International Symposium: Reviewing the History of Chinese-East European Relations from the 1960s to the 1980s. Beijing, 24-26 March 2004*, Zürcher Beiträge zur Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktforschung Nr. 72 (Zurich, 2004), <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=CAB359A3-9328-19CC-A1D2-8023E646B22C&lng=en&id=10435>, accessed 23 August 2013, 37.

²² Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 173, and Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift*, 46-47.

²³ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 202, and Lalaj, 'Albanien und der Warschauer Pakt', 36.

Koço Tashko, were purged.²⁴ The Chinese leadership particularly welcomed this move,²⁵ which the Soviet leaders strongly denounced.²⁶ At the same time, both China and Albania turned inwards. In both countries increasing radicalisation went hand in hand with severe travel restrictions, which hardly allowed foreign communists any scope for manoeuvre.²⁷

When all other Eastern European leaders also cut economic aid to Albania, the Albanian leadership was forced to turn to China for further economic aid. Thus Khrushchev had ironically undermined his own position by inadvertently weakening the pro-Khrushchevite faction and enabling the Sino-Albanian friendship. This friendship was mutually advantageous: Mao had gained a cheap and loyal ally,²⁸ and Albania had found such a distant protector, that it would not 'become a puppet of its protector but rather would increase its own degree of independence of maneuver in foreign and domestic affairs.'²⁹

Meanwhile, Khrushchev had committed the equally 'self-defeating blunder' of unilaterally withdrawing the approximately fourteen hundred Soviet specialists from China on 18 July, thus undermining the potential 'institutional and human leverage over the PRC', which the SU had built up in the course of ten years.³⁰ According to the Kremlin the Chinese mistrust, disrespect and hostility made it impossible for the Soviet specialists to continue their work.³¹ At the same time, the Albanian leadership attempted to 'mediate' between the two in a letter written to both parties at the end of August 1960, by emphasising the 'vital importance' of reaching an agreement and advising both parties 'to do everything to mend the differences of opinion' before the international Moscow Conference of communist countries in November 1960. They also used the letter to underline their independent stance, since 'the Albanian Workers Party has not joined the opinion of the majority of parties', which denoted an implicit farewell to democratic centralism.³²

It is unlikely that the Albanians expected any concrete results, but it is remarkable that the Albanians were the first to use the incipient Sino-Soviet

²⁴ 'Department of foreign policy and international relations. Information to com. Ulbricht', Berlin, 13 October 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3589, 154.

²⁵ Letter from Paul Wandel, GDR diplomat in Beijing, to Ulbricht, 11 September, 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3605, 79.

²⁶ Cf. letter from the CPSU CC to the CCP CC, 5 November 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3605, 200.

²⁷ Letter from Beijing from an envoy of the PCI to Giuliano Pajetta, 25 August 1960, FIG APC, China, 1960, mf 0474, 0973, and 'Note on Albania by Franco Portone', 9 October 1961, FIG APC, Albania, 1961, 0483, 2349.

²⁸ Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift*, 175.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁰ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 176.

³¹ See also 'Strictly confidential letter from Khrushchev to SED CC about withdrawal of Soviet specialists from China', 18 July 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3605, 21-24, and 'Strictly confidential memorandum from Soviet embassy in China to Chinese ministry of foreign affairs', *ibid.*, 18 July 1960, 28-33.

³² Letter from AWP CC to CPSU CC and CCP CC, 27 August 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3589, 129-137.

estrangement in order to strengthen their own position and emphasise their autonomy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. At the same time, the Albanian leadership sent a letter to the Kremlin on 2 August in which they ‘accused Soviet diplomats in Albania for “interfering in the internal affairs of the AWP [Albanian Workers Party]”’, since they had talked to Albanian party members about the future of the AWP, thus underlining their autonomy yet again.³³ Professing to mediate, the Albanian leaders seemed primarily interested in precipitating the Sino-Soviet split, since it would force the Kremlin to take smaller allies more seriously, which would provide them with greater scope for manoeuvre.

A few days before the Moscow conference the Soviet and Albanian leaders met in a vain attempt to mend matters. The ‘Yugoslav Question’, the ouster of Lyri Belishova, and a dispute about the naval base in the Albanian town Vlorë, which was manned with Soviet submarines, took centre stage.³⁴ Hoxha’s complaint about a quarrel between Soviet and Albanian officers, which had started after the Bucharest conference, led Khrushchev to suggest removing the base with Albanian approval, which Hoxha considered a threat.³⁵ Whereas Khrushchev tried to prove that he had Albanian interests at heart, by emphasising his insistence on including Albania in the WP in 1955, Hoxha kept hammering on the Soviet ‘threat’ of removing the naval base, even repeating Mehmet Shehu’s suggestion several times ‘to convene a meeting of the Warsaw Pact’.³⁶ Rather than reducing the tension before the Moscow meeting, the Albanian leadership had become the first NSWP member to suggest the convention of a PCC meeting, thus using the Warsaw Pact as a new arena for Soviet-Albanian disagreements. Despite Khrushchev’s insistence to the contrary, the Albanian membership of the WP thus seemed to turn into a liability.

Some half-hearted attempts to patch up the differences during the Moscow Conference in November 1960 had little effect, and the Albanian leadership unambiguously sided with the Chinese against the Soviet Union from the Moscow Conference onwards. It was especially ‘the attitude of the Soviet comrades (...) concerning the Yugoslav question’ that was considered ‘not only impossible, but also opportunistic and dangerous’, while Khrushchev was branded a ‘Revisionist’.³⁷ The Polish leader Gomulka nevertheless introduced the Warsaw Pact into the polemics, by

³³ CPSU note to the delegations of the communist parties at the Moscow Conference, 8 December 1960, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 76/1960, 73.

³⁴ Minutes of a conversation between a delegation of the CPSU CC and the AWP CC, 12 November 1960. ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 76/1960, 118-134. Cf. Lalaj (ed.), ‘Albania is not Cuba’, 190-195, for the strikingly similar Albanian version of the minutes.

³⁵ Minutes of a conversation between a delegation of the CPSU CC and the AWP CC, 12 November 1960. ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 76/1960, 132-133.

³⁶ Minutes of a conversation between a delegation of the CPSU CC and the AWP CC, 12 November 1960. ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 76, 131-133. Cf. Lalaj (ed.), ‘Albania is not Cuba’, 194.

³⁷ GDR Embassy in Budapest, 30 November 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3589, 156-158. Cf. Minutes of a conversation between a delegation of the CPSU CC and the AWP CC, 12 November 1960, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 76/1960, 119: ‘The divergences were in the Yugoslav question’, which caused the deterioration of relations since the Bucharest conference.

arguing that ‘this question should be discussed in the framework of the Warsaw Pact’.³⁸ Hoxha in turn filed an official complaint against the Soviet leadership and other ‘fraternal parties’, such as the Polish one, for using ‘an incorrect and uncomradely jargon vis-à-vis the Albanian Workers Party’.³⁹ At the same time he shouted at Khrushchev throughout the conference and rebuked him for the withdrawal of economic aid, while exclaiming that ‘‘while the rats could eat in the Soviet Union, the Albanian people were starving to death, because the leadership of the Albanian Labour Party had not bent to the will of the Soviet leadership.’’⁴⁰

Despite the profound disagreements the Moscow Conference still resulted in a common declaration, which repeatedly stressed the fact that all communist parties were ‘sovereign’, and ‘independent’, and had ‘equal rights’.⁴¹ Although this so called ‘Moscow Declaration’ primarily reflected an attempt to present a united front to the non-communist world, its contents would come to haunt the Kremlin in the future. According to the Italian Communist Party, which strongly rebuked the Chinese stance, the document represented a severely diluted compromise after the presentation of 350 amendments, and as such ‘showed the weakness of the communist movement’.⁴² Meanwhile, Hoxha would explore the scope for manoeuvre, which the Sino-Soviet tensions had created, to the full.

THE ALBANIAN FOURTH PARTY CONGRESS

The period after the Moscow Conference marked a new course in Albanian foreign policy, which heralded a further deterioration in Soviet-Albanian relations. While Hoxha’s personality cult was flourishing, Khrushchev’s name had almost ‘disappeared’ from the Albanian press, ‘the struggle against revisionism in Belgrade’ was intensified, and any encounter with ‘Soviet comrades’ was avoided.⁴³ At the same time, the Albanian leaders were actively engaging in talks with the Chinese leader Zhou Enlai in order to define their position vis-à-vis the ‘revisionist’ Khrushchev. Zhou Enlai at this stage still emphasised that Albania was a member of the Warsaw Pact, and that it therefore would be ‘inappropriate for us to interfere in this [military aid] matter’, and even suggested to ‘mediate’ between Albania and the Soviet Union ‘so that the

³⁸ Minutes of the PCI leadership, 9 December 1960, FIG APC, Leadership, 1960, mf 024, 876.

³⁹ Declaration of the Albanian Workers Party at the Moscow Conference of communist and workers parties, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 76/1960, 62.

⁴⁰ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 189.

⁴¹ ‘DECLARATION of the conference of representatives of communist and workers parties’, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 81/1960, 125, 126, 135, 156.

⁴² Minutes of the PCI leadership, 9 December 1960, FIG APC, Leadership, 1960, mf 024, 880-881.

⁴³ Extract from the memorandum by GDR diplomat, König, December 1960/January 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV/2/20/99, 179-182.

relations with Albania improve and that they help you on military matters'.⁴⁴ Although the Chinese leadership still trod its ground carefully vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, since the Sino-Soviet estrangement was by no means irreversible, the Albanians seemed quite ready to force a break with the Kremlin.

The recently reshuffled Albanian leadership used its Fourth Party Conference, which began on 13 February 1961 and to which all communist parties had been invited, to define a new course for Albania within the communist movement.⁴⁵ Emboldened by the Moscow Conference, the Albanian party leaders even claimed that the Albanians and the Chinese had 'determined and safeguarded the Marxist-Leninist contents of the declaration' at the Moscow conference, while heralding Enver Hoxha as the 'defender and courageous saviour of the purity of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine', and the Albanian Workers Party as 'vanguard of the international communist movement'.⁴⁶ Thus the Albanian leadership did not only explicitly associate itself with Stalin, who had said the same about the CPSU and the Soviet people, but also compared Albania to the Soviet Union, 'when the USSR was still the only socialist country'.⁴⁷ By placing themselves in the vanguard, the Albanians were implicitly diminishing the importance of the SU itself, which they accused of 'threatening' the 'independence and sovereignty of Albania', while emphasising their own sovereignty.⁴⁸ Moreover, by defining themselves as the vanguard of communism, the Albanian leaders seemed to place themselves above their WP allies. Although the Albanian Party Conference in February 1961 has been ignored in historiography, it seemed a turning-point in Albania's foreign policy, with far-reaching consequences for the dynamics in the WP.

The Albanian leadership also emphasised Albania's importance by stressing that 'Albania is situated in a very important strategic location vis-à-vis the imperialist camp', and 'therefore represented an important facet of the fight against imperialist threats in the Mediterranean'.⁴⁹ Hoxha immediately used this as leverage over his comrades, by announcing a foiled invasion by Yugoslavia, Greece and the American Sixth Fleet – a somewhat curious coalition of Albania's potential enemies – to justify preparations for a potential war with Yugoslavia and to take control over Soviet warships in the Warsaw Pact naval base at Vlorë,⁵⁰ where they refused to raise the

⁴⁴ 'Memorandum of Conversation with Comrade Zhou Enlai', Beijing 18 January 1961, in Lalaj (ed.), 'Albania is not Cuba', 196, 199.

⁴⁵ Letter from Hoxha to RWP CC, 22 December 1960, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 7/1961, 43.

⁴⁶ 'Report of the RWP delegation which participated in the IVth Congress of the Albanian Workers Party', February 1961, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 81/1960, 1.

⁴⁷ Letter from CPSU CC to AWP CC, 21 August 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3592, 2-29. See for the same quote 'Report of the RWP delegation which participated in the IVth Congress of the Albanian Workers Party', February 1961, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 81/1960, 1-15.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴⁹ Information on the Albanian Party Conference, 26 February 1961, FIG APC, Albania, 1961, mf 0483, 2333.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 3. See also the report by König, 17 April 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV/2/20/99, 190.

Soviet flag any longer.⁵¹ Most other delegations did not take this ‘comic conspiracy’ very seriously, and assumed that the Albanian leadership intended to create a ‘psychosis of war’ in order to consolidate its own power, as Eastern and Western European reports of the conference show alike.⁵² Both the Romanian and the East German leadership denounced the Albanian attitude in equally strong terms, while underlining that ‘in front of the AWP a band of provocateurs, nationalists and adventurists’ has ‘installed itself’, which has ‘nothing in common with the Moscow Declaration’, and is ‘contrary to the line of the immense majority of communist parties’. All Eastern European delegations were carefully kept apart, while only allowed to move under surveillance of an Albanian party member, so that they could not close ranks against Albania.⁵³

Moreover, this conference testifies to the remarkable fact that the Soviet-Albanian split preceded the Sino-Soviet split: even though the foreign delegations, including – after some hesitation – the Chinese, applauded with great zeal for the Soviet speech, the Chinese one was generally appreciated, too, whereas the Albanian one was greeted with little enthusiasm.⁵⁴ The Soviet-Albanian split accordingly turned the Warsaw Pact inside out, since its smallest ally had become more militant than its biggest rival.

Meanwhile, the Albanian party conference offered a further opportunity for talks between the Albanian leadership and the Chinese delegates, who repeated their offer ‘to mediate with the Soviets’. The Albanian leaders emphasised that they had not only ‘lost all hope in N. S. Khrushchev’, but also in ‘W. Gomulka’, and criticised the existence of ‘the revisionist groups in the leaderships of the European socialist states’, thus discrediting most WP leaders, too. Moreover, Hoxha used the alleged Soviet ‘secret’ attempt ‘to liquidate Albania’ by withdrawing the fleet from Vlërë as leverage over China.⁵⁵ The message was clear: if China did not support Albania, it would lose its most loyal ally. Interestingly enough, this was exactly the way Ulbricht, whom the Albanians accused of ‘ideological war’ with Albania, attempted to pressurise Khrushchev into unflinchingly supporting the GDR, as we shall see in the next chapter.

⁵¹ Letter from CPSU CC to Ulbricht, 28 March 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3590, 29-46.

⁵² Cf. Report by König, 17 April 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV/2/20/99; ‘Report of the RWP delegation which participated in the IVth Congress of the Albanian Workers Party’, February 1961, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 81/1960; Information on the Albanian Party Conference, 26 February 1961, FIG APC, Albania, 1961, mf 0483, 2331-2344.

⁵³ ‘Report of the RWP delegation which participated in the IVth Congress of the Albanian Workers Party’, February 1961, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 81/1960, 3, 14-15.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 10. Cf. Information on the Albanian Party Conference, 26 February 1961, FIG APC, Albania, 1961, mf 0483, 2331-2344.

⁵⁵ ‘Talks with Chinese delegation’, 25 February 1961, in Lalaj (ed.), ‘Albania is Not Cuba’, 205-206, 210.

THE CONFRONTATION OF DAVID AND GOLIATH

The Albanian Party Conference also heralded a further deterioration of the diplomatic relations between Albania and the other WP countries. The Soviet diplomats considered the situation ‘perhaps still more difficult (...) than in the hostile capitalist countries’, and the Albanian-Polish relations had disintegrated to such an extent that the Polish leaders decided to withdraw their ambassador from Tirana in March 1961, thus creating a precedent for other NSWP members. Moreover, the specialists and advisers from virtually all WP countries were treated so badly that they were forced to withdraw, while more Chinese specialists were expected in Albania.⁵⁶ At the same time the Albanian leadership used the alleged foiled invasion by Yugoslavia, Greece and the American Sixth Fleet to take control of dozens of Soviet warships in the Warsaw Pact naval base at Vlorë, thus placing the Soviet officers effectively under Albanian command. Having declared themselves ‘the vanguard of the communist movement’ the Albanian leaders felt entitled to turn Soviet-Albanian relations fully upside down.

Since the communist movement was already on the verge of collapsing through its disunity, only the Warsaw Pact remained as a platform for the debates, which had been held in the communist movement. Although it was not primarily a communist institution, the WP was the only forum where the Kremlin could attempt to foster a united front. With the WP allies united against Albania, the WP became the arena for the Soviet-Albanian split. The Kremlin accordingly convened the Political Consultative Committee on 28-29 March 1961 in Moscow to resolve the issue, thus conceding to the suggestion of the Albanian prime minister Mehmet Shehu in November 1960. The fact that the PCC was convened under pressure from an NSWP member, with an internal WP matter rather than the imperialist enemy dominating its agenda, was unprecedented. The Albanian leadership further attempted to determine the dynamics of the meeting by sending a sixteen page invective to all WP members, in which Shehu emphasised ‘that the Albanian side is not at fault,’ but blamed the Soviet officers in turn for the ‘condescending and scornful attitude toward the Albanian officers and all the Albanian personnel’. He even quoted a Soviet naval officer, who said that “[y]our Albanian heads should be quashed with a hammer since you don’t have any material or technical resources: we give you everything – from work clothes to submarines, and still you don’t obey us.”⁵⁷

According to Shehu it was, however, the Soviet withdrawal of material and technical support which was the ‘real cause’ of ‘[t]he grave situation at Vlorë naval base’, combined with the fact that ‘some Soviet officers – and this is especially

⁵⁶ ‘Further information about the attitude of the Albanian comrades after the fourth Party Conference’, Tirana, 24 March 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY30/3590, 49-53.

⁵⁷ ‘The Soviet-Albanian Dispute: Albanian Memorandum on Incidents at Vlorë Naval Base’, 22 March 1961, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17891&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 Aug. 2013.

important – maintain contacts with people who were discharged from service or expelled from the Albanian Labour [= Workers'] Party'.⁵⁸ The crux of the issue was, accordingly, not only the Soviet withdrawal of aid to Albania in the wake of the Bucharest conference, but also the Soviet contacts with the pro-Khrushchevite communists who had been purged by Hoxha. Despite its defiance on the surface, the Albanian leadership felt profoundly undermined by the Soviet behaviour. In fact, the Sino-Soviet estrangement seems to lie at the heart of the matter, since it is the Albanian stance at the Bucharest party conference which triggered both Khrushchev's withdrawal of Soviet aid from Albania, and Hoxha's purges.

At the same time the memorandum reveals a tension between Albania's security interests on the one hand, and its leaders' zeal for autonomy on the other. By arguing that the Soviet 'dangerous and arduous path' contradicted the spirit of the Warsaw Treaty itself, the WP was used to blackmail the Soviet leadership into compliance. On the other hand the importance of Vlorë naval base, as 'the only military base of the socialist camp in the Mediterranean', and of Albania's membership of the WP, as 'the only socialist country on the Mediterranean' was continuously underlined, while emphasising Albania's allegiance to the Warsaw Pact. The depiction of Albania as a loyal ally seemed to serve two purposes: in the first place it preventively shifted the blame for the Soviet-Albanian split to the Soviet Union, thus turning the Soviet Union's 'arduous path' into a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁵⁹ And in the second place it indicated that Albania wanted to explore its room for manoeuvre *within* the confines of the alliance. Its allegiance to China was not yet irreversible or definitive.

The Soviet report on the incidents at Vlorë nevertheless sheds a different light on the Albanian 'loyalty'. It cited numerous examples of the 'refusal of members of the Albanian staff to follow Soviet orders', as well as listing a long sequence of defiant acts, including Albanian exhortations to 'go back to the Soviet Union' and Albanian threats to buy, sell and hang their Soviet comrades.⁶⁰ The insolence of the Albanian sailors mirrored the defiance of their leaders, who had invited 'the entire Diplomatic Corps and the foreign correspondents' at the Albanian delegates' 'departure to Moscow' to attend the PCC meeting.⁶¹ The Albanian leadership obviously trusted that the PCC meeting would turn into an Albanian triumph.

The Albanian attitude could, however, count on little support at the PCC meeting. The other NSWP members rallied behind the position of the Soviet leadership, which emphasised the Albanian 'separatist line in foreign policy' and 'hostile propaganda' since the Moscow conference in a letter to their allies on the first day of the PCC meeting. The alleged invasion at the third Albanian party conference was considered a 'clumsy statement' in order to 'to create the impression among the

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Report by König, 17 April 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV/2/20/99, 190.

Albanian nation that Albania has been allegedly threatened with a direct military attack', so that the ensuing 'war panic' would serve to consolidate the power of the Albanian leadership.⁶² This analysis fully corresponds with the Romanian and East German reports after the Albanian party conference, which indicates that most NSWP members and the Kremlin were genuinely on the same line concerning the Albanian question.

Meanwhile, the fact that none of the Warsaw Pact allies was informed of the allegedly imminent invasion entailed a violation of article 3 of the Warsaw Treaty, according to which the allies should notify one another of potential threats to their security. This was particularly painful since the WP was the most stable 'guarantee of the territorial integrity and the safe-guarding of national interests' that Albania had ever had.⁶³ The Albanian use of the Warsaw Treaty as leverage thus backfired. The Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov accordingly considered the 'acts of the Albanian leadership (...) incompatible with (...) the Warsaw Treaty,'⁶⁴ and spontaneously issued a separate statement in which he argued that 'given the current situation in Albania, it might be more reasonable to move this Warsaw Treaty naval base.'⁶⁵ The Soviet loss of control over the WP naval base at Vlorë formed a particular threat to Zhivkov, since Albania and Bulgaria were the only WP countries, which shared a border with Greece, which was a member of NATO. Any more unpredictable plots or actions from the Albanian leadership could accordingly also put Bulgarian security at risk.

The Soviet stake in Albania was, therefore, of particular importance to Zhivkov, who strongly denounced the recent anti-Khrushchevite purges within the AWP, and the creation of 'an unbearable environment of persecution against the honest Albanian communists and friends of the Soviet Union'.⁶⁶ According to Zhivkov this lay at the heart of the Soviet-Albanian dispute. The other WP members shared Zhivkov's concern about the Albanian party, which consisted of a rare blend of Westernised intellectuals, educated in America, and extreme nationalists, with rather doubtful proletarian credentials, despite their advocacy of *true* Marxism-Leninism.⁶⁷ The Romanian members had even issued a report on its 'obviously anti-Marxist-anti-

⁶² 'Central Committee of the CPSU to the First Secretary of the PUWP (Władysław Gomułka)', 28 March 1961, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17893&navinfo=14465>, accessed 20 September 2013.

⁶³ Letter from CPSU CC to Ulbricht, 28 March 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3590, 29-46.

⁶⁴ 'Speech by the Bulgarian First Secretary (Todor Zhivkov)', 29 March 1961, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17894&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

⁶⁵ 'Statement by the Bulgarian First Secretary (Todor Zhivkov) on Albania', 29 March 1961, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17889&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Cf. Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift*, 13.

Leninist conception',⁶⁸ and the Romanian leader Gheorghiu-Dej strongly denounced the 'negative position' of the Albanian leadership, 'which contradicted the decisions of the Moscow conference of 1960'.⁶⁹ The NSWP members were, accordingly, quick to create a united front *against* Albania, since the Albanian course of action also affected the security interests of other WP leaders.

Meanwhile, Khrushchev attempted to prevent a further deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations by emphasising the 'unity of the socialist camp' in his speech, while stressing the importance of the friendship treaty with China, as well as promising to consult with the Asian observers 'on the most important foreign policy issues'.⁷⁰ Khrushchev was, however, fighting a lost cause. In protest of the Soviet treatment of Albania the Chinese had only sent their ambassador, instead of a delegation to the PCC meeting, who refused to read out a speech.⁷¹ The Soviet-Albanian split thus precipitated the Sino-Soviet split, with the incipient break between Albania and the Warsaw Pact mirroring the Sino-Soviet dispute.

The other WP leaders denounced the Albanian course of action in a top secret resolution, by stating that 'the Political Consultative Committee notes with regret that Albania has recently taken some steps that do not correspond to the principles and provisions of the Warsaw Treaty'.⁷² According to the resolution the Soviet naval forces would be withdrawn from Albania, if the Albanian naval officers did not submit to the Supreme (= Soviet) Command of the Warsaw Pact's armed forces. Although this could be seen as an attempt 'to undermine Albania's territorial sovereignty',⁷³ since it would leave Albania exposed to a potential Yugoslav attack, it was exactly because the other WP members regarded the Albanian course of action as a potential threat to *their* security that they so easily rallied behind the Kremlin. The WP was, accordingly, becoming more than a mere transmission belt of Soviet interests, since the NSWP interests simply coincided with the Soviet ones on the Albanian question. Some NSWP members, such as Todor Zhivkov, had moved even faster than the Soviet leadership in suggesting the removal of the naval base at Vlorë.

The unprecedented split within the Warsaw Pact was all the more remarkable since it occurred over an internal WP matter. Although the Albanian leadership had deliberately tried to assert its independence *within* the confines of the Warsaw Pact, it had become the victim of its own attempt to play the Soviet and NSWP leaders off

⁶⁸ 'Some problems concerning the construction of the AWP', ANIC, RWP, C, 81/1961, 16. In this report the background of everyone in the party-top is traced, with some striking findings about the capitalist, Muslim, and Western origins of the party leaders.

⁶⁹ 'Gheorgiu Dej's speech at the convention of the Warsaw Pact's Political Consultative Committee meeting', ANIC, RWP, IR, 1/1961, 21.

⁷⁰ Speech by First Secretary of the CC of the CPSU, Nikita Khrushchev, 29 March 1961, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17897&navinfo=14465>, accessed 4 December 2013.

⁷¹ Lalaj (ed.), 'Albania is Not Cuba', 223.

⁷² 'Resolution of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact', 14 April 1961, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 1/1961, 3-4.

⁷³ Lalaj, 'Albanien und der Warschauer Pakt', 37.

against one another. The other NSWP leaders were not at all enchanted by the Albanian interpretation of a treaty that applied to all of them, and regarded Albanian insolence as a greater risk to their security than Soviet hegemony. The Albanian defiance was conveniently ignored in the ensuing communiqué, so that the WP still seemed a static monolith to the outside world. Below the surface it was, however, turning into something quite different.

The Albanian delegates did, however, prefer to forget about the denouement of the PCC meeting, too, and kept their return secret, in sharp contrast to their departure.⁷⁴ The Albanian attempt to use the Warsaw Treaty as an instrument to question Soviet hegemony was, however, not without repercussions in the long term: the Albanian leadership had set a precedent in exploring the room for manoeuvre within the Warsaw Pact. Hoxha had caused a crack in the unity of the Warsaw Pact, which facilitated a new kind of relations between the Kremlin and its NSWP comrades.

ALBANIAN EMANCIPATION AND WP MULTILATERALISATION

The PCC meeting was followed by a rapid exacerbation of Soviet-Albanian relations. Although the Albanian leadership had managed to defy the Soviet leadership, it had not done so with complete impunity: the Kremlin withdrew all remaining Soviet specialists from Albania and cancelled the economic aid in the following April. The Soviet response once again opened a window of opportunity for the Chinese leaders, who initiated a trade agreement with Albania. The Albanians meanwhile put their defiance of the Soviet Union into practice and openly professed their de-Stalinisation in reverse by replacing all Khrushchev's pictures on public buildings by ones of Stalin and by allegedly putting all Soviet diplomats and officials under police surveillance.⁷⁵

Meanwhile, the Warsaw Pact had, by its mere existence, provided the Albanian leadership with a platform for its critique of Soviet hegemony. It had also raised the status of Albania in the eyes of their Chinese 'allies', and the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping was impressed 'how small Albania could be the perpetrator against the big Soviet Union'.⁷⁶ It seems plausible that the Albanian leadership would not have dared to call the Soviet Union's bluff without an alternative of potential protection.⁷⁷ The link to China was, indeed, 'a significant support for the small Balkan state',⁷⁸ and the Sino-Soviet split thus enabled the Albanian leadership to take such a gamble. Meanwhile, Khrushchev's hasty reaction inadvertently facilitated the Sino-Albanian

⁷⁴ Report by König, 17 April 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV/2/20/99, 190.

⁷⁵ Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift*, 81.

⁷⁶ 'Memorandum of Conversation, Comrade Adyl Kellezi with Comrade Zhou Enlai', 20 April 1961, in Lalaj, 'Albania is Not Cuba', 223.

⁷⁷ See Zagoria, *The Sino-Soviet Conflict*, 370.

⁷⁸ Lalaj, 'Albanien und der Warschauer Pakt', 40.

friendship, since 'it was the Soviet withdrawal from Vlorë that opened the door to China'.⁷⁹

Moreover, it was only *after* their failed attempt to gain support against the SU *within* the WP that the Sino-Albanian relations drastically intensified: the Albanian contacts with China tripled in the period directly *after* the PCC meeting. The financial support and the number of Chinese specialists in Albania increased in particular.⁸⁰ It seemed indeed as though the Albanians had forced a break with the Warsaw Pact in order to step up the Chinese support to Albania. The Soviet suspicion that the Albanian leadership was consciously trying to exacerbate 'relations with the Soviet Union and with the other socialist members of the Warsaw Pact' therefore seems to ring true.⁸¹

The 'Albanian problem', as it soon came to be called, sparked a voluminous correspondence that the Albanian leadership initiated by complaining about the WP decision to withdraw the Soviet fleet from Vlorë. The Albanian leaders clearly did not want to take responsibility for dispensing with the WP, and blamed their WP allies for assuming 'that Albania had practically placed itself outside the Warsaw Pact through its politics'.⁸² The Albanian prime minister Mehmet Shehu complained that 'this attitude (...) represents an impermissible interference in our internal affairs', and cleverly copied the rhetoric of the Moscow Declaration concerning 'independence, equality, and non-interference', while applying it to the relations within Warsaw Pact.⁸³ However much the WP leaders disagreed with Shehu's complaints, he had enabled them to formulate their stance in the Albanian problem in response, while defining their position within the WP along the way.

The Albanian leaders had antagonised their allies by suggesting that the sanction concerning Vlorë was a 'unilateral decision of the Soviet Union', which was refuted by all NSWP leaders, and regarded as 'an insult' by the Romanian leadership, who used it to assert their 'independence'.⁸⁴ By emphasising that the sanction was *not* a Soviet decision, but a WP decision, the NSWP leaders made a clear distinction between the WP and the SU, which tends to be overlooked within historiography.⁸⁵ The Albanian attempt to sow discord was strongly rebuked by the Bulgarian leadership in particular,

⁷⁹ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 205.

⁸⁰ Relations between Albania and China in 1960 and 1961, Berlin 6 January 1962, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV/2/20/99, 235-245.

⁸¹ Letter from A. Kossygin to the Albanian government, 26 April 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3590, 100.

⁸² Letter from Mehmet Shehu to WP leaders/observers, April 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3590, 55-62. The Albanians were thus not as successful in defying the Kremlin as is often assumed. See e.g. Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift*, 176, for a more upbeat account.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Letter from Maurer to the Albanian government, Bucharest, 21 June 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3591, 221.

⁸⁵ Cf. the more conventional claim from the Albanian historian Ana Lalaj, in 'Albanien und der Warschauer Pakt', 29: 'Die Beziehungen zwischen Albanien und dem Warschauer Pakt lassen sich im Grunde auf die Beziehungen zwischen Albanien und der Sowjetunion reduzieren.'

and had the opposite effect: the NSWP members spontaneously closed ranks in the face of Albanian dissent.⁸⁶

It may be tempting to attribute the NSWP response to Soviet pressure instead, but the empirical evidence points in another direction. Soviet annoyance at the fact that the Hungarians were the first to reply to the Albanian letter,⁸⁷ and internal memoranda between party leaders and their ministers about whether to reply to the Albanian letters or not suggest that the Soviet leadership had no control over the correspondence.⁸⁸ On the contrary: the correspondence inadvertently served to liberate the NSWP members from potential Soviet pressure.

The correspondence about the Albanian problem was the ideal vehicle for the NSWP members to formulate their own stance within the WP, and to assert their autonomy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Since it was an issue that directly concerned the alliance and the decision-making within it, the NSWP leaders felt at liberty to define the scope for manoeuvre within a pact that, at least in theory, belonged to them as much as the SU. This theory now acquired a force of its own. By denying the Albanian charge of Soviet pressure, the NSWP members did not do the Kremlin an unambiguous favour, since they implicitly also denied Soviet hegemony. This correspondence inadvertently served to multilateralise the alliance, since there was no scope for Soviet unilateralism in a dynamics that the Soviet leaders failed to control. The Albanian leadership had thus contributed to the emancipation of the other NSWP leaders, instead of emancipating themselves.

Meanwhile, the Albanian leadership continued defying the Kremlin in particular, by refusing to cooperate with the Soviet withdrawal from Vlore, which it called 'a dark moment in the annals of the organisation of the Warsaw Treaty', and blaming the Kremlin's unilateral withdrawal of Soviet specialists for the deterioration of relations between the two countries.⁸⁹ The Albanian leadership seemed remarkably keen to limit the dispute to a bilateral one, after it had failed to gain multilateral support, while also creating a situation for which it could retrospectively blame the Kremlin: although several diplomatic reports from other communist countries testify to the fact that the Soviet specialists were treated so badly that the Soviet leadership was forced to withdraw them, the Albanian leadership now used this against the Soviet

⁸⁶ Letter from Anton Iugov to the Albanian government, Sofia, 17 May 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3590, 176-181.

⁸⁷ Letter from Neumann to König, Berlin, 23 May 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3590, 172-173, and Ferenc Münnich to the Albanian government, Budapest, 18 April 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3590, 82-84.

⁸⁸ E.g. Letter from König to Neumann, Berlin, 05 May 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3590, 164, and letter from Florin to Ulbricht, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3592, 52.

⁸⁹ Letter from Hoxha/Shehu to CPSU CC and government, Tirana, 06/07/1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3591, 41.

Union.⁹⁰ By using the WP as a platform for their dispute, the Albanian leaders had, however, contributed to its multilateralisation.

ALBANIAN EXCLUSION

Hoxha continued his outright humiliation of the Warsaw Pact by refusing to turn up at the meeting of WP first secretaries, which was convened from 3-5 August 1961 in Moscow for the endorsement of the closure of Berlin's internal borders – a euphemism for the construction of the Berlin Wall. Even the correspondence had been delegated to a junior secretary, Hysni Kapo, who explained that Hoxha could not participate 'due to health-related reasons', but that the Albanian leadership would like to have materials to prepare the meeting.⁹¹

This time the Albanian leadership had gone too far in exploring the scope for manoeuvre: at the actual meeting all other first secretaries supported Ulbricht's proposal to exclude the Albanian delegation, since it had only sent a junior secretary, and they were asked to leave.⁹² The Albanian defiance was, however, such, that the Albanian delegation displayed 'not the slightest intention to leave' and even stayed at the buffet 'in order to continue the work against the general will'.⁹³ The meeting accordingly had to be cancelled for the rest of the day, which still failed to deter the Albanians, who tried to enter the Kremlin the day after, but were refused entry by the security guards. The fact that the Albanian leadership had already bought a return ticket scheduled for return on 4 August – one day before the end of the meeting – indicates that the sabotage of the meeting was premeditated.⁹⁴ The Albanians had thus forced their allies to postpone the decision-making on the Berlin wall for an entire day.

Meanwhile, the Warsaw Pact reaction to the Albanian behaviour further exacerbated the Sino-Soviet differences, since the Chinese observer, Liu Siao, who contrary to conventional wisdom did speak at the conference,⁹⁵ 'insisted upon asking the annulment of the adopted decision, using the argument that each party has the right to send as its representative whomever it considers necessary and no fraternal

⁹⁰ E.g. 'Note on Albania by Franco Portone', 9 October 1961, FIG APC, Albania, 1961, 0483, 2349-2352.

⁹¹ Letter from Hysni Kapo to Walter Ulbricht, Tirana, 22 July 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3591, 172.

⁹² 'Statement from Ulbricht about Albanian behaviour', SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3478, 11-14. See also ANIC, RWP CC, C, 2/1961, 220-225 for the minutes of this session, particularly 222-223 for Ulbricht's proposal.

⁹³ Minutes of the meeting of WP party leaders, 3 August 1961, ANIC, RWP CC, C 2/1961, 223.

⁹⁴ Minutes of the meeting from 3-5 August 1961, top secret, *Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes* (PAA), Berlin, *Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der DDR* (MfAA), G-A 474, 21.

⁹⁵ Cf. Zubok, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis*, 27: 'The Chinese ambassador sat at the meeting without uttering a word.'

party has the right to remove another party.⁹⁶ Although none of the other participants supported the Chinese proposal for a separate declaration in protest against the Albanian exclusion, both the Albanian exclusion and the Chinese protest indicate that the differences from the Moscow conference had spilled over into the Warsaw Pact, and began to challenge Soviet control over the WP's moves.

The fact that one NSWP member could successfully propose to exclude another NSWP member from a WP meeting did, indeed, imply the end of Soviet domination. The reason for the Albanian exclusion was accordingly not its previous defiance of the Soviet Union, but its deliberate scorn of the WP's unwritten rules. The Albanian delegation made a virtue out of necessity by keeping both the meeting and the WP declaration about the closing of the inner-Berlin borders secret, producing a separate declaration about the German Question instead,⁹⁷ which illustrated both the Albanian 'Sonderkurs', and its 'self-isolation'.⁹⁸

Ulbricht was particularly grieved about the Albanian obstruction during the meeting he had convened, since the Albanian dissidence seemed to overshadow the German Question. His proposal to exclude the Albanian delegation nevertheless represented his first successful initiative within the alliance. Since Hoxha was well aware of the fact that he had been outwitted by an NSWP member,⁹⁹ he complained to the leaderships of *all* WP countries and the observers a month later that '[t]he organisers of this unprecedented measure' had 'split the unity of the Warsaw Treaty and of the socialist camp'.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, the Albanian leadership had succeeded once more in stretching its room for manoeuvre so far that it had provoked new sanctions, which it could use to discredit the WP. The Albanian attempt to undermine Soviet hegemony had, nevertheless, failed, since Ulbricht had outdone Khrushchev in his zeal to denounce Albania.

The Albanian self-exclusion went so far that the Albanian leadership did not attend the 22nd Congress of the Soviet Communist Party from 17-31 October 1961 at all, thus setting a trend, which the Chinese leadership would soon follow. The Albanian absence and Khrushchev's opening speech, in which he publicly denounced the Albanians, not only confirmed the Soviet-Albanian split,¹⁰¹ but also the Sino-Soviet one, since Mao had felt indirectly attacked by Khrushchev's pronounced criticism of Albania. Mao, too, blamed Khrushchev for dividing the socialist camp, and ostensibly

⁹⁶ Minutes of the meeting of WP party leaders, 3 August 1961, ANIC, RWP CC, C 2/1961, 224.

⁹⁷ 'Estimate of the attitude of the Albanian People's Republic on the conclusion of a German peace treaty', Berlin, 3 October 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IV/2/20/99, 227-229.

⁹⁸ Letter from CPSU CC to AWP CC, 21 August 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3592, 16.

⁹⁹ 'Letter from the Albanian ministry of foreign affairs to the East German embassy in Tirana about the unilateral East German decision to withdraw the diplomats', Tirana, 26 December 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY30/3592, 153: 'Wie es scheint, hat die Führung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik die Rolle auf sich genommen, mit jedem Mittel den Ausschluss der Volksrepublik Albanien aus dem Warschauer Vertrag zu provozieren.'

¹⁰⁰ Letter from Hoxha to CPSU CC, 06 September 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3592, 82.

¹⁰¹ Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift*, 88

left Moscow halfway through the conference in protest. Since all Asian leaders, apart from the Mongolian leader, Yumjaagin Tsendenbal, also refused to denounce Albania, the communist movement suddenly seemed to have split in two, with the Asian leaders and Albania on one side, and the other WP leaders and Mongolia on the other.

In the face of the disintegration of the communist movement the other WP leaders united again, and on the last day of the congress they used the issue of representation to question the status of the East Asian observer states in the Warsaw Pact – China, North Korea, Mongolia and North Vietnam – by notifying them that in their case, too, only first secretaries should attend the PCC meetings. Although the North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Min and Tsendenbal seemed perfectly happy with this requirement, Mao considered the issue of representation a tacit move to exclude China from WP deliberations, and decided to sever all institutional ties with the WP in response.¹⁰² His appeal to ‘independence, equality, and non-interference’, and his argument that the level of representation was not mentioned within the Warsaw Treaty echoed both the Albanian arguments and the ‘Moscow Declaration’.¹⁰³

The Chinese refusal to participate turned the Warsaw Pact from an alliance, in which members from the entire communist bloc were represented – albeit only as observers in the case of the Asian countries – into an Eastern European alliance, which is a subtle, but important shift in the nature of the Warsaw Pact: its reach had now shrunk considerably. On the other hand, the Sino-Soviet estrangement might have increased the WP’s importance as a platform for consultations and deliberations, since decision-making by the NSWP allies had previously seemed somewhat overshadowed by the Chinese involvement in the resolution of *inter alia* the Hungarian revolution and the Polish uprisings in October and November 1956.¹⁰⁴

Meanwhile, Moscow had already withdrawn its ambassador from Tirana in August of the same year, and by December 1961 all Warsaw Pact countries had severed diplomatic relations with Albania of their own accord.¹⁰⁵ Although the Soviet withdrawal of both its specialists and its diplomats from Albania mirrored the withdrawal from China a year earlier, it was bound to have even more severe repercussions, since the fact that it had broken off (diplomatic) relations with a Warsaw Pact ‘ally’ made the status of WP membership somewhat ambivalent. It is

¹⁰² Letter from CCP CC to CPSU CC, 20 November 1961, DY 30/3386, 230-233. Cf. L. M. Lüthi, ‘The People’s Republic of China and the Warsaw Pact Organization, 1955-63’, *Cold War History* 7:4 (2007), 485.

¹⁰³ Lüthi, ‘The People’s Republic of China’, 485.

¹⁰⁴ See e.g. letter from the CCP CC to the CPSU CC, 10 September 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3604, 19-147, and Chapter 1 of this book, 32-33.

¹⁰⁵ Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift*, 85 and Lalaj, ‘Albanien und der Warschauer Pakt’, 38. Cf. ‘letter from the Albanian ministry of foreign affairs to the East German embassy in Tirana about the unilateral East German decision to withdraw the diplomats’, Tirana, 26 December 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3592, 150-161, and ‘Directive of tasks of the RWP CC’, 15 December 1961, in which the Albanian ambassador in Bucharest was also declared a ‘persona non grata’: ANIC, RWP CC, C, 3/1962, 17, and *ibid.* 19, for the withdrawal of the Romanian ambassador from Albania in October 1961.

extremely curious that two allies fail to maintain diplomatic relations. At the same time, the Chinese intensified their friendship with Albania, united “in the struggle against common enemies” as the Chinese ambassador in Tirana solemnly pledged.¹⁰⁶

The Warsaw Pact remained effectively powerless in the face of the united Sino-Albanian front. Although the Albanians were excluded from the ensuing PCC meetings, since they continued to refuse to send representation at the highest level, the Warsaw Treaty did not cater for a formalisation of this *de facto* exclusion. And in this case, too, the Albanian leadership deliberately provoked its WP colleagues into excluding them. On a military level the Albanian leaders also made the working conditions for representatives of the Unified Command so difficult, while blocking all communication, that ‘further cooperation in the framework of the Warsaw Treaty’ became virtually impossible.¹⁰⁷ The Warsaw Pact’s Supreme Commander, the Soviet Marshal Konev, was forced to leave Albania to its own devices.¹⁰⁸ With the motto ‘better be dead on your feet than alive on your knees’ the Albanian self-isolation was complete.¹⁰⁹

Thus the Albanian leadership succeeded in defying the Kremlin *within* the formal confines of the Warsaw Pact. Ulbricht’s insistence that the Albanian government should ‘turn directly to the member states of the Warsaw Treaty’ with any questions nevertheless served as a reminder that the NSWP members also had a say in the Albanian question.¹¹⁰ Indeed, both the Sino-Soviet estrangement and the Soviet-Albanian split had forced Khrushchev to consult with his allies.¹¹¹ Although the NSWP members capitalised on the Albanian ‘problem’ for their own emancipation, the Albanian leadership attempted to make the alliance responsible for its exclusion: professing their wish to stay within the alliance, the Albanians kept a kind of leverage that they would otherwise lack.¹¹² Meanwhile, the Albanian leaders had cleverly forced the Soviet withdrawal from Vlorë.

The Albanian behaviour accordingly challenges two common preconceptions about the Warsaw Pact: in the first place the alliance was not as involuntary as is often assumed, since Albania actually insisted on staying within in *against the will* of their WP allies, and secondly it was not primarily an instrument *of* the Soviet Union, but it could also be used as an instrument *against* the Soviet Union. This strongly distinguishes the Warsaw Pact from the COMINFORM, which Stalin used to excommunicate Tito in 1948. The WP was not only an alliance between states rather than communist parties

¹⁰⁶ Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift*, 87

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Grechko to General Bekir Baluku, the minister of defence in Albania, January 1962, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3593, 4-5.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Letter from the CPSU CC to all Party organisations and all communists in the SU’, 22 January 1962, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3593, 38.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Information on the Meeting with Comrade Chen Yi’, 27 July 1961, in Lalaj (ed.), ‘Albania is Not Cuba’, 228.

¹¹⁰ Letter from Ulbricht to Khrushchev, 16 January 1962, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 1-2.

¹¹¹ See e.g. letter from Ulbricht to Khrushchev, January 1962, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3606, 17-23.

¹¹² Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 208.

on paper: the alliance's interstate nature compelled the Soviet leadership to treat its members as the leaders of sovereign states, rather than inferior communist parties.

The defiance of Soviet power by such a seemingly insignificant member exposed the weakness of the alliance leader all the more poignantly. The alternative of Mao's support also underlines how the Sino-Soviet estrangement had facilitated a crack within the WP. The Albanian leaders had indeed 'exploited the differences of opinion between the CCP and the other fraternal parties', as well as 'transferring the ideological differences of opinions to the domain of interstate relations', as the Soviet leadership wrote to the Chinese in 1962.¹¹³ By doing so, they had made the differences between the Chinese and Soviet leaders increasingly difficult to bridge. The Albanian attitude anticipated the Chinese one in many ways, and may even have inspired Mao 'to "procrastinate" as much as possible' two years later in order to 'evade the blame' and "let [Khrushchev] assume the responsibility for [the split]".¹¹⁴

Moreover, the Albanian leadership had focused on several issues that would come to haunt the Soviet leadership in the future: the emphasis on sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs, which was also enshrined in the Moscow Declaration; the request for materials in preparation of the meetings; the invocation of the Warsaw Treaty in defence of their own stance; the issuing of separate declarations in case of disagreements – all of these paved the way for the more successful emancipation of the Romanian leadership a couple of years later. As Griffith prophetically put it in 1962, 'Hoxha has been the first but hardly the last to profit from Mao's challenge.'¹¹⁵

SINO-ROMANIAN RAPPROCHEMENT

The incipient Sino-Soviet split had not only enabled the Albanian leadership to call the Kremlin's bluff, but the Soviet-Albanian split had considerably strengthened the Chinese hand vis-à-vis the Kremlin, too. The fact that both the communist movement and the Warsaw Pact had become split considerably undermined Soviet hegemony. Soviet attempts to prevent 'the existing divergences on the Albanian problem' from affecting 'relations between our parties' were thus disregarded in China.¹¹⁶ The Soviet-Albanian split merely confirmed the Chinese 'assumption that the [East European] countries (...) had interests of their own that could be exploited by China to help isolate the Soviet Union'.¹¹⁷

There was one other WP country in particular whose interests differed from the Soviet ones, as the Chinese leadership began to notice in 1963. Although the

¹¹³ Letter from CPSU CC to CCP CC, 31 May 1962, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3606, 123.

¹¹⁴ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 240.

¹¹⁵ Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift*, 176.

¹¹⁶ Letter from CPSU CC to CCP CC, 22 February 1962, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 50/1962, 10.

¹¹⁷ Liu and Mastny (eds.), 'China and Eastern Europe', 10.

Romanian leadership had strongly denounced the Albanian stance at both WP meetings in 1961, it had turned against the Kremlin within COMECON during the meeting in December 1961.¹¹⁸ The Soviet plans to create a kind of ‘common market’ with an international division of labour, which would reduce Romania to the mere provider of raw materials, would negatively affect the Romanian economy.¹¹⁹ The repeated Chinese references to the Moscow Declaration, and its emphasis on ‘sovereignty, independence, and non-interference’ in the voluminous correspondence with the Soviet leadership thus gained a special importance to the Romanian leaders. Since the COMECON was concerned with economic issues, the Romanian preoccupation with sovereignty only had limited repercussions if it confined itself to the COMECON. If it spilled over to the WP, it would, however, also confront the Kremlin with a *political* challenge.

From 1962 onwards Gheorghiu-Dej himself closely studied the Sino-Soviet correspondence, while concentrating on the Chinese attempts to assert its independence vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, as the fact that he underlined important passages in various colours and elaborately annotated in the margins show. In early 1963 the Romanian leadership even commissioned a study of the Marxist-Leninist documents on ‘sovereignty and national independence’, which culminated in the Moscow Declaration.¹²⁰ It is remarkable that the Romanian leaders only began to concentrate on the principles of ‘sovereignty and national independence’, enshrined in the Moscow Declaration after the Chinese had repeatedly emphasised these.

In a meeting with the Soviet politburo member Yuri Andropov in early April 1963 in Bucharest the attitude of the Romanian leaders echoed the Chinese one. Referring to ‘the extraordinary important problem of sovereignty’ and to other parts from the Moscow Declaration, Gheorghiu-Dej justified the Romanian disagreement with ‘the idea of a single planning organ’ within COMECON.¹²¹ It was, accordingly, no coincidence that the Romanian leadership used the same conversation to underline its willingness to take the initiative on mending the Sino-Soviet split. Emphasising that the Romanians would ‘try to contribute towards strengthening unity’, since they were ‘all interested in the victory of the socialist camp’ of which ‘the Chinese represent about two thirds,’ Gheorghiu-Dej was in fact seeking Soviet approval for a Romanian rapprochement to the Chinese leadership. Andropov’s agreement ‘that we must find solutions for strengthening unity’ was interpreted as the green light.¹²²

The Soviet ambassador in Bucharest, Jegalin, who had also attended part of the meetings, ‘had not slept all night’, because of ‘the existing differences between the

¹¹⁸ Note of discussion between Ghizela Vass and Soviet official Scaciov, 17 February 1962, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 14/1962, 12, 15.

¹¹⁹ Cf. L. Țăranu, L., *România în Consiliul de Ajutor Economic Reciproc, 1949–1965* (Bucharest, 2007).

¹²⁰ ‘Documents on sovereignty and national independence’, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 29/1963.

¹²¹ ‘Report on a discussion with comrade Andropov during lunch’, 2 April 1963, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 13/1963, 2.

¹²² Note of the talks with Andropov, 3 April 1963, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 13/1963.

Romanian and Soviet comrades'.¹²³ Meanwhile, the Chinese leadership displayed 'a more benevolent attitude' towards the Romanian diplomats in the Chinese capital at the end of April.¹²⁴ According to the Romanian ambassador in Beijing the Chinese had only adopted this attitude after the RWP had displayed 'a critical attitude concerning some problems within the COMECON framework', which proved that the Romanian leadership 'respects the principles enshrined in the Moscow Declaration'. As a consequence Chinese foreign affairs officials explicitly stated a desire to consult the Romanian diplomats more often. The mutual interest in sovereignty had thus begun to forge a bond between the Chinese and Romanian parties.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the diplomatic relations between the Chinese and Romanians intensified at Chinese initiative. The Chinese leaders raised the Romanian consciousness of the Soviet 'adventurism' in breaking off diplomatic relations with Albania, after Soviet adventurism by acting unilaterally during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 had already been abundantly covered in the Chinese press.¹²⁵ It was, accordingly, not the fact that the Kremlin had flouted its allied obligations during the Cuban Missile Crisis that had sparked the more independent Romanian course, as is often suggested.¹²⁶ It was, on the contrary, the Sino-Soviet correspondence, which boosted the Romanian interest in sovereignty, intensified Sino-Romanian relations, and in turn drew the Romanian attention to the Soviet unilateralism during the Cuban Missile Crisis.¹²⁷ Only in April 1964, when the relations with the Chinese had further intensified, did the Romanians conclude that '[b]ecause of the fact that we are all members of the Warsaw Pact we should have been informed, we should have discussed, we should have decided together whether it would be good or not to send those missiles there.'¹²⁸

At this stage, the Romanian leadership was still primarily interested in the Chinese focus on the Moscow Declaration, according to which 'every party is independent concerning its internal problems', as was emphasised in a conversation between the Chinese ambassador in Bucharest and Romanian politburo member

¹²³ 'PROBLEMS, which have arisen from discussions with comrades Andropov, Jegalin, and Kariipenko', ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 13/1963, 15.

¹²⁴ Letter from the Romanian ambassador in Beijing, D. Gheorghiu, to the foreign ministry, TOP SECRET, 25 May 1963, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 55/1963, 5.

¹²⁵ Information from the Romanian embassy in Beijing, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 1/1963, 57.

¹²⁶ See R. L. Garthoff, 'When and Why Romania Distanced Itself from the Warsaw Pact', in J. Hershberg (ed.), *Cold War Crises*, CWIHP Bulletin No. 5 (Washington, 1998), 111, and L. Watts, *Romanian Security Policy and the Cuban Missile Crisis*, CWIHP E-Dossier No. 38 (Washington, 2013), <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/e-dossier-no-38-romania-security-policy-and-the-cuban-missile-crisis>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹²⁷ An account of the Cuban Missile Crisis falls outside the scope of this book. See for the most lucid and well documented account to date: A. Fursenko and T. Naftali, *"One Hell of a Gamble". Khrushchev, Castro and Kennedy, 1958-1964* (London and New York, 1998).

¹²⁸ 'Minutes of the plenary session of the RWP CC, from 15-22 April 1964', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 16/1964, 17.

Leonte Rautu in June 1963.¹²⁹ The Romanian leaders thus became increasingly convinced of 'the righteousness of our position', and the 'great discrepancy' between theory and practice in the Soviet attitude towards sovereignty.¹³⁰

The Sino-Romanian rapprochement was an essential boon to the Chinese, since the negotiations between American, British and Soviet leaders about the conclusion of a limited nuclear test-ban treaty [NTBT] in July 1963 were particularly problematic to the Chinese, who were trying to develop their own nuclear device. The negotiations, which were indeed partly directed at Chinese nuclear testing, took place in Moscow on 15 July, and accordingly coincided with a visit from a Chinese delegation to Moscow from 6-20 July in a last attempt to reverse the Sino-Soviet split.¹³¹ During these talks Mao's emissary Den Xiaoping not only expressed China's outrage at the lack of consultation with 'the fraternal countries' during the Cuban Missile Crisis, but also blamed the Kremlin for 'pursuing an unseemly goal in coming to such an agreement [the NTBT], namely: to bind China hands and feet through an agreement with the USA.'¹³² Despite Soviet attempts to assuage the Chinese delegates through references to the Moscow Declaration, the Soviet delegation left with 'a profound sentiment of regret and sadness'.¹³³ This corresponds with Mastny's observation that the 'treaty became the catalyst of the Sino-Soviet break.'¹³⁴

THE MONGOLIAN APPLICATION

Despite the further deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations things seemed to turn for the better within the Warsaw Pact, because Yumjaagin Tsendenbal, the first secretary of Mongolia, applied to join the alliance at exactly the same time as the Sino-Soviet talks. Tsendenbal had consistently sided with his Soviet comrades in the Sino-Soviet and Soviet-Albanian split, and in a 'strictly confidential' conversation with the Chinese leader Zhou Enlai in December 1962 Tsendenbal had already strongly denounced Albania, and supported the Soviet stance, while refusing to yield to Chinese blackmail concerning the dispatch of Chinese workers to Mongolia.¹³⁵ The request of the

¹²⁹ Conversation between the Chinese ambassador in Bucharest and Leonte Rautu (RWP), 19 June 1963, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 1/1963, 64.

¹³⁰ Cf. 'Minutes of the meeting of the RWP CC Politburo meeting of 26 June 1963', C, 34/1963, 2-32.

¹³¹ Cf. M. Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace. The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, 1999), 283-4.

¹³² Lalaj (ed.) 'Albania is Not Cuba', 178. Cf. meeting of a delegation of the CPSU and the CCP, July 1963, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3608, 1-287.

¹³³ Remark by Soviet representative, B. N. Ponomarov, 13 July 1963, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 26/1963, 170.

¹³⁴ V. Mastny, *China, the Warsaw Pact, and Sino-Soviet Relations under Khrushchev*, PHP, http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll_china_wapa/intro_mastny.cfm?na_vinfo (2002), 2, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹³⁵ 'Report of a conversation between Zhou Enlai and Tsendenbal in China, strictly confidential,' 26 December 1962, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3606, 259-286.

Mongolian leadership to join the Warsaw Pact was a clear expression of its allegiance to the Soviet Union, especially considering the fact that Mongolia shared a long border with China.¹³⁶ The fact that Albania's *de facto* exclusion from COMECON in 1962 coincided with Mongolia's admission had already adumbrated this move.¹³⁷ According to the expert on Mongolia, Sergei Radchenko, Mongolia even 'pressured the Soviet leadership to take a harder line on the PRC',¹³⁸ and its application to the WP can therefore be regarded as directed against China.

In the first instance the Mongolian application did seem a boost to the WP, since Tsedenbal's emphasis on its importance underscored the concept of the Warsaw Pact as a 'voluntary alliance'¹³⁹ and made it almost seem an 'empire by invitation'.¹⁴⁰ Khrushchev therefore eagerly endorsed the Mongolian application, and attempted to convince the other WP members of its benefits in a letter he sent on 10 July 1963,¹⁴¹ while calling for a PCC meeting on 26 and 27 July to discuss the application in a second letter five days later.¹⁴²

The Mongolian application nevertheless exposed the Warsaw Pact's fragility, since it compelled its members to exercise some introspection regarding its functioning. Although the united front against Albania in 1961 might have deceived Khrushchev into believing that his NSWP allies would back the Soviet Union in this case, too, the application in fact revealed a further crack within the alliance. The Romanian and Polish allies were particularly critical, and the independent stance they were enabled to adopt vis-à-vis the Soviet Union would prove irreversible.

The Romanian leaders discussed the issue during a politburo meeting on 18 July 1963, in which they elaborately and self-consciously prepared their stance at the ensuing PCC meeting. They felt particularly confident, since they had just 'achieved a very big success' at a COMECON meeting, where they had 'succeeded to make [the SU] retreat' in terms of the common market, which would have had 'implications

¹³⁶ The Mongolian move was also motivated by security reasons. Cf. Radchenko, *The Soviets' Best Friend in Asia*, 2.

¹³⁷ The Chinese leaders seemed to have anticipated this. See 'Memorandum of Conversation between Deng Xiaoping, Wang Jiaxiang, Hysni Kapo, and Ramiz Alia', 19 June 1962, in Lalaj (ed.), 'Albania is Not Cuba', 234.

¹³⁸ Radchenko, *The Soviets' Best Friend in Asia*, 12.

¹³⁹ He did so by 'attaching great importance to the Warsaw Treaty Organization' and 'completely approving of the goal of the Treaty – to secure the peace and security of nations'. See 'Mongolian Request for Admission to the Warsaw Pact', 15 July 1963, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=20907&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹⁴⁰ G. Lundestad, 'Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1942-1952,' *Journal of Peace Research* 23 (1986), 263-277. According to this article 'the United States was often invited to play a more active role' by Western European governments, in contrast to 'the Soviet Union, which frequently had to rely on force to further its interests.'

¹⁴¹ Letter from Khrushchev to Ulbricht (and other WP leaders), 10 July 1963, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 47-49.

¹⁴² Confidential letter from Khrushchev to Ulbricht (and other WP leaders), about convention of PCC meeting, 15 July 1963, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 52-53.

concerning sovereignty, independence etc.’ They criticised the Soviet leadership for omitting to send them, as a WP country, Tsendenbal’s letter of application, and had ‘started from the assumption that, tactically, it is not good to say either yes or no, but to show what implications Mongolia’s intention of entering into the Warsaw Treaty Organisation would have.’¹⁴³

Those implications entailed that it would create ‘military blocs within the [communist] camp’, and ‘would mean the extension of the pact into another zone than the European one.’ As such it would implicitly be targeted against China, since ‘Mongolia only has borders with two countries.’¹⁴⁴ This would be a significant shift in the identity of the Warsaw Pact as an alliance directed against NATO. In later conversations with the Chinese, the Romanian leaders regularly referred to their opposition to the entrance of Mongolia into the Warsaw Pact, which ‘would be interpreted as a stone thrown into the window of our Chinese comrades’.¹⁴⁵ The ‘Cold War in the Communist World’, as Lüthi calls it, had thus created a new and unforeseen dynamics within the Soviet alliance.¹⁴⁶

The Sino-Soviet split had turned into a sword of Damocles, which the NSWP members could wield to defend their case. Referring to an appeal by Khrushchev not to ‘disclose the divergences’, but to concentrate on the ‘friendship between Romania and the Soviet Union’, Gheorgiu-Dej emphasised that ‘we are in a favourable situation (...), since the principal problem which gnaws at [Khrushchev] is the problem with the Chinese.’ Moreover, they questioned the assumption Khrushchev had expressed in his letter that ‘since [Albania] does not participate, there is no need to ask it,’ and actually predicted problems with the UN, where the Warsaw Treaty Organisation was registered, if their decision-making had no legal basis in the treaty.¹⁴⁷ The treaty’s claim to legitimacy inadvertently limited the scope for manoeuvre of the Soviet Union itself. Rather than a ‘paper tiger’ the treaty turned into a Trojan horse, which the Kremlin had inadvertently created.¹⁴⁸

The Romanian concerns were mirrored in a letter written two days later by the Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki, which echoed all the Romanian arguments. Rapacki nevertheless expanded on ‘the problem of Albania in the Warsaw Pact’, since its potential veto would ‘have a legal basis’, and argued that it could ‘inflame existing differences’ with Romania, which would be likely to develop ‘a negative stance’ on this

¹⁴³ ‘Minutes of the meeting of the RWP CC Politburo meeting of 18 July 1963’, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 39/1963, 117.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Meeting between Gheorghiu-Dej and the Chinese ambassador in Bucharest, Liu Fan, 5 June 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 5/1964, 45.

¹⁴⁶ Subtitle of Lüthi’s book *The Sino-Soviet Split. Cold War in the Communist World*.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Minutes of the meeting of the RWP CC Politburo meeting of 18 July 1963’, ANIC, RWP CC, C 39/1963, 121, 124. Cf. Griffith, *Albania and the Sino-Soviet Rift*, 27.

¹⁴⁸ Mao Zedong, ‘US Imperialism is a Paper Tiger’, 14 July 1956, http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_52.htm, accessed 20 September 2013.

matter.¹⁴⁹ The allusion to Romanian obstruction within the WP was unprecedented. Mongolia's application thus turned from a potential triumph for the Warsaw Pact's popularity into a thorny issue. Its treatment does, however, also reflect the fact that the smaller allies gained increasing room for manoeuvre within the WP, since Albanian and Romanian opposition could still be conclusive. In addition, the Sino-Soviet split loomed larger than the imperialist threat, which again underlines how the 'Cold War' *within* the communist camp began to overshadow the one outside it.

At the PCC meeting on 26-27 July 1963 the Mongolian issue nevertheless took a different turn, since the Soviet leadership itself unexpectedly questioned Mongolian admission, considering the expansion of the WP contradictory with the signing of the nuclear test-ban treaty, which was concluded to defuse international tensions, the previous day.¹⁵⁰ Khrushchev's initial enthusiasm for the Mongolian application nevertheless suggests that his political U-turn was caused by the unexpectedly critical Polish and Romanian stance instead, which undermines the conventional reading that he was primarily concerned about the coincidence with the nuclear test-ban treaty.¹⁵¹ On the contrary, Khrushchev's courting of Tsedenbal's favour coincided with severe disputes about the NTBT between the Soviet and Chinese leaders, which might have stimulated him to find a new ally elsewhere. When that initiative caused friction within the Warsaw Pact, Khrushchev had to sacrifice the Mongolian application to WP unity. Confronted with the escalation of the Sino-Soviet split, Khrushchev could ill afford to alienate his WP allies.

Khrushchev had accordingly withdrawn his own proposal in an attempt to save face. Although he had successfully pre-empted Polish criticism, the Romanians gave 'a vague and useless reply', according to the Hungarian report.¹⁵² The Romanians themselves, meanwhile, considered their opposition to the Mongolian question a great success within the WP, which was not altogether unjustified since it seemed as though a Soviet initiative had unprecedentedly been blocked by an NSWP member.¹⁵³ A decision on the Mongolian application was subsequently 'postponed' and the Mongolian application was also omitted from the ensuing communiqué, as was, astonishingly, the presence of Tsedenbal. As in the Albanian case, the failure to

¹⁴⁹ 'Memorandum by the Polish Foreign Minister (Adam Rapacki)', 20 July 1963, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17905&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹⁵⁰ See 'Excerpts of Report to the Hungarian Politburo on the PCC Meeting by the First Secretary of the MSzMP (János Kádár)', 31 July 1963, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17907&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹⁵¹ Mastny, *China, the Warsaw Pact*, 3.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ E.g. 'Minutes of the plenary session of the RWP CC, which took place on 17.II.1964', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 6/1964, 23.

respond to dissent resulted in its denial, making the WP seem much less dynamic than it actually was.¹⁵⁴

The Romanian and Polish responses underline Lüthi's interpretation of the episode as 'an unsuccessful Soviet attempt to turn the Warsaw Pact Organization against the People's Republic'.¹⁵⁵ The Sino-Soviet split had caused Khrushchev to overplay his hand once again and to undermine the Soviet position within the alliance. Whereas the Albanian insolence had stimulated the other WP members to close their ranks in 1961, the Mongolian application had ironically enabled them to drift apart. A common enemy seemed more effective in fostering WP coherence than a common ally. Although the other NSWP leaders still seemed to side with the Soviet leadership, the Mongolian application allowed the Romanian leaders, and to some extent the Poles, to use the Warsaw Treaty as an instrument to explore their own scope for manoeuvre. Although Tsedenbal, unlike Hoxha, did not profit from Mao's challenge, Gheorghiu-Dej certainly did.

ROMANIAN MEDIATION

The PCC meeting in July 1963 marked a reorientation in Romanian foreign policy away from the loyal WP members to communist dissidents and other Soviet enemies. This also shows in the trade agreements that it concluded with Albania, China, and the FRG in the same year.¹⁵⁶ Not only did the Romanians choose to trade with the 'dissidents' within the communist bloc, but they also intensified the relations with the West German 'revanchists'. The Warsaw Pact, meanwhile, received scant attention, and it was therefore totally in line with the Romanian conduct to undermine Ulbricht's attempt in January 1964 to convene a PCC meeting on 19 March 1964, which will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter.¹⁵⁷ The Czechoslovak suggestion to put 'the destructive activity of the PR China' on the agenda might have antagonised the Romanians, too,¹⁵⁸ and they told Khrushchev that April was not suitable, instead of replying to Ulbricht.¹⁵⁹ Greatly offended, Ulbricht refused to comply with Khrushchev's request to propose a different date,¹⁶⁰ and waited for a personal response from Gheorghiu-Dej, who ultimately – at the end of March – replied that April

¹⁵⁴ 'Communiqué', 26 July 1963, PHP,

<http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17906&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹⁵⁵ Lüthi, 'The People's Republic of China', 479.

¹⁵⁶ 'Information report to the ministry of foreign affairs of the GDR, section Romania', 14 January 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/368, 19 and 24.

¹⁵⁷ Letter from Ulbricht to Khrushchev, Berlin, 24 January 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 61-62. Cf. letter from Ulbricht to Gheorghiu-Dej, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 6/1964, 44-45.

¹⁵⁸ Letter from Novotny to SED CC, 15 February 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3877, 80.

¹⁵⁹ Letter from Khrushchev to Ulbricht, 20 March 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 90-91.

¹⁶⁰ Letter from Ulbricht to Gheorghiu-Dej, 26 March 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 95.

was simply impossible.¹⁶¹ In April the Romanian leaders were far too busy with asserting their own independence, as we shall see below.

On 14 February 1964, a month after the East German attempt to convene the PCC, the Romanian leaders wrote a letter to their Chinese and Soviet comrades in which they asked the Soviet leadership not to publicise its criticism of the Chinese, and the Chinese leadership to stop the open polemics. They also suggested measures for 'restoring communist unity', since they considered 'that it is not yet too late for making yet another effort in finding the ways and means to prevent the split', and they proposed a meeting with the Chinese leadership 'concerning problems related to the unity of the socialist camp and the communist world movement.'¹⁶² The Romanians sent the letter to the leaders of all communist parties in the world, which left the Kremlin with little alternative but to comply.

The Chinese leadership made its stance dependent on the suggested visit of a Romanian delegation to China, and thus invested the Romanians with still more power.¹⁶³ As the Romanian historian Mihai Retegan puts it, '[t]he escalation of the misunderstandings between the two communist centers was naturally used by the leaders in Bucharest to make themselves heard in a choir where there was a single soloist – Moscow.'¹⁶⁴ But the Romanian leaders achieved much more than that: their mediation in the Sino-Soviet split would force Moscow to play the Romanian tune with the whole communist movement as an audience. The letter had prompted enthusiastic responses from thirty-one leaders of communist parties worldwide, including those in Western countries, and had thus made the Romanian leadership a player on global stage.¹⁶⁵

The Romanian leadership was, meanwhile, very conscious of its own worth. Gheorgiu-Dej even underlined in a meeting in which he discussed the Romanian delegation's visit to China that 'it is no easy matter, it is a move of great importance and responsibility', for which 'we need to possess many more qualities: agility, tact, perseverance, patience, while anticipating everything that could happen'. In the same meeting it was suggested to 'elaborate a new document', which would expand on the 1957 and 1960 Moscow Declarations, and which they could 'present at an international

¹⁶¹ Letter from Gheorgiu-Dej to Ulbricht, no date, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 98. Cf. 'Minutes of the RWP CC Politburo session on 30-31 March 1964', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 12/1964, 33 for the Romanian discussion on this letter.

¹⁶² Letter from the RWP CC to the CCP CC, Bucharest, 14 February 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 5/1964, 16. Cf. C. Rijnoveanu, *A Perspective on Romania's Involvement in the Sino-Soviet Conflict (1960-1965)*, Cold War History Research Centre, Budapest, http://www.coldwar.hu/html/en/publications/Rom_Sino_Riv.pdf (May 2009), 1, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹⁶³ Letter from RWP CC to SED CC, containing a copy of the letters to the CPSU CC and the CCP CC. 14 February 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3655, 112-117.

¹⁶⁴ M. Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring: Romanian Foreign Policy and the Crisis of Czechoslovakia, 1968* (Oxford, 2000), 37.

¹⁶⁵ Response from several communist parties to the RWP's letter, 4 April 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR 12/1964, 35.

meeting'. Conscious 'of the fact that we are called 'mediators' and that they say that we are opportunists', the Romanian leaders stressed that '[i]t is out of the question that we exercise neutrality, when we exercise Marxism-Leninism', and that '[our] action (...) is very important and will remain inscribed in the history of our party, because we have intervened at a moment when we were one step away from splitting the socialist camp'.¹⁶⁶ The Sino-Soviet mediation thus primarily served to boost the prestige of the Romanian leadership.

The Kremlin, meanwhile, seemed to be under such pressure from the Sino-Soviet split, that it was willing to interpret the Romanian strategy charitably. It did, however, refuse to publish a Romanian communiqué about it, which underlines the Soviet ambiguity towards the Romanian initiative.¹⁶⁷ Although the Soviet diplomat Iljuchin considered 'the chances of success for the Romanian move slim' he emphasised in a conversation with the East German leadership that 'the Romanian attempt to stop the dangerous development should be highly esteemed'.¹⁶⁸ The number of question marks and pink underlinings in the East German documents indicate that the GDR leaders were not quite so impressed. The Romanian attempts to emphasise 'that the RWP [Romanian Workers' Party] does not adopt the role of a mediator in the resolution of the differences of opinion', seriously believed in the feasibility of its enterprise, and was not at all interested in 'the prestige of its own party' merely met with scepticism in the GDR.¹⁶⁹ Gomulka had already advised the Soviet leadership to take the initiative in improving relations with China, while warning it against any attempts at mediation by other parties in October 1963.¹⁷⁰ The NSWP leaders were, accordingly, not at all enchanted with the Romanian move.

Meanwhile, it gave the Romanian leaders the opportunity to be taken seriously by the Chinese: meeting with a top level Chinese delegation was, as such, a success in itself, even though Gheorgiu-Dej confessed that 'I cherish no illusion whatever that we shall obtain capitulation from the Chinese', but argued that 'even a chance of a few percentages to subdue the Chinese' would suffice to justify the struggle. He considered the Romanian strategy an opportunity to tell the Soviet comrades, that they, too, 'should not cherish the illusion that they are always right,' while calling the Romanian attitude 'nothing else but a service, since we do not stand with our arms crossed and

¹⁶⁶ 'Minutes of the RWP CC Politburo meeting of 28 February 1964', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 9/1964, 7, 8, 11, 20.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁶⁸ 'Memorandum about a conversation with comrade Iljuchin from the Soviet embassy', 20 February 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA 2/20/354, 55-56.

¹⁶⁹ 'Memorandum about a conversation with comrade Lazarescu, deputy director of the department of international relations in the RWP CC', Bucharest, 11 March 64, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/354, 68-71. Letter from ambassador Dölling to Florin, Moscow, 10 March 1964: 'The Romanian ambassador, who himself speaks Russian badly, conveyed all that in a tone to justify the move of the Romanian CC.'

¹⁷⁰ Gomulka advised Khrushchev on the Sino-Soviet rift in the abovementioned letter, written on 8 October 1963, published in D. Selvage, *The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Nonproliferation*, 29.

do nothing.¹⁷¹ But not only political and ethical motives played an important role. The fact that China was potentially ‘a big market’ was particularly attractive to the Romanian leadership, since the differences within COMECON had rendered alternative trade partners all the more essential.¹⁷²

During the talks between the Romanian and the Chinese delegation from 3 to 10 March the Romanians ‘completely agreed [with the Chinese] that relations between socialist countries should be based on the principles of equality and non-interference in domestic affairs,’ as consolidated in the 1960 Moscow declaration. Moreover, the WP was a regular topic of conversation, and was considered a mere ‘formality’ by the Romanians, since there were ‘more problems’, such as the lack of consultation in the Cuban Missile Crisis, which the Chinese in particular considered outrageous, thus heightening the Romanian awareness of their role in the alliance.¹⁷³

The Romanian proposal for a common appeal to cease the polemics met, however, with little enthusiasm, since the Chinese insisted that the Kremlin had ignored the abovementioned principles of the Moscow Declaration, and emphasised that ‘nothing prevent[ed] Khrushchev from doing what he wanted’ anyhow. The Chinese even put the Romanians on the defensive by asking why they changed their mind on the Chinese attitude within a year, thus forcing the Romanians to confess that they were mistaken to side with the Soviet Union against China in the past.¹⁷⁴ Although the Romanian attempt to cease the polemics had failed, the Chinese did emphasise that they would like to have ‘more regular contact’ with the Romanians in future, which served to consolidate Sino-Romanian relations still further.¹⁷⁵

At the same time the Soviet leadership was so eager to show its goodwill that it attempted to patch up the differences with China, by emphasising the communist parties’ ‘equal rights’ in its correspondence with the Chinese, while agreeing to meet with the Romanian party leaders on their way back from China in Gagra on 15 March 1964 to discuss future steps.¹⁷⁶ Meeting the Soviet leaders in the town Gagra on the Black Sea instead of Moscow, *after* meeting the Chinese leadership in Beijing, already indicates the way in which the Romanians had forced the Soviets to adopt a lower profile. The high level Soviet delegation that awaited the Romanians at Gagra, consisting of *inter alia* Khrushchev, Mikoyan, and Andropov, illustrates how seriously the Soviets took the Romanian leaders, who proudly observed that ‘[w]e truly enjoyed

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 22.

¹⁷² ‘Minutes of the RWP CC Politburo session on 30-31 March 1964’, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 12/1964, 24-26.

¹⁷³ ‘Minutes of the conversations between the RWP CC and the CCP CC’, 3-10 March 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 31/1964, I, 174-175.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 251-252. In the same vein the Romanians also regretted that they ‘did not rise against the attacks directed at the Albanian Workers’ Party’, see ‘Minutes of the RWP CC Politburo meeting on 24 March 1964’, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 11/1964.

¹⁷⁵ ‘Minutes of the conversations between the RWP CC and the CCP CC’, 3-10 March 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 31/1964, I, 174-175.

¹⁷⁶ Letter from the CPSU CC to the CPC CC, 7 March 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 17/1964, 249.

a lot of attention.¹⁷⁷ Khrushchev nevertheless also expressed his 'displeasure' at the Romanian attempt 'to condition the convention of the [PCC] meeting', to which the Romanians replied that it was 'an elementary, democratic right of each party to know in advance what would be discussed at such a meeting'.¹⁷⁸

The Romanian leadership was, however, very pleased with the meeting in Gagra, and underlined upon its return in a politburo meeting that the Soviets 'have entered a situation from which they cannot escape', and decided to propose an appeal to 'strive after the ending of the polemics'.¹⁷⁹ Gheorghiu-Dej officially suggested in a letter to Khrushchev on 25 March 'that the CPSU CC, the CCP CC, and the RWP CC would direct a common appeal in order to cease the open polemics to all communist and worker parties'.¹⁸⁰ Thus the Romanian leadership indirectly placed itself on a level with the CPSU and the CCP in a letter, which was also sent to all WP leaders. By enclosing the draft of the appeal, which was full of such principles as 'non-interference', 'independence and national sovereignty', the Romanian leadership used the Moscow Declaration to (re)define its own stance within the communist bloc.¹⁸¹ Although Gheorghiu-Dej had presented this in the politburo as a Soviet proposal, Khrushchev referred instead to 'your new proposal' at Gagra,¹⁸² and repeatedly stressed that he only agreed to the appeal 'if the leadership of the CCP unconditionally ceases the public polemics, and stops splitting the communist movement', as he had already mentioned during the meeting at Gagra.¹⁸³

The Sino-Soviet split forced the Kremlin to treat the Romanians gently, but the Soviet diplomat in Bucharest, Suchanov, criticised the 'exceptional position' of the Romanians in a conversation with his East German colleague, and even compared Romania to 'an extraordinarily stubborn and bad-tempered adolescent'.¹⁸⁴ The Romanian 'mediation' was finally considered Romanian obstinacy. The fact that successful mediation had always been out of the question was, however, irrelevant to the Romanians: what mattered was the fact that their mediating *pose* had underlined Romanian sovereignty in both Chinese and Soviet eyes. Meanwhile, the Romanian party leaders were convinced that '[t]he Soviets have missed a great opportunity. What lack of suppleness! What rigidity!', which is a strong contrast with their self-proclaimed 'agility'.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁷ 'Minutes of the plenary session of the RWP CC from 15-22 April 1964', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 16/1964, 45.

¹⁷⁸ Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 5 September 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 5/1964, 108.

¹⁷⁹ 'Minutes of the RWP Politburo Session, 18 March 1964', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 10/1964, 20. Gheorghiu-Dej quoted in *ibid.*, 71.

¹⁸⁰ Letter from Gheorghiu-Dej to Khrushchev, 25 March 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3655, 139-140.

¹⁸¹ Romanian draft appeal as appendix to the abovementioned letter, SAPMO-BArch, DY30/3655, 141-150.

¹⁸² Khrushchev to RWP CC, 31 March 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3655, 167.

¹⁸³ Khrushchev to RWP CC, 28 March 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3655, 161-162.

¹⁸⁴ 'Information report to the ministry of foreign affairs of the GDR, section Romania', 08 April 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/368, 73.

¹⁸⁵ 'Minutes of the RWP CC Politburo session on 30-31 March 1964', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 12/1964, 6.

THE ROMANIAN DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

On a superficial level the Romanian endeavour had failed: their appeal for unity had been undermined by their visit to Beijing. On a more profound level the Romanians had nevertheless been very successful indeed: their attempts at mediation in the Sino-Soviet split had placed them, as self-proclaimed mediator between the two communist great powers, on a different level from their WP comrades. This had facilitated their opposition to Ulbricht's attempts to convene his allies, and had emphasised both their sovereignty and their autonomy. Meanwhile, the Soviet leadership was forced to participate in the mediation-game, since the Sino-Soviet split had placed it in a vulnerable position. The Romanians themselves considered that they had 'succeeded only partially', but that they had 'motives to continue', since it would be against their interests to 'abandon the banner of the battle to stop the polemics'.¹⁸⁶ They obviously wanted to keep a finger in the pie. Ulbricht was accordingly not enchanted with the Romanian strategy, and concluded from the Romanian debacle in Beijing 'that some Romanian leaders allow themselves to be led by nationalist views'.¹⁸⁷

This did not seem far from the truth, considering the fact that the Romanians recycled the draft appeal to all the communist parties as a basis for the formulation of their own stance, in a manifesto that has later been called 'the Declaration of Independence', and has been considered 'the turning-point of Romania's *public deviation* in its foreign policy'.¹⁸⁸ According to Gheorgiu-Dej '[w]e shall not participate in the polemics between parties through this appeal, but we shall have the opportunity to take a position against unjust methods which they use,' and '[t]owards the end of the document, like a chanson, which sounds pleasantly to the ears, we shall have our appeal for the ending of the polemics'.¹⁸⁹ Assuming the role of the mediator within the Sino-Soviet split thus enabled the Romanians to make their independent stance within the communist movement as a whole easier to swallow. The Romanian confidence had enjoyed such a boost, that Gheorgiu-Dej even stressed in a preliminary talk about the plenum with the Chinese ambassador Liu Fan that 'it is possible that we express points of view with which you will not agree, it is possible that our points of view will be different from those of the CPSU'.¹⁹⁰ The Romanians were emphatically not inclined to sing the Chinese tune either.

The Romanian leadership presented the appeal at an extraordinary plenum of the RWP CC from 15 to 22 April 1964, which had been convened 'to deal with questions concerning the differences of opinion in the communist world

¹⁸⁶ 'Minutes of the RWP Politburo Session, 18 March 1964', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 10/1964, 19.

¹⁸⁷ Letter from Ulbricht to Krushchev, Berlin, 09 April 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3609, 142-149.

¹⁸⁸ D. Deletant and M. Ionescu, *Romania and the Warsaw Pact: 1955-1989*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 43, (Washington, 2004), 72. The Romanian ambassador in Beijing, D. Gheorgiu, had already suggested in a letter to Gheorgiu-Dej on 31 March 1961 that 'an appeal from our side to the international communist and workers' movement would be opportune', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 93/1963, 39.

¹⁸⁹ 'Minutes of the RWP CC Politburo meeting on 2 April 1964', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 13/1964, 9-10.

¹⁹⁰ Meeting between Gheorgiu Dej and Liu Fan, 10 April 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 5/1964, 24,

movement'.¹⁹¹ It ironically coincided exactly with Ulbricht's suggested date of the PCC meeting. The appeal, which had attracted 'numerous foreign journalists', seemed to follow logically from a summary of the 'conversations' of the Romanian with the Chinese and Soviet leaders, which had served to further crystallise 'our position in relation to the most important current problems'. The politburo member Vasilichi Gheorghie even 'consider[ed] the most important result of this action from our party that (...) we have all become cleverer at the end of this action, so to speak, we know the matters much more than we knew them before'. This remark is very perceptive in that the mediation in the Sino-Soviet split had, indeed, increased the Romanian self-consciousness, as well as (inadvertently) contributing to their emancipation. Moreover, it also served to underline 'that we are a mature party, that we are a party with a sense of responsibility, that we are a party capable of judging and of perceiving the matters with our own eyes.'¹⁹²

Since the declaration included an appeal to 'the principles of **national independence and sovereignty, equality, (...) non-interference in the domestic affairs, the respect of territorial integrity, on the principles of socialist internationalism**',¹⁹³ it was indeed 'the first time a small party had something to say about the big problems of Communism, and dared to speak as equals with the great powers.'¹⁹⁴ Moreover, the text cleverly used exactly the same jargon as the Moscow Declaration, as well as copying several statements relating to equality, which the Soviets had expressed in their letters to the Chinese. Although the East German allies blamed the Romanians for using 'formulations (...) out of the arsenal of the Chinese leaders', the Romanians did the same with the Soviet phrases.¹⁹⁵ Under the pretext of mediating within the Sino-Soviet split, the Romanian leaders had actually reemphasised the equality of *all* communist parties in order to confirm their own equality. The Romanian leadership had accordingly appropriated the Moscow Declaration for its own purposes.

At the same time the declaration served as an implicit protest against the WP, and as such explained the Romanian reluctance to participate in another PCC meeting. Although the declaration mentioned the alliance only once, in relation to a non-aggression treaty between the WP and NATO, the role of the Warsaw Pact was discussed time and again in the accompanying plenary session. In this meeting especially the attempts to coordinate the Political Consultative Committee in a COMECON-like fashion were criticised, as well as Ulbricht's proposal to convene the

¹⁹¹ 'Information report to the ministry of foreign affairs of the GDR, section Romania', 8 April 1964, DY30/IVA2/20/368, 73.

¹⁹² 'Minutes of the plenary session of the RWP CC from 15-22 April 1964', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 16/1964, 47, 113, 245.

¹⁹³ 'Declaration of the position of the RWP in questions of the international communist and workers' movement', Bucharest, 22 April 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/354, 161-193. See ANIC, RWP CC, C, 16/1964, 47ff for the Romanian version of the appeal.

¹⁹⁴ Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring*, 41

¹⁹⁵ Letter from Florin to SED CC, Berlin, 12 May 1964, DY30/IVA2/20/354, 196.

PCC, the Soviet 'introduction of a coordinating programme', which only served Soviet interests, and the fact that the Soviet leaders 'had confronted us with several *faits accomplis* within the Warsaw Pact, without prior consultations'.¹⁹⁶ The declaration was slightly less explicit on this front, and 'turned against any higher form of cooperation between the socialist countries', while attempting to 'reach a loosening of the cooperation', and to 'increase the scope for manoeuvre'.¹⁹⁷

As such it was directly targeted against Khrushchev's and Ulbricht's attempts to increase foreign policy coordination within the WP, which will be further discussed in the next chapter. Ulbricht's zeal to convene a PCC meeting seems to have inspired the Romanians to formulate a declaration, which seemed deliberately anti-Ulbricht. Two months later the East German diplomatic services even had access to 'reliable sources' which suggested that '[t]he RWP did not agree with some decisions of the Warsaw Pact. It would accordingly no longer cooperate actively, but would merely observe the development in the Warsaw Pact'.¹⁹⁸ This is ironically exactly the role his allies feared de Gaulle would adopt within NATO.¹⁹⁹

In the wake of the extraordinary plenum the Romanian leadership decided to make its emancipation from the Soviet grip felt at home, too, by, *inter alia*, substituting Romanian street names for Russian ones and abolishing the compulsory study of Russian at school, thus creating 'an anti-Soviet atmosphere' according to vehement Soviet criticism.²⁰⁰ A month after the RWP meeting a great number of public meetings were held, in order to divulge the new course in Romanian foreign policy to a wider audience, which successfully served to capitalise on anti-Soviet sentiments and increase the popularity of the leadership. Soviet influence was thus eradicated from Romanian society at different levels. Meanwhile, Soviet distrust vis-à-vis Romania had increased to such an extent that the house in Moscow of the Romanian military representative in the Warsaw Pact was bugged 'in the name of proletarian internationalism!'²⁰¹

In the same year, Romania also started cultivating the links with Western states, for example by turning diplomatic offices into embassies.²⁰² At the beginning of August 1964 a top-level Romanian delegation even went to Paris, on 'the first such trip

¹⁹⁶ 'Minutes of the plenary session of the RWP CC from 15-22 April 1964', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 16/1964, 42-44, 164, 242-243.

¹⁹⁷ 'Information of the attitude about the RWP leadership to the politics of the CCP leadership. Strictly confidential', Berlin, 29 April 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA 2/20/359, 12.

¹⁹⁸ 'Information report to the ministry of foreign affairs of the GDR, section Romania', 17 June 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA 2/20/368, 126.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. A. Locher, 'A Crisis Foretold. NATO and France, 1963-66', in A. Wenger et al. (eds.), *Transforming NATO in the Cold War. Challenges beyond Deterrence in the 1960s* (Oxford and New York, 2007), 107-127.

²⁰⁰ Discussions between delegations of the RWP CC and the CPSU CC, Moscow, July 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 36/1964, 158.

²⁰¹ Meeting between Gheorghe Apostol, Emil Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 28 July 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 5/1964, 34, 50. Cf. Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring*, 41.

²⁰² E.g. in Sweden, Italy, Japan the United States (!) and Norway. Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring*, 42.

ever made to a Western nation by an Eastern-bloc head of government other than Nikita S. Khrushchev himself.²⁰³ The choice of France was of course no coincidence: visiting NATO's most recalcitrant member, the Romanian delegation implicitly emphasised its stance in the Warsaw Pact.²⁰⁴

Had Romania been a member of NATO, it would indeed have behaved like France: in stark contrast to the Albanian leadership the Romanian leadership did not so much begin to turn against Khrushchev as a *Soviet* leader, but against 'hegemonic tendencies in general, against the idea of the superpowers' responsibility in international matters in particular', as the Romanian historian Elena Dragomir convincingly argues.²⁰⁵ Romania had never considered the Albanian course of siding with China, since it was not in favour of the hegemonic tendencies of *either* of the communist great powers. This might be one of the reasons why the Kremlin had more patience with Romania. Refusing to take sides in the Sino-Soviet split, the Romanian leaders had indeed occupied 'a neutralist and centrist position', as the East Germans observed.²⁰⁶ The Romanian challenge seemed subtler than the Albanian one, and it had successfully called Khrushchev's bluff. Having agreed to the Romanian appeal to communist countries, he had indirectly sanctioned their independence, too.

THE AFTERMATH

At the beginning of July a high level Romanian delegation went to Moscow to discuss Soviet-Romanian relations with its Soviet comrades. The Warsaw Pact featured prominently on the agenda, which was proposed by the Romanians, who wanted to discuss the procedures of convening the PCC meetings, and determining the agenda, 'the lack of consultations in problems which concern the member states', the potential reforms of the pact, including 'the creation of a permanent organ for foreign policy', both of which the Romanians vehemently opposed, and the 'independent position of each country in problems of foreign policy' as well as its 'sovereign right'.²⁰⁷ The Romanian Declaration of Independence was thus seamlessly applied to Romania's role

²⁰³ *Newsweek*, 10 August 1964, 'The New Rumania: A Satellite Looks West', ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 125/1964, 3-8.

²⁰⁴ Cf. for a very positive description of De Gaulle, whom the Romanians considered 'more intelligent than Mikoyan': 'Minutes of a conversation between Gh. Gheorgiu-Dej with a delegation of the AWP (com. M. Myftiu)', 24 August 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 18/1964, 17.

²⁰⁵ E. Dragomir, 'The Perceived Threat of Hegemonism in Romania during the Second Détente', *Cold War History* 12:1 (2012), 116.

²⁰⁶ 'Summary, trade department', Bucharest, 31 July 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/359, 39.

²⁰⁷ Romanian proposal for the agenda of the discussions between the delegations of the RWP CC and the CPSU CC, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 36/1964, 12-13.

in the Warsaw Pact. It was no coincidence that the Soviet leaders called the declaration 'a manifest of anti-Sovietism'.²⁰⁸

On these issues, the Soviet leaders were mainly forced on the defence, especially when the Cuban Missile Crisis was brought up time and again as the prime example of the Soviet lack of consultation, which ultimately compelled Khrushchev to admit that '[y]ou truly have the full moral high-ground when you criticise us for not informing you about sending missiles to Cuba', even confessing that '[w]e recognise that we are at fault'. On the Albanian issue, with which the Romanian leaders also confronted Khrushchev, he nevertheless refused to yield, emphasising that he 'was more Albanian than the Albanians', but that the Albanians were simply ungrateful.²⁰⁹ Moreover, Khrushchev underlined his great esteem for the Polish leader Gomulka and the East German Ulbricht, while stressing that he had very equal discussions with these WP leaders, and that 'equality' was, accordingly, not a Romanian prerogative.

Meanwhile, the Chinese leadership was well aware of the opportunities the Romanian dissidence offered in terms of further weakening the Soviet Union, and both supported and incited the Romanians against the Soviet leaders in various conversations. Zhou Enlai himself summoned the Romanian ambassador, D. Gheorgiu, on 17 July 1964, in order to point out to what extent the Kremlin had compromised the interests of other communist countries, while comparing the Soviet Union to 'tsarist Russia' and stressing that it desired 'that all socialist countries would be subordinate to the Soviet Union.' Meanwhile, he 'admired with sympathy' the Romanian leaders for their 'resistance against the [great] pressures exercised by the USSR', which 'we notice and it is necessary that we support you.' He even accepted the Romanian invitation to send a Chinese delegation to Romania 'in order to exchange information concerning the resistance made against the pressures exercised by Khrushchev'.²¹⁰ Moreover, the Chinese used the intensified relations with the Romanians by explicitly inciting them and the other Warsaw Pact members against the Soviet leaders, by stating that '[i]f all [WP members] will rise against Khrushchev, then his adventure will be reigned in'.²¹¹ The Chinese clearly realised the WP's potential in eroding Khrushchev's power, and made the Romanians aware of this, too.

The Romanians perfected their newly gained independence by inviting an Albanian delegate to Bucharest at the end of August in order to discuss international relations within the communist camp. The Albanian envoy, Manush Myftiu, highlighted that the 'goal of transforming the Warsaw Pact from a defence treaty of socialist countries into a weapon of blackmail, threat and exploitation, of domination

²⁰⁸ Discussions between delegations of the RWP CC and the CPSU CC, Moscow, July 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 36/1964, 158.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 47-48, 209-210. See *ibid.*, 134-135, 144-148, and 157-159 for further discussions on the Warsaw Pact.

²¹⁰ Conversation between Zhou Enlai and D. Gheorghiu, 17 July 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 93/1963, 45, 47, 49.

²¹¹ 'Minutes of a conversation between a Romanian delegation and Zhou En-Lai, convened at Chinese initiative', 29 September 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 55/1964, I, 25.

in Khrushchev's hands, is clear.' In an attempt to draw Romania into the Albanian camp, Myftiu also predicted that Romania would soon face the same fate as Albania, and would therefore have to form a bloc with China, North Korea and North Vietnam.²¹² The Sino-Soviet split had thus enabled the Romanian leadership to formulate an autonomous course, which also facilitated an anti-Soviet campaign on a domestic level. Romanian sovereignty was consolidated at Soviet expense.

Thus the Sino-Soviet split had again contributed to the emancipation of one of the NSWP countries, since Romania's involvement as 'mediator' had provided it with leverage over the SU. Moreover, it not only 'provided Romania a distinct status within the communist bloc', as Rijnoveanu puts it, but it actually put the Romanian leaders *above* the Warsaw Pact, since they posed as a mediator in a conflict that transcended the confines of the Soviet alliance. Although 'the Romanian leaders were far from having the necessary power to play a significant role in settling the Sino-Soviet divergences', their attempt to do so was sufficient to increase their status.²¹³ The process was much more important to the Romanians than the result. Instead of giving Moscow the moral high-ground in its estrangement from China, the Romanian 'mediation' further eroded Soviet power by vindicating Romanian dissent. After the Sino-Soviet split had revealed that the communist bloc was not a monolith, it provided the Romanians with the opportunity to break through the monolithic structure of the Soviet bloc, too, and had, as such exposed its weakness.

THE IMPACT OF ROMANIAN INDEPENDENCE

On 14 October 1964 Khrushchev's ouster, which will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter, seemed to provide a brief window of opportunity for the improvement of Sino-Soviet relations, since the new leadership allegedly wanted to 'write a new page' in terms of their relations with the Chinese.²¹⁴ In fact, however, the Chinese leaders complained to their Romanian comrades that 'it is surprising that they give the same insults after the fall of Khrushchev'.²¹⁵

Putting their independence into practice, the Romanian leadership vetoed another proposal by Ulbricht to convene a PCC meeting to discuss MLF on 27-28 November 1964.²¹⁶ At a cocktail party in Moscow, in celebration of Khrushchev's

²¹² 'Minutes of a conversation between comrade Gh. Gheorgiu-Dej with a delegation of the AWP CC (com. M. Myftiu)', 24 August 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 18/1964, 10-11.

²¹³ Rijnoveanu, *Perspective on Romania's Involvement*, 5, 10.

²¹⁴ 'Information from CPSU member E.D. Karpescenko on the way to Moscow', 5 November 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 70/1964, 10.

²¹⁵ 'Minutes of the discussions between the Romanian party and government delegation and the Chinese party and government delegation', Moscow, 8 November 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 70/1964, 72.

²¹⁶ Letter from Gheorgiu-Dej to Ulbricht, 19 November, 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 184-185.

ouster, the Romanian foreign minister Maurer explained to Ulbricht that he objected to the method in which the meeting was convened, since the Romanians wanted to know the items on the agenda on time so as to be well prepared.²¹⁷ They nevertheless agreed to an unprecedented compromise, according to which a meeting of deputy foreign ministers would be convened on 10 December 1964, followed by a PCC meeting in January 1965.²¹⁸ The East German leadership had suggested this in complete exasperation at the Romanian obstinacy.²¹⁹

This was a topic of conversation between an East German diplomat in Warsaw and the Polish PUWP member Zenon Kliszko, who defined Albania as ‘the Achilles heel of the socialist camp’, because the Albanian ‘front had indeed spilled over to Romania’. He even expected that ‘Romania would attend the meeting, would confirm that Albania was not there, and would say that it could not participate in this meeting under these circumstances.’²²⁰ The way in which the Romanian leadership had already patterned its own behaviour after that of their Albanian comrades tends to be overlooked in historiography. The Romanians nevertheless reluctantly attended, and stayed, while stressing that they had never considered the meeting necessary in the first place, but that they had only come because the other WP member states had agreed.²²¹

In a conversation with the Chinese ambassador Liu Fan shortly after the meeting the Romanian vice-premier, Emil Bodnaras, explained that they had ‘decided to attend so as not to lose touch with the problems, so as to know what exchange of opinions would take place, (...) so as not to give them cheap arguments against us.’ In order to paralyse the meeting, they had nevertheless given their delegate, Pompiliu Macovei, ‘a limited mandate’, according to which he was ‘not to sign any document whatsoever, nor even to accept the smallest communiqué in the press.’²²² Although an expression of dissidence, the Romanian agreement to the meeting after all underlines again that they were – unlike the Albanians – careful to explore the scope for manoeuvre *within* the Warsaw Pact. The Romanian leaders considered the WP a useful instrument to influence Soviet bloc policy and emphasise Romanian sovereignty through cultivating an autonomous stance, and had no intention to follow the Albanian example.

The Romanians did use the Albanian question in order to underline their own emancipation from the Soviet grip: the Romanian suggestion to invite the Albanians again to the PCC meeting in January met with little enthusiasm, but was ultimately

²¹⁷ ‘Reception on the evening of 7 November’, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 70/1964, 31.

²¹⁸ Letters from Ulbricht to individual Warsaw Pact leaders, 24/11/1964, DY30/3387, 205-216.

²¹⁹ Letter from Ulbricht to Gheorgiu-Dej, 24 November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 201-202.

²²⁰ ‘Memorandum of a conversation between diplomat Mewis und PUWP party member, comrade Zenon Kliszko’, 24 November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 235-236.

²²¹ East German report of the deputy foreign ministers meeting, December 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3393, 17.

²²² Meeting between Emil Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 12 December 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 5/1964, 188.

approved.²²³ In addition, Macovei stressed that all observers should be invited to the PCC meeting in January, too, which would also entail renewed Chinese involvement in the Warsaw Pact. Macovei's suggestions mainly met with an elaborate reply from the Polish deputy foreign minister, Naszkowski, who explained that he agreed in principle that all WP members should be invited to the meeting in January, but that 'considering the Albanian position in recent years, he doubted whether that would be possible'.²²⁴

Moreover, the Romanian deputy foreign minister vetoed both a common communiqué about the contents of the meeting in question and the preparation of a communiqué that would be published after the PCC meeting in January 1965, because it would make the meeting itself redundant. This led to a two hour long discussion, which remained unresolved, but in which the Pole Naszkowski, supported by the Soviet Sorin and the East German Winzer, again took the lead in an attempt to win Macovei over to their stance by presenting two alternative communiqués. Although Macovei vetoed this attempt, too, it is interesting to note that a new dynamics was burgeoning within the Warsaw Pact, in which the Romanian dissidence was mainly countered by a Polish search for alternatives, thus leaving the Kremlin somewhat empty-handed. A meeting without a communiqué was unprecedented, and testified to the way in which the WP had turned into much more than a rhetorical ploy. Soviet choreography had yielded to NSWP manoeuvrability. Only a few drops from the Albanian front had spilled over to Romania.

The Romanian obstinacy frustrated Ulbricht's aims, since they had deliberately limited the meeting to purely 'technical problems about the convention [of the PCC meeting in January]', but created room for genuine discussion within the alliance. As Bodnaras explained to Liu Fan '[a]ccepting a communiqué in the press concerning the meeting of deputy foreign ministers, would have blocked our freedom of action'.²²⁵ The absence of a pre-concocted communiqué for the PCC meeting in January 1965 increased the scope for manoeuvre during that meeting not only for the Romanians, but also for their comrades.

Moreover, Bodnaras emphasised that 'we want to orient the discussions within the framework of the Political Consultative Committee's session in other directions than the other members of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation want'. He had specifically informed the Chinese about this, because he thought that they should join the WP again as observers, as will be explained at greater length in chapter 5. As such they could play a significant role in widening the scope of the Warsaw Pact as a vehicle of the international communist movement 'in order to promote another spirit than that of the whip'. By involving the Chinese so closely in developments within the Warsaw Pact the Romanian leaders did not only raise their status with the Chinese, who

²²³ The new Soviet leadership had allegedly said that 'an atomic bomb would suffice for Albania': Meeting between Liu Fan and Bodnaras, 24 November 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 5/1964, 165.

²²⁴ Meeting between Emil Bodnaras and Liu Fan, Bucharest, 12 December 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 5/1964, 192.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 191-193.

profusely praised their 'decisive and concrete battle for the defence and respect of the just norms of the relations which should exist between socialist countries', but they also attempted to use the potential stance of the Chinese and other observers as an instrument to gain more ground within the WP.²²⁶ This in itself indicates that the Romanian leadership began to attach increasing importance to the alliance, while realising that participation within the WP could turn in their favour.

This was illustrated by the relations between Albania and Romania: whereas Romania even celebrated the 20th birthday of the Albanian People's Republic in Tirana, the Romanian delegates were appointed bad seats at the festivities, refused to applaud, and left the room 'demonstratively' when the Albanians proposed a 'toast to splitter groups in the international communist movement'. Moreover, Hoxha's explicit vow 'to continue the polemics' could count on little Romanian enthusiasm.²²⁷ The Romanian leaders only patterned their behaviour after the Albanians within limits.

CONCLUSION: EMANCIPATION AND MULTILATERALISATION

The situation within the Warsaw Pact halfway through 1964 seemed a far cry from Khrushchev's optimism four years earlier. The Sino-Soviet split had escalated, and the dynamics within the Warsaw Pact had begun to spiral out of Soviet control. Instead of serving as an instrument to further Soviet interests, it inadvertently turned into an instrument which some of the NSWP members skilfully employed to undermine the Soviet hegemony and strengthen their own domestic position. Khrushchev was more often than not at the receiving end of the initiatives of other WP members. The Sino-Soviet Split was bound to result in a Pyrrhic victory for the SU.

The defiance of tiny Albania was particularly humiliating, since it exposed the Soviet incapacity to prevent even its smallest ally from siding with its biggest rival. Chinese protection provided the Albanian leadership with an escape-route out of the Soviet grip. Keeping up the appearances of communist unity and fearing an escalation in Sino-Soviet relations, the Kremlin was weak in the face of Albanian defiance. The Albanian leadership thus set a precedent by using the WP as an instrument to further its own national interests and undermine Soviet ones, instead of vice versa. The Albanian emancipation from Moscow's grip facilitated the WP's multilateralisation by challenging Soviet unilateralism and raising the self-consciousness of the other NSWP members.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 196-197.

²²⁷ Information report to the ministry of foreign affairs of the GDR, section Romania', 17 December 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/368, 228. Cf. for the similar Romanian account: 'Visit of a party and governmental delegation of the Romanian People's Republic into the Albanian People's Republic with the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the liberation of Albania', ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 18/1964, 26.

Both the Albanian refusal to leave the alliance and the Mongolian application to join it not only refute the common assumption of the WP as *involuntary* alliance, but also illustrate how the Warsaw Treaty could be employed to undermine the Soviet position. Using both the treaty and the Sino-Soviet split as an instrument to argue against Soviet support of the Mongolian admission, the Romanian and Polish leaders increased their room for manoeuvre and formulated an individual response. Although the failure of the Mongolian application prevented the WP's reorientation against China *de iure*, the Mongolian episode illustrated that the alliance threatened to become reoriented against China *de facto*.

In the deliberations about the Mongolian application in 1963 the split with China loomed large, whereas NATO did not even feature. The Warsaw Pact was not only, as Vojtech Mastny argues, perennially 'in search of a purpose', but in the early sixties it even seemed to have lost its original purpose of uniting in the face of 'imperialism'.²²⁸ WP unity vis-à-vis China had become more important. With the Chinese observers, the Chinese interests had been ousted, too. The split with its former ally, China, fundamentally challenged the WP's communist credentials, which had not been enshrined in the Warsaw Treaty anyhow. The subsequent identity crisis of the alliance also contributed to the increased room for manoeuvre, since the NSWP leaders could participate in reshaping the identity of both the pact and its members.

The Romanian leaders in particular seized the opportunity provided by the Sino-Soviet split, since they continued to explore their possibilities in order to also challenge the SU in a bilateral context in the period after the Mongolian application. By presenting themselves as a mediator between China and the Soviet Union, they pulled some of the strings and actually broke through the institutional confines of the Warsaw Pact. Having successfully refashioned their own identity from Soviet pawn to Soviet 'equal', the Romanian leaders began to define the rules for a new game, which would have a huge impact on the alliance in the second half of the sixties. By leaving the initiative to Romania and even approving Romanian mediation, Khrushchev increased the Romanian scope for manoeuvre so much that he indirectly sanctioned the Romanian Declaration of Independence. The Romanian 'mediation' had enabled the Romanians to emphasise their sovereignty and independence from the Soviet Union. Time and again, Khrushchev was defeated with his own weapons, by overplaying his hand and failing to consider the consequences of his brinkmanship.

After the Romanian leadership had successfully prevented the WP from turning *against* China through the potential admission of Mongolia, it also attempted to draw China again into the alliance by closely consulting with the Chinese ambassador in Bucharest in the wake of its Declaration of Independence. Whereas the Albanian leadership challenged the Soviet authority within the WP to strengthen its domestic position and to further national interests, the Romanian leadership pursued the same

²²⁸ V. Mastny, 'The Warsaw Pact: an Alliance in Search of a Purpose', in M. A. Heiss and S. V. Papacosma (eds.), *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intra-bloc Conflicts* (Ohio, 2008), 141-160.

goal by playing the Soviet Union and China off against each other, while pretending to mediate between the two. It had however, carefully studied the Albanian precedent, and understood what the limits were. Although the Romanian emancipation largely developed outside the confines of the WP, it paved the way for its *Sonderweg* within the alliance in the second half of the sixties. Instead of siding with the Chinese and defying the Kremlin, the Romanian leaders adopted a more subtle strategy: they emancipated from the Soviet grip, while remaining within the Soviet alliance.

At the same time the Sino-Soviet split had increased the importance of the WP, since it remained as the only platform to close ranks with the Kremlin after the communist movement had crumbled. With the major communist powers moving in two directions, the communist movement had effectively ceased to operate from 1960 onwards. Although the break in the communist movement spilled over into the WP through the Soviet-Albanian split, the WP could never provide a viable alternative to the communist movement. Apart from the fact that it was considerably smaller, its *intergovernmental* nature prevented it from turning into a forum of communist *parties*. Within the WP European security, not communist ideology, was paramount, even though the WP members still had to find a way to separate the two. The WP's increasing importance over the communist movement accordingly meant a considerable shift from ideology to security within the Soviet bloc.

The Sino-Soviet split had not only exposed Sino-Soviet unity as a fairy-tale, but it had also undermined the consensus within the WP. The WP monolith, too, had turned into a mosaic, which was neither a paper tiger nor a cardboard castle. In the shadow of the Sino-Soviet split the WP had developed a dynamics of its own, which turned it into an alliance that was not as rosy-coloured as Khrushchev hoped in 1960, but was at least multi-coloured. That in itself was a notable achievement, since the embryonic emancipation of some of the smaller allies actually began to turn the WP into a more multilateral alliance. After Albania and Romania had called the Soviet bluff, the ground-rules were established for an altogether new game.



Enver Hoxha at the top of his power in 1971.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/00/Enver_hoxha_-_white_background.jpg

3

**THE WARSAW PACT
COMPROMISED BY THE GERMAN QUESTION**

Comrade Ulbricht sleeps soundly, while we struggle with his problems.¹
Khrushchev to the Romanian delegation in Gagra, March 1964

The German Question was both the Warsaw Pact's *raison d'être* and its greatest bone of contention. Founded in response to West Germany's accession to NATO, the WP was an important instrument to boost the status of East Germany. The East German leader, Walter Ulbricht, became increasingly aware of this, and in the first half of the sixties he began to use the alliance as a platform to force a speedy resolution of the second Berlin Crisis. After Khrushchev's six-month ultimatum on a German peace treaty and the demilitarisation of West Berlin in November 1958 had expired with impunity, Ulbricht considered the time ripe to move the issue into the WP's multilateral arena.² This nevertheless implied that other WP members were involved, too, such as the Polish leader Gomulka, whose interests were somewhat different.

Caught in an increasing tension between Polish and East German interests, the Kremlin faced the task of positioning itself on such complicated issues as the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961, a peaceful resolution of the second Berlin Crisis, and NATO's project of nuclear sharing through Multilateral nuclear Forces (MLF), which could also affect the nuclearisation of the FRG. In the shadow of the Sino-Soviet split the Soviet stance on the German Question was of particular significance: the Kremlin could ill afford to be checkmated on too many chessboards simultaneously. Nor could the East German and Polish leaderships afford to see their sovereignty and security compromised by Khrushchev's inclination to grow soft on the FRG and tolerate its nuclearisation, even though Ulbricht and Gomulka also had conflicting interests on this matter. The Soviet leadership could no longer go it alone

¹ 'Minutes of the plenary session of the RWP CC from 15-22 April 1964', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 16/1964, 44.

² See Chapter 1 of this book for an explanation of the Second Berlin Crisis in the period 1958-1960, 59-63.

on the German Question, and the Warsaw Pact became the instrument for going it together. This chapter accordingly complements the previous one on the Sino-Soviet split, by examining the period from January 1960 to December 1964 from the perspective of the German Question, while focusing on the members with the greatest stake in the German Question, namely the GDR and Poland. These two chapters together provide a comprehensive account of the issues, which affected the dynamics of the WP in the first half of the 1960s.

The second Berlin Crisis and the German Question seem to have been exhaustively studied, but the accounts, which treat the Berlin Crisis from a multilateral angle, tend to focus on the Western view. The historians William Smyser and Marc Trachtenberg both examine the various interests of the bigger NATO allies – France, the United Kingdom, the FRG – in their iconic monographs on the German Question.³ Although Trachtenberg also draws a link between the second Berlin Crisis and the nuclearisation of West Germany, he does not address the Crisis from the Eastern European perspective. Moreover, the scant treatment of the Warsaw Pact's response to MLF stands in sharp contrast to the wealth of literature on the divisions within NATO on the project of nuclear sharing.⁴ The project that sparked one of NATO's gravest crises *and* a call for increased consultations, had a similar impact on its Eastern European counterpart.

In so far as the second Berlin Crisis has been studied from an Eastern European perspective, the focus has been on the bilateral relationship between Khrushchev and Ulbricht.⁵ The American historian Hope Harrison has even dedicated her book *Driving the Soviets up the Wall* to this topic, in which she traces 'the birth of a super-ally', namely the GDR, which left the habitual pattern of a 'subservient, dependent client', to one of the 'tail wagging the dog.'⁶ In Harrison's influential account the Warsaw Pact is, however, not used as an explanatory factor of Ulbricht's increased leverage over Khrushchev. Moreover, Harrison falls into the common pitfall of focusing on Ulbricht's role in the second Berlin Crisis at Gomulka's expense. The only historian who has paid some attention to Gomulka is Douglas Selvage, but he does not view the impact of Gomulka's actions from the WP's multilateral perspective,

³ W.R. Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin. The Cold War Struggle over Germany* (London, 1999), and M. Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace. The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, 1999).

⁴ A. Locher, *Crisis? What Crisis? NATO, de Gaulle, and the Future of the Alliance, 1963-1966* (Berlin, 2010), and A. Priest, 'From Hardware to Software: the End of the MLF and the rise of the Nuclear Planning Group', in A. Wenger et al. (eds.), *Transforming NATO in the Cold War. Challenges beyond Deterrence in the 1960s* (Oxford and New York, 2007), 148-161, and H. Haftendorn, *NATO and the Nuclear Revolution. A Crisis of Credibility, 1966-1967* (Oxford, 1996).

⁵ Cf. G. Wettig, *Chruschtschows Berlin-Krise 1958 bis 1963. Drohpolitik und Mauerbau* (Berlin, 2006) (more nuanced); M. Lemke, *Die Berlinkrise 1958 bis 1963. Interesse und Handlungsspielräume der SED im Ost West Konflikt* (Berlin, 1995); H. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall. Soviet East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton, 2005); J.L. Gaddis, *We Now Know. Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford, 1997); V.M. Zubok and C. Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War. From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Harvard, 1996), for varying accounts of the extent to which Ulbricht successfully pressured Khrushchev into building a wall.

⁶ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 12.

but concentrates on the relationship between the Polish and East German leaders instead.⁷

This chapter therefore aims to redress this balance by assessing to what extent Khrushchev's brinkmanship in the German Question and his stance on MLF created scope for the leaders directly affected by the German Question, namely the Polish leader Wladyslaw Gomulka and the East German leader Walter Ulbricht, to formulate their own stance within the WP, and emancipate themselves from the Soviet grip. By tracing the alliance's role in legitimising the Berlin Wall, resolving the second Berlin Crisis, and formulating a stance vis à vis MLF, a new light will be shed on the linkage of these questions from a multilateral perspective. Starting with the PCC meeting in February 1960, this chapter examines the way in which the interplay between the WP and the German Question culminated in a plea for increased foreign policy coordination in 1964 in an attempt to forestall a crisis akin to the one that threatened NATO.

WARSAW PACT (DIS)HARMONY ON THE GERMAN QUESTION

In September 1959 Khrushchev thought he had achieved a break-through in the peaceful resolution of the second Berlin Crisis. Judging his visit to President Eisenhower in the United States in September 1959 his "hour of glory", because "the most powerful capitalist country in the world [had] invited a Communist to visit", Khrushchev was easily inclined to consider the meeting with the American president at his 'dacha' in Camp David a great success.⁸ Since Khrushchev's ultimatum on a peace treaty with both Germanys and the demilitarisation of West Berlin had already been completed for four months, it was imperative to reach an understanding with Eisenhower on the German Question. Eisenhower conceded that America was "not trying to perpetuate the situation in Berlin", and promised to attend a four-power conference, much to Khrushchev's delight, while forcing Khrushchev to withdraw his ultimatum in turn.⁹ Although the meeting with Eisenhower had by no means resolved the stalemate on the Berlin question, Khrushchev returned to the Soviet Union euphoric, and promised a huge crowd that welcomed him on his arrival in Moscow a 'new era of peace'.¹⁰

⁷ D. Selvage, *The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Nonproliferation, 1963-1965*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 32 (Washington, 2001); D. Selvage, 'The Warsaw Pact and the German Question, 1955-1970', in M. A. Heiss and S. V. Papacosma (eds.), *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intra-bloc Conflicts* (Ohio, 2008), 178-192, and D. Selvage, 'The End of the Berlin Crisis. New Evidence from the Polish and East German Archives', in C. Ostermann (ed.), *Cold War Flashpoints*, CWIHP Bulletin No. 11 (Washington, 1998), 218-229.

⁸ W. Taubman, *Khrushchev. The Man and his Era* (London, 2003), 419.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 438.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 440.

It was in this mood that Khrushchev convened the WP members on 4 February 1960 for the first PCC meeting since he issued his Berlin ultimatum in November 1958. His brinkmanship now seemed to have paid off, and his authority had received a major boost. Breathing 'the spirit of camp David', Khrushchev hoped to use the WP to consolidate his alleged gains concerning a peace treaty. The PCC meeting was preceded by a conference of the WP's foreign ministers, at which the Soviet prepared agenda was supposedly approved 'without discussion'.¹¹ The draft declaration, which was to be published after the PCC meeting, nevertheless provoked considerable discussion, and 'the delegations, especially those of the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia and Poland, presented a number of substantive and editorial comments'. It is no coincidence that these countries in particular commented on the declaration, since they had a vested interest in the matter: recognition of the GDR would also secure the inviolability of the borders they shared with East Germany. The Kremlin seemed to appreciate this fact, and was therefore prepared to accept the comments of its allies.¹²

During the actual PCC meeting the WP allies rallied behind Khrushchev's confident stance, according to which 'we are not going to make any compromise on principle',¹³ and welcomed 'with great satisfaction the agreement reached by the Soviet Union, the U.S.A., Great Britain and France on the convening of a summit conference in Paris in May of this year'.¹⁴ The four powers that occupied Berlin would attend the Paris summit in order to reach a peaceful resolution on the second Berlin Crisis, and the status of West Berlin. The NSWP members also supported Khrushchev's proposal to sign a separate treaty with the GDR '[i]f the Western powers continue to delay the negotiations of the peace treaty (...), with all the resulting consequences for West Berlin'. Gomulka in particular seized the opportunity to assert Polish interests, and added that he considered 'the conclusion of a peace treaty (...) the only realistic, current possibility for resolving the German Question', since the 'draft declaration correctly underscores the inviolability of the Western borders of Poland and Czechoslovakia'.¹⁵ Khrushchev's brinkmanship in the German Question impinged on the national

¹¹ V. Mastny, 'Meeting of the PCC, Moscow, 4 February 1960, Editorial Note', PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17885&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹² 'Report on the PCC Meeting for Czechoslovak Party Politburo', 20 February 1960, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17884&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹³ 'Report on PCC Meeting by the Bulgarian Prime Minister (Anton Iugov) to Bulgarian Politburo Session', 11 February 1960, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17883&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹⁴ 'Declaration', 4 February 1960, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17643&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹⁵ 'Report for Czechoslovak Party Politburo', 20 February 1960, PHP.

interests of several NSWP members, who were accordingly stimulated to use the WP as an instrument to promote their own goals.

The ensuing declaration, too, underscored the importance of the recognition of the borders, which probably reflected the considerable Polish and Czechoslovak input. Arguing that '[t]he Warsaw Pact states declare their support for the measures adopted by the GDR government with a view to ensuring peace against the revanchist policy of the Adenauer government', it was emphasised that '[t]he combined might of the socialist camp is a reliable guarantee that neither encroachments on the GDR's independence, nor a new seizure of Poland's Western lands, nor violation of the integrity of Czechoslovakia's borders, will be permitted.'¹⁶ Repudiating West German 'revanchism and border revision and (...) the policy of German remilitarisation and atomic armament', the declaration clearly illustrates the extent to which a German peace treaty should serve to undermine any West German attempts to expand eastward. The conditions of the peace treaty were intended to curb West German nuclear ambitions, which constituted a serious threat to all Eastern European countries.¹⁷ The 'complete unanimity', which was habitually emphasised in the ensuing communiqué, was accordingly more than mere rhetoric.¹⁸ United against a common West German enemy, the WP members were unified by the division of Germany on the surface. The German Question nevertheless caused tension at a more profound level.

The East German leadership was not at all pleased with the way in which its Polish comrades appropriated the 'German problem'. Ten days after the PCC meeting the Polish leadership convened the Sejm (Polish parliament) in order to claim the German Question as "the key problem of Polish foreign policy", while also emphasising 'that Poland stands "in the centre" of the current system of international relations, and actively influences it'.¹⁹ The Polish foreign minister Adam Rapacki explicitly linked his own foreign policy to that of the WP, by ensuring the Sejm that the consensus at the PCC meeting was fully in line with Polish foreign policy,²⁰ and stressed 'that Poland actively participates in this policy', *inter alia* through his own proposal of 'the creation of a nuclear free zone in Middle Europe', which was a reference to the famous Rapacki plan.²¹ At the same time the Poles took the initiative in creating a common stance on disarmament with their Czechoslovak and East

¹⁶ 'Declaration', 4 February 1960, PHP.

¹⁷ Cf. Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, for the link between the second Berlin Crisis and the nuclearisation of the FRG.

¹⁸ 'The exchange of views revealed complete unanimity': 'Communiqué', 4 February 1960, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=17880&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹⁹ 'About several questions on foreign policy, which were discussed at the Sejm on 16 and 17 February 1960', SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV/2/20/284, 362, 367.

²⁰ "'Our foreign policy – a policy of peace'", speech by the foreign minister Adam Rapacki in the Sejm, 17 February 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV/2/20/184, 376.

²¹ 'Resolution of the Sejm of the PRP, Trybuna Ludu', 17 February 1960, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV/2/20/184, 389-389b. Cf. Chapter 1 of this book on the Rapacki plan, 43.

German neighbours. This left their East German allies somewhat empty-handed, who accordingly criticised the 'exaggeration of Poland's active role in foreign policy'.²² It also illustrates the way in which the Poles, too, could use the German Question to formulate their own foreign policy goals, while employing their active participation in the WP to boost the prestige of both Poland and its leadership. The German Question had thus turned into a Polish trump.

Khrushchev, meanwhile, was beginning to lose his grip on the German Question. His confidence in a peaceful resolution of the Berlin Crisis was thoroughly undermined by the U2 spy incident on 1 May 1960, during which an American spy plane was shot down on Soviet territory, just before the superpower summit was about to take place in Paris. Khrushchev's procrastination had led to humiliation instead of victory. Pressure grew on Khrushchev to show his teeth, and to avoid antagonising the hardliners in Berlin, Moscow or Beijing further. A deliberately unrealistic request for Eisenhower's apologies during the Paris conference and the fact that Khrushchev did not feel taken seriously ensured the failure of the summit.²³ Although the increased antagonism greatly appealed to Ulbricht, it was not the East German leader, but the American president who had inadvertently compelled Khrushchev's more unyielding stance. There was no tail wagging the dog in this case; this was a competition between two dogs.

BRINKMANSHIP VERSUS CAUTION

Khrushchev's initial reaction to the failed Paris summit was not brinkmanship but caution. He did not want to create the impression that he had deliberately thwarted the summit in order to increase his antagonism towards West Germany, and he continued by procrastinating, much to Ulbricht's despair.²⁴ Caught between the Western refusal to give in on the one hand and Ulbricht's pressure to undertake action on the other hand, Khrushchev's reduced room for manoeuvre resulted in inaction on his part.²⁵ Ulbricht, meanwhile, decided to fill the vacuum that Khrushchev had created by acting unilaterally, and from August 1960 onwards he took measures to restrict travel into East Berlin, despite Soviet warnings to become more 'flexible' and attempts to prevent

²² Memorandum about a conversation with the Czechoslovak diplomat Rezek on 29/02/1960 at the Ostbahnhof, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV2/20/184, 358.

²³ Minutes of the failed preliminary Paris summit, 15-18 May 1960, DY 30/3507, e.g. 208-209 and 233.

²⁴ Cf. V.M. Zubok, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis (1958-1962)*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 6 (Washington, 1993), and Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*; Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin*; H. Harrison, *Ulbricht and the Concrete Rose: New Archival Evidence on the Dynamics of Soviet East German Relations and the Berlin Crisis, 1958-1961*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 5 (Washington, 1993), Appendix A, 71.

²⁵ Cf. Zubok, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis*, 20 and Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 139 on Khrushchev's diminished room for manoeuvre.

him from acting unilaterally.²⁶ As Harrison argues, '[t]he same lever Khrushchev sought to use against the West (access to Berlin) he found Ulbricht using without his approval during the final year of the Berlin Crisis.'²⁷

Moreover, just as Khrushchev used the Berlin Crisis to arrange summit meetings with the US leadership, so Ulbricht used it to raise the stakes of the bilateral meetings between him and Khrushchev. Having secured such a meeting on 30 November 1960, Khrushchev promised a separate peace treaty with the GDR by the end of 1961, if a joint one did not materialise. Considering the potential failure to conclude a peace treaty in 1961 a great 'blow' to Soviet prestige,²⁸ Khrushchev seemed confident that he could deal with an economic embargo from the West that might result from a separate peace treaty.²⁹ Although he rebuked Ulbricht for making the East German economy too dependent on West Germany instead of directing it towards Eastern Europe, he seemed to offer Ulbricht unqualified support under the motto: 'the GDR's needs are also our needs'. Ulbricht nevertheless overplayed his hand by proposing to single-handedly negotiate with the three Western powers, while refusing to recognise the FRG as a 'sovereign state'. Emphasising that '[w]e are not obligated to repeat your position', Khrushchev clearly signalled that Ulbricht went too far.³⁰ Khrushchev gradually began to realise that he had invested Ulbricht with more power than he had bargained for by raising the stakes of a German peace treaty.

The more acute problem for the prestige and economy of the Soviet bloc was the exodus of refugees from the GDR, which had escalated by the beginning of 1961. The status of the GDR was accordingly under threat from different sides: internally, because many of its citizens attempted to flee, and externally, because its existence was not recognised. This heightened the urgency for the conclusion of a peace treaty, which would at least provide East Germany with *de facto* recognition of its sovereignty. This seemed a non-starter considering Khrushchev's procrastination. In fact the East German leadership was much more impressed with its Polish neighbour Gomulka, who had paid a very successful visit to New York, as well as succeeding in 'involving a wide circle of the population in the foreign policy problems' and creating 'good conditions for the understanding of the Moscow declaration'.³¹ Ulbricht therefore tightened the bonds with Poland, by intensifying the diplomatic contacts and increasing the number of East German consulates in Poland,³² while also keeping a

²⁶ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 147. For a more detailed discussion of Ulbricht's unilateral actions, cf. *ibid.*, 144-147.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.

²⁸ Harrison, *Concrete Rose*, Appendix A.

²⁹ Selvage, 'The End of the Berlin Crisis', 218.

³⁰ Harrison, *Concrete Rose*, Appendix A, 74.

³¹ 'Memorandum about a conversation of comrade Moldt with comrade Stasiak, chef of the department of propaganda in the PUWP CC on 9 January 1961', Warsaw 12 January 1961', SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV/2/20/185, 23-25.

³² 'Re: Establishment of consulates of the German Democratic Republic in the People's Republic of Poland', 25 January 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV/2/20/185, 47-52.

close watch on the Polish relations with the FRG.³³ In order to make any progress on the issue of a peace treaty, Ulbricht needed Gomulka's support just as much as Khrushchev's. The Polish stake in the German Question had therefore provided Gomulka with diplomatic leverage.

Still fearing further Soviet paralysis, Ulbricht wanted to involve his Warsaw Pact allies in the matter. Ulbricht did not only request another meeting with Khrushchev in a letter on 18 January 1961, 'with the goal of raising the authority of the GDR in future negotiations', but he also proposed that 'after the consultation of the party and governmental delegations of the USSR and GDR, a meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of Warsaw Pact States take place,' since 'until now, the majority of the Warsaw Pact states have considered the peaceful resolution of the German Question and the West Berlin question as a matter which only concerns the Soviet Union and the GDR'.³⁴ Not getting anywhere on a bilateral level, Ulbricht accordingly seemed to think that a discussion of a peace treaty within the WP's multilateral framework might provide him with additional leverage over Khrushchev. Meanwhile, Ulbricht organised a trip of a GDR delegation to China without Soviet approval, since he was prone to "use the relationship with the PRC in bargaining with the Soviet Union," as a former GDR diplomat in Beijing explained.³⁵ Although Ulbricht by no means went so far as his Albanian and Romanian allies in exploiting the Sino-Soviet split to put the Kremlin under pressure, he occasionally played the Chinese card in the early 1960s, when the Sino-Soviet split had not yet become irreversible.

Khrushchev nevertheless moved more shrewdly than he has often been credited for. However 'boldly' the 'tail (...) wagged the dog',³⁶ the PCC meeting, which was about to take place in March 1961, was *not* convened at Ulbricht's request, *pave* Harrison and Zubok.³⁷ A closer reading of Khrushchev's response on 30 January reveals that Ulbricht's manipulation of Khrushchev had its limits. Although Khrushchev supported the idea of a bilateral meeting, he put Ulbricht on hold concerning the suggested convention of a PCC meeting by arguing that 'during this [bilateral] meeting we will discuss your proposal about the convention of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact for the discussion of the question of the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany'.³⁸

Meanwhile, Khrushchev had already written a letter to all WP leaders on 24 January in which he proposed a PCC meeting in Moscow at the end of March on modernisation of the WP armed forces.³⁹ By omitting the German Question from the

³³ 'The relations between Poland and West Germany', Warsaw, 10 February 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV/2/20/185, 74-99.

³⁴ Letter from Ulbricht to Khrushchev, 18 January 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3508, 59-73.

³⁵ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 165. This is the explanation from Horst Bric, a former GDR diplomat at the embassy in Beijing.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁷ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 163, and Zubok, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis*, 24.

³⁸ Letter from Khrushchev to Ulbricht, 30 January 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3508, 114-116.

³⁹ Letter from Khrushchev to SED CC, 24 January 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3386, 116-117.

agenda, he seemed to have tacitly reminded Ulbricht that the Kremlin still called the shots. The bilateral meeting never materialised at all, and the PCC meeting, which was convened on 28-29 March 1961, accordingly did not take place *after* the bilateral Soviet-GDR meeting, thus depriving Ulbricht of the opportunity to coordinate his stance with the Kremlin.⁴⁰ Moreover, Khrushchev underlined in his letter to Ulbricht that '[i]f we don't succeed in coming to an understanding with Kennedy, we will, as agreed, choose together with you the time for their implementation'.⁴¹ Super power negotiations were still priority number one for Khrushchev. The tail wagged the dog somewhat less boldly than it had intended.

THE WARSAW PACT AS ULBRICHT'S INSTRUMENT

In late February 1961 Khrushchev received the much coveted invitation from US President John F. Kennedy, who had been inaugurated one month earlier, to another summit in May or June. Khrushchev's stance in the Berlin Crisis was accordingly one of the central topics of the PCC meeting in Moscow on 28-29 March, which was nevertheless overshadowed by the Albanian question, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Starting his speech with Kennedy's suggestion to meet in May in order 'to exchange opinions', Khrushchev attempted to impress his WP allies by promising that '[we] will not needle them unnecessarily', and by stressing that 'it is very important that the socialist countries demonstrate a united, tight-ranked front also with respect to the peaceful settlement of the German issue.' Confronted with the Sino-Soviet split and Albanian defiance during this meeting, unity was all the more imperative.

Khrushchev continued to underline that a separate peace treaty with the GDR was only a last resort, if a peace treaty 'with both German states' were to fail. He explained his optimism by arguing that '[t]he issue [of a peace settlement] gave us strong leverage, allowing us to affect the position of Western powers in many areas of our relations,' while forcing them 'to sit with us and discuss the most pressing international problems.' Relishing the opportunity of any more super power discussions, Khrushchev emphasised that he would not undertake any action before the next super power summit with Kennedy. Although Khrushchev underlined his firm commitment to a separate peace treaty with the GDR in the worst case scenario, he also emphasised that 'our governments will probably have to exchange opinions, taking into account the current situation and circumstances, before the final decision is made and appropriate actions are coordinated.'⁴² Whereas Ulbricht might have hoped

⁴⁰ Letter from Khrushchev to WP leaders, 15 March 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3386, 120-121.

⁴¹ Harrison, *Concrete Rose*, 88.

⁴² 'Speech by the First Secretary of the CC of the CPSU (Nikita S. Khrushchev)', 29 March 1961, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17897&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

that a WP conference could serve to speed things up, Khrushchev preferred to use the alliance as an instrument to slow down Ulbricht's unilateral collision course.

Ulbricht nevertheless tried to underline the 'necessity' of a quick resolution in his own speech, and rebuked his allies for already 'having left the Western powers two years time to get used to the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany'. He accordingly emphasised 'the necessity' of coordinated action within the WP, while underlining the sovereignty of the GDR and its role as a 'bastion of peace' in the world. Although he supported Khrushchev's stance, he bypassed the Soviet Union altogether by explaining that the Central Committee of the 'Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands' (SED) had proposed five points to the West German president 'in order to pave the way to a peaceful resolution'. These points were, however, mere propaganda, since a West German response to his proposals would constitute *de facto* recognition of the GDR, which was out of the question. While narrowly focussing on the interests of the GDR, Ulbricht tried to prod his comrades into action by using the possibility that 'the failure of a peace treaty (...) facilitates the atomic armament of the West German militarists' as leverage over his allies and using the exodus of refugees as an argument to close the sectoral border in Berlin. Arguing at the same time that he planned to control West Berlin in the near future instead of Khrushchev, he already asked his allies for money in case of a West German economic blockade.⁴³

In his attempt to use the Warsaw Pact as an instrument to strengthen Khrushchev's resolve regarding a peace treaty, Ulbricht had overplayed his hand: the other allies 'argued against the closing of the borders with West Berlin' with Khrushchev's support.⁴⁴ The ensuing communiqué did not echo Ulbricht's militant stance, but merely mentioned the necessity of 'concluding a peace treaty with both German states, and, in this connection, rendering harmless the seat of danger in West Berlin by converting it into a demilitarised free city.' The GDR did not even enter the equation, let alone a separate peace treaty with the GDR or the transfer of access rights to East Berlin to Ulbricht. The communiqué did, however, focus more explicitly on the dangers of the 'equipment [of the West German army] with missile-nuclear weapons', which illustrates that the nuclearisation of West Germany began to overshadow the recognition of East Germany.⁴⁵ Ulbricht's proactive stance had forced Khrushchev to retreat: he was presumably loth to invest Ulbricht with more power. The PCC meeting had accordingly served to moderate Ulbricht's unilateral actions, rather than catalysing those of Khrushchev.

⁴³ Ulbricht's speech, 29 March 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3386, 161-180.

⁴⁴ Zubok, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis*, 24-5. Cf. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 169: 'According to Sejna [the Czechoslovak minister of defence], "Ulbricht put forward a proposal to make crossing the border from East to West Berlin impossible.... But none of the Warsaw Pact states agreed, [and] Romania opposed it especially vehemently."'

⁴⁵ 'Communiqué', 29 March 1961, PHP,

<http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17886&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

It was, however, the first time that an extraordinary meeting of the East German Politburo was convened in order to discuss the PCC meeting.⁴⁶ This illustrates that the East Germans began to consider the alliance an important instrument for East German foreign policy objectives. In February 1960 they had still paid more attention to an agricultural conference than the PCC meeting in their internal reports.⁴⁷ Moreover, the very dynamics of the Berlin Crisis contributed to the emancipation of *all* WP allies, since Khrushchev's zeal to 'exchange opinions' and coordinate 'appropriate actions' went beyond mere rhetoric:⁴⁸ if Khrushchev's brinkmanship on the German Question were to escalate into war, he would have to rely on his allies for military support, which forced him to take them seriously. The crisis would not only 'give an impetus for the transformation of the Warsaw Pact from mainly an accessory of Soviet diplomacy to something more akin to a military alliance',⁴⁹ as we shall see in the next chapter, but it would also plant the seeds for foreign policy coordination.

RAISING THE STAKES AGAIN

A letter from the Soviet ambassador Pervukhin in Berlin to Soviet foreign minister Gromyko in May 1961 shows how the Soviet and East German sides were growing apart concerning the peace treaty. Emphasising that 'our [East German] friends do not always stick to the precise line and allow some vacillation', Pervukhin added that 'our German friends sometimes exercise impatience and a somewhat one-sided approach to this problem, not always studying the interests of the entire socialist camp or the international situation at the given moment'. He was critical of the East German idea that it could negotiate directly with the Western powers after the conclusion of a peace treaty – which was obviously not in Soviet interests – and suggested concluding 'a temporary agreement on West Berlin' to normalise the situation in West Berlin in negotiations with the three Western powers.⁵⁰ The Soviet leaders were not at all keen to yield their bargaining power to Ulbricht, and therefore moderated their stance on the peace treaty.

Khrushchev, meanwhile, was far from inclined to forego his prerogative of negotiating with the Western powers, and considered the super power summit in Vienna on 3-4 June more decisive than Ulbricht's pressure. When the summit with the American president failed, because of 'Khrushchev's aggressive, almost threatening,

⁴⁶ 'Protocol No. 15/61, of the extraordinary session of the politburo on Saturday 1 April 1961', SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/JIV2/2A 813, 1.

⁴⁷ 'Protocol No. 6/60, of the session of the politburo on Thursday, 8 February 1960', SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/JIV2/2/687, 1.

⁴⁸ 'Speech by the First Secretary (Khrushchev)' 29 March 1961, PHP.

⁴⁹ V. Mastny, 'Meeting of the PCC, Moscow, 28-29 March 1961, Editorial Note', PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17899&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

⁵⁰ Harrison, *Concrete Rose*, Appendix D.

tone', Khrushchev's policy options narrowed.⁵¹ Kennedy had emphasised that the Western powers would under no circumstances leave West Berlin, but were less concerned with bilateral agreements between the Soviet Union and the GDR, which would not impinge on Western rights.⁵² In order to save face Khrushchev still emphasised his commitment to a separate peace treaty with the GDR, but, considering the risks that would entail, this remained an empty threat.

Having lost faith in Khrushchev's political clout, Ulbricht again turned to Gomulka, explaining 'that the struggle for the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany and for the resolution of the West Berlin problem had entered a new phase' after the failed super power summit in Vienna. Emphasising that 'West Berlin is a hole through which 1 billion Marks flees our Republic annually', Ulbricht suggested closer economic cooperation between the GDR, Poland and Czechoslovakia.⁵³ He also prodded Khrushchev into action by writing him that '[i]t is also important through the joint efforts of all socialist countries to further discredit even more German revanchism and militarism, (...) and at the same time to thoroughly prepare the conclusion of a peace treaty in the countries of the Warsaw Treaty states.' Emphasising that 'West German imperialism (...) demands nuclear weapons for NATO, i.e. obviously its own army', Ulbricht underscored the urgency of a peace treaty yet again.⁵⁴

It was clear to Khrushchev that some progress had to be made after the failed summit with Kennedy, and he finally conceded Ulbricht's initial request that it would be 'useful if a consultation of the first secretaries of the communist and workers' parties of the countries of the Warsaw Pact would take place as soon as possible.'⁵⁵ Khrushchev allowed Ulbricht to convene the WP first secretaries for a meeting from 3-5 August in Moscow, thus unprecedentedly foregoing the Soviet prerogative of convening such meetings, and enabling Ulbricht to present the construction of the wall as a united WP initiative.⁵⁶ The meeting was, however, not conducted within the framework of the PCC, since it primarily dealt with an *internal* issue, and only the party leaders were invited. In order to heighten the sense of urgency, Ulbricht told Soviet ambassador Pervukhin at the end of June 'to tell Khrushchev that "if the present situation of open borders remains, collapse is inevitable."⁵⁷ Although Ulbricht used this argument to put more pressure on the conclusion of a separate peace treaty, he had, in fact, overshot the mark by introducing a new argument. The refugee problem

⁵¹ A. Dobrynin, *In Confidence. Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents (1962-1986)* (New York, 1995), 45.

⁵² Cf. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 175.

⁵³ Letter from Ulbricht to Gomulka, draft of the political part of the letter by Winzer, June 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3655, 36.

⁵⁴ Harrison, *Concrete 'Rose'*, 96.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Letter from Ulbricht to WP leaders, convening WP meeting (no date), SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3386, 212-213.

⁵⁷ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 185.

could be solved without a peace treaty. Closing the intra-Berlin borders now became the top priority.

By this stage Khrushchev was apparently convinced that some action had to be undertaken, but he stopped short of Ulbricht's wish of a separate peace treaty between the WP countries and the GDR. By shifting the problem from the recognition of the GDR to the problem of the open borders, Ulbricht had inadvertently undermined the need for a peace treaty. Contingency plans were already drawn up in order to stem the flight of refugees to the FRG, and on 4 July Pervukhin concluded in a report to Gromyko that 'it would be incorrect to exclude in general the possibility of closing the sectorial border in Berlin in one or another way, since with the exacerbation of the political situation, closed borders could be necessary'.⁵⁸ Although the exact timing is still a subject of debate, it seems likely that Khrushchev gave Ulbricht permission to build a wall on 6 July.⁵⁹ As Khrushchev later related to Hans Kroll, the West German ambassador to Moscow, "[t]he wall was ordered by me due to Ulbricht's pressing wish."⁶⁰

The multilateral meeting, which Ulbricht had desired since January, was preceded by a bilateral meeting between Ulbricht and Khrushchev on the morning of 3 August, as Ulbricht had requested.⁶¹ Ulbricht seemed to have learned from his previous Warsaw Pact debacle, and was forewarned by a colleague who returned from Moscow in mid July that 'the East Germans might not get approval at the meeting for everything they wanted, that is, anything beyond the border closure'.⁶² This time Ulbricht drafted his speech more carefully, while taking the Soviet advice into account 'to be well prepared to discuss political, economic, and military issues related to West Berlin and a peace treaty'.⁶³ Since the idea of the building of a wall was intended to remain top secret, the Warsaw Pact allies were not informed in advance of the agenda of the meeting, which caused a complaint by Gomulka.⁶⁴

In the morning of 3 August everything went according to Ulbricht's wishes, since Khrushchev already agreed with the closure of the intra-Berlin border in the bilateral meeting.⁶⁵ The ensuing meeting of WP party leaders merely served to create a united front behind Khrushchev and Ulbricht and to rubberstamp their decisions, which was initially challenged by Albanian dissent, as we have seen in the previous chapter. As Khrushchev put it diplomatically in his speech '[t]he goal of our conference (...) is to have a detailed discussion of the question of concluding a German peace treaty, to consult about practical measures which must be taken in the near

⁵⁸ Harrison, *Concrete 'Rose'*, Appendix F, 100.

⁵⁹ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 186.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Letter from Ulbricht to Khrushchev, July 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3478, 4-5.

⁶² Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 189.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

future, and to work out united tactics.⁶⁶ This set-up confirms the assumption of the Warsaw Pact as a Soviet transmission belt and supports the argument of the historian Douglas Selvage, that '[t]he GDR – even more than the Soviet Union – believed that the Warsaw Pact should serve as a transmission belt for Soviet directives', which 'was to convey foreign policy directives to the other socialist states aimed at bolstering the GDR's international position.'⁶⁷

The East German leader, meanwhile, attempted to put his arguments about the need for a separate peace treaty with the GDR into a somewhat less narrow framework. Instead of focusing on the national interests of the GDR, Ulbricht emphasised that '[a] peace treaty will ensure an international-legal consolidation of the existing and established borders between the German Democratic Republic and the Polish People's Republic, between the German Democratic Republic and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, and also the borders between the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany.' Mindful of the PCC meeting in March, Ulbricht anticipated the involvement of the Polish and Czechoslovak leadership, while also casting his net wider by even arguing that such a peace treaty would 'answer (...) the interests of all peoples.' He then used this argument as leverage for his plea for economic help from the other WP leaders 'with the goal of making the GDR economically independent from the FRG.' Moreover, he mentioned the fact that the refugee exodus necessitated that the Warsaw Pact states should agree to control the intra-Berlin borders in the same way as the borders with the Western European states.⁶⁸

Despite his attempt to identify his own needs more with those of his WP allies, Ulbricht's speech still mainly dealt with the East German problems and therefore failed to convince his comrades on all fronts. Although the closure of the borders met with general approval at the meeting, the allies were more reluctant to provide Ulbricht with the economic aid he demanded.⁶⁹ The Polish leader Gomulka, who had apparently already told Khrushchev time and again to shut the inner-Berlin borders, took the lead in charting a course towards resolving the Berlin Crisis.⁷⁰ Expressing his 'principled agreement' with Ulbricht on the necessary 'measures' concerning 'the open borders in Berlin', Gomulka emphasised that there should be no delay 'in executing those

⁶⁶ Harrison, *Concrete 'Rose'*, 106.

⁶⁷ Selvage, 'The Warsaw Pact', 178.

⁶⁸ Speech by Walter Ulbricht on 3 August 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3478, 43-94.

⁶⁹ In order to maintain strict secrecy, the planned construction of the wall was not mentioned in any transcripts (Zubok, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis*, 27) and the words 'be closed' were only spoken at the conference but omitted from the final records (Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 197).

⁷⁰ Selvage, 'The End of the Berlin Crisis', 222. 'Gomulka: I would have shut it far earlier. How many times I told Khrushchev about it.' This also corroborates with Gomulka's emphasis in a PUWP CC meeting on 22 November 1961 that 'we were saying among ourselves here long before the Moscow meeting [of the Warsaw Pact in August] ... why not put an end to it? Close off, wall off Berlin. And later we made the decision in Moscow.'

measures', but that they should be executed 'now'.⁷¹ Thus Gomulka decoupled Ulbricht's proposal to close the border from a separate peace treaty with East Germany, which could always be concluded at a later stage, and urged the former at the expense of the latter. Considering the fact that this is exactly what happened, it was not Ulbricht's stance, but Gomulka's, which carried the day.

Gomulka further undermined Ulbricht's zeal to use the peace treaty to boost his own authority, by arguing that Poland should take the initiative on the peace treaty together with Czechoslovakia and SU. He thus excluded the GDR from negotiations about its own treaty altogether, and appropriated the German Question yet again. Moreover, Gomulka understood the question of economic aid, but added that the question of the potential embargo from the West against the entire Warsaw Pact and not just the GDR if a separate peace treaty were concluded 'needs a broad treatment and one concerning all socialist countries'. Emphasising that this was 'not an easy problem', Gomulka urged the GDR to cooperate more closely economically with its allies through COMECON, rather than demanding more economic assistance.⁷² In this case, too, the WP leaders rallied behind Gomulka instead of Ulbricht, and those most directly involved, namely the Czechoslovak leader Antonin Novotny and the Hungarian leader Janos Kadar, supported Gomulka with particular enthusiasm.⁷³ Although both leaders professed to agree with Ulbricht's arguments, they repeated Gomulka's emphasis on solving the issue through COMECON, and Kadar even mentioned the potential 'bankruptcy' of the GDR several times – a word that the GDR leaders systematically crossed out in their documents! The convention of a WP meeting seemed to have facilitated Polish involvement in the German Question, which inadvertently eclipsed Ulbricht.

Khrushchev meanwhile provided Ulbricht with unqualified support, and emphasised that the WP leaders would have to pay 'a greater price than any [economic] help for the GDR' if they failed to provide economic aid, since a potential 'liquidation of the GDR' would imply that the 'West Germany army [would be] at our borders'.⁷⁴ Khrushchev proved to be very sensitive to Ulbricht's threats about losing the GDR. The reluctant attitude of most other WP leaders therefore drove Khrushchev to despair, and fully contradicted his confident reassurance during the meeting with Ulbricht in November 1960, 'that the Soviet Union and the other socialist states could and would provide the GDR with the necessary economic aid to survive an embargo'.⁷⁵ In an attempt to save face, Khrushchev vehemently 'criticized unnamed leaders of Eastern European socialist countries for "national narrow-mindedness" in their approach to the GDR's difficulties'.⁷⁶ The failure of the summit with Kennedy in

⁷¹ Gomulka's speech, PA AA, MfAA, G-A 474.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Cf. the speeches by Kadar and Novotny, PA AA, MfAA, G-A 474.

⁷⁴ Khrushchev's speech, PA AA, MfAA, G-A 474.

⁷⁵ Selvage, 'The End of the Berlin Crisis', 218.

⁷⁶ Zubok, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis*, 27.

June had driven him once more straight into the arms of Ulbricht. The other Warsaw Pact leaders were, however, less keen to join this deadly embrace. The Warsaw Pact had, as such, made an important contribution to resolving the Berlin Crisis, since the NSWP refusal to assist the GDR economically would play an important role in Khrushchev's ultimate decision to abstain from a peace treaty. This multilateral forum had undermined the bilateral understanding between Khrushchev and Ulbricht, as well as putting a halt to Ulbricht's unilateralism.

To some extent the WP meeting at the beginning of August did, however, serve as the Soviet transmission belt of the GDR's national interests, since it seemed to create a united front in support of closing the borders in Berlin. Despite his apparent triumph, Ulbricht nevertheless overplayed his hand by expanding his bilateral negotiations with Khrushchev to the Warsaw Pact's multilateral platform. Although Harrison convincingly argues that 'Ulbricht's tenacious, opportunistic, self-confident personality helped him to push events in the direction he wanted,' this only applied to his interaction with Khrushchev.⁷⁷ This same personality worked against him within the frame of the WP, where according to Ulbricht's Russian interpreter, Walter Eberlein, 'there was a "certain reserve regarding Ulbricht" on the part of the other delegates and that "they interpreted his statements regarding supplies from the socialist countries as a certain threat." Kádár in particular asked Ulbricht, "Is [the situation] really so serious, or have you just played it up here?"'⁷⁸ By linking the fate of the GDR with that of the Soviet bloc, Ulbricht gained support for closing the borders between East and West Berlin, but by his repeated emphasis on the interests of the GDR he lost the goodwill of his Warsaw Pact comrades. Gomulka, meanwhile, had won their support.

DRIVING HIMSELF UP THE WALL

The Warsaw Pact nevertheless served to enhance the legitimacy of the border closure, and during a five hour long extraordinary SED Politburo meeting on 7 August 1961 the WP meeting was discussed at length. From this meeting it becomes evident that the building of the Wall was indeed sanctioned by Ulbricht's allies, since it was concluded from the meeting that 'the anticipated measures' would be carried out between 12 and 13 August.⁷⁹ In the night from Saturday 12 to Sunday 13 August, the intra-Berlin border was speedily sealed off by barbed wire, to be replaced by concrete blocks four days later. The Warsaw Pact support exonerated the East German leadership, as becomes clear from a declaration in the SED newspaper *Neues*

⁷⁷ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 142.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁷⁹ 'Protocol No. 39/61 of the extraordinary session of the politburo on Monday, 7 August 1961', SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/JIV2/2A841, 1-12.

Deutschland on 13 August, which stated that '[t]he governments of the Warsaw Pact countries' had proposed the closure of the inner-Berlin borders to 'the parliament and the government of the GDR'.⁸⁰ Other WP leaders, such as the Poles, nevertheless preferred to downplay their role in the decision-making, especially when the barbed wire gradually began to be replaced by concrete blocks.⁸¹ Meanwhile, Kennedy's pragmatic reaction that "'a wall is a hell of a lot better than a war'" summed up the lack of Western protest.⁸²

In a letter to Khrushchev on 15 September 1961 Ulbricht attributed the success of the entire operation (ironically codenamed 'Rose') to the fact 'that the Warsaw Pact states acted unanimously under the leadership of the Soviet Union'.⁸³ Ulbricht did not only consider the successful construction of the Wall a prelude to the long coveted peace treaty, but also thought it entitled the East Germans to further control over the situation in East Berlin, which was officially still under Soviet occupation.⁸⁴ Khrushchev took the opposite view and replied in a letter on 28 September that 'measures which could exacerbate the situation, especially in Berlin, should be avoided'.⁸⁵ After another characteristic U-turn, Khrushchev now seemed to think that no steps needed to be taken beyond border closure. Since the Wall had solved the pressing problem of the refugee exodus and the economic brain-drain, it had undermined the necessity for a separate peace treaty and it had allayed the Soviet fears about the GDR as 'super-domino'. Moreover, any attempts to turn West Berlin into a 'free city' seemed ludicrous after it had been sealed off by the Wall. Although Ulbricht continued to press Khrushchev for the conclusion of a separate peace treaty with the GDR, the spell was broken.

Khrushchev sealed his U-turn on the peace treaty during the 22nd CPSU Congress in Moscow from 17-31 October. In his speech on 17 October he emphasised 'peaceful coexistence' and retracted the 31 December deadline for the German peace treaty.⁸⁶ Since the Chinese delegation had already left the conference in a rage about Khrushchev's denunciation of Albania, Khrushchev no longer 'needed to look over his shoulder' in order to appease the Chinese.⁸⁷ This congress accordingly marked the Soviet decision to prioritise peaceful coexistence over Sino-Soviet relations.⁸⁸ Because

⁸⁰ 'Declaration of governments of the Warsaw Pact States (13 August 1961)', SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/1140, 30-31.

⁸¹ 'INFORMATION: Polish mood concerning Berlin', Warsaw, 22 August 1961, DY 30/IV/2/20/185, 199-205.

⁸² Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 207.

⁸³ Letter from Ulbricht to Khrushchev, Berlin, 15 September 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3509, 95.

⁸⁴ Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin*, 168. Cf. Ulbricht's letter to Khrushchev on 15 September (above).

⁸⁵ Letter from Khrushchev to Ulbricht, 28 September 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3509, 105-107.

⁸⁶ Lemke, *Die Berlinkrise*, 175.

⁸⁷ Zubok also argues this (*Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis*, 29), but does not mention the coincidence with the 22nd party congress. This was also the interpretation in the FRG: 'Material about some aspects about the journey of Adzhubei to West Germany', Berlin, 3 November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3497, 266-267.

⁸⁸ See Chapter 2 for the role of the 22nd CPSU party congress in the Sino-Soviet split, 85-86.

this also implied a more moderate stance on the Berlin Crisis, Ulbricht was not at all pleased with this change of direction, and furiously stressed in his speech three days later that the peace treaty was “a task of the utmost urgency”.⁸⁹ The Soviet-East German disagreements were out in the open.

It accordingly seems hardly a coincidence that Ulbricht took a measure to escalate the second Berlin Crisis during the Moscow conference. On 22 October, five days after Khrushchev’s speech and two days after his own, he instructed East German guards at the crossing points between East and West Berlin not to let personnel of the three Western powers pass without identification. Since such border controls were officially the prerogative of the four occupying powers, and the Soviet leadership had not authorised the East German guards to do so, Ulbricht had unilaterally decided to appropriate this prerogative in the hope to force Khrushchev into supporting him. The measure immediately escalated, when the American diplomat Allan Lightner refused to show his travel documents to the East German guards on the way to the opera in East Berlin on the evening of 22 October. The American side responded by sending US soldiers to accompany Lightner into Berlin, which sparked an East German decree the next morning according to which all foreigners, except those in the military uniforms of the Western Powers, would have to show travel documents to East German guards. By unilaterally issuing a new decree, Ulbricht compelled Khrushchev to either support him or the American side.

Meanwhile, the Americans forced the Kremlin to come clean, too, by continuing to send American officials in civilian clothes to the crossing points, while calling for US soldiers if the East German guards refused to comply. By 26 October the situation had escalated to such an extent that the American side brought up ten tanks to escort American officials into East Berlin. Khrushchev ultimately responded to the American tanks with an equal number of Soviet ones, seemingly supporting Ulbricht. At the same time the presence of Soviet tanks clearly illustrated that Khrushchev refused to allow Ulbricht to manage the crisis single-handedly, while usurping any more Soviet prerogatives. After a twenty-four hour standoff from 27-28 October the Soviet tanks withdrew one by one, and so did the American ones. Although Ulbricht seemed to have succeeded in raising the stakes of the second Berlin Crisis, he had inadvertently undermined the East German claim to sovereignty: the East German guards had succeeded in provoking the crisis on Ulbricht’s orders, but Khrushchev had to solve it. Any further East German claims to manage the situation in Berlin singlehandedly had lost credibility.⁹⁰

The link between the Checkpoint Charlie standoff and Ulbricht’s zeal for further control over Berlin became clear in a letter the East German leadership wrote to all participants in the CPSU congress on the last day of the conference (30 October)

⁸⁹ Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin*, 171.

⁹⁰ Cf. Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin*, 172-178 for a lucid account of the Checkpoint Charlie crisis. Cf. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 213-214.

– two days after the Checkpoint Charlie crisis. In this letter Ulbricht used the American ‘provocation’ at Checkpoint Charlie to urge Khrushchev into conceding more prerogatives to the East German border guards, while emphasising that a settlement on the status of West Berlin and a peace treaty had become all the more urgent in order to prevent any further ‘violation of the sovereignty of the GDR’. He also pressed for ‘further tactics’, since Khrushchev had withdrawn his ultimatum on the peace treaty, and even suggested convening the foreign ministers of the Warsaw Pact, while proposing as agenda ‘the negotiations between the Soviet Union and the Western powers’ on a peace treaty, in order to pressurise the Western powers – but at the same time also the SU – to continue negotiating. Adding that ‘[t]he non-conclusion of a peace treaty in this year and the exacerbation of relations between the two German states threatens the economic plan of the GDR of 1962’, Ulbricht clearly intended to force Khrushchev to conclude a peace treaty after all.⁹¹ Ulbricht’s attempt to once again use a multilateral framework to bypass bilateral negotiations with the Soviet Union nevertheless backfired. The suggested Warsaw Pact meeting never materialised, and Khrushchev turned to Gomulka after the CPSU congress instead in order to explain that ‘signing a peace treaty with the GDR might exacerbate the situation’, which must have sounded as music to Gomulka’s ears.⁹²

Moreover, Ulbricht’s intransigence had driven Khrushchev into West German arms instead. Ten days after the conference Khrushchev ordered the West German ambassador in Moscow, Hermann Kroll, to tell chancellor Adenauer that ‘[t]he Soviet government, and N.S. Khrushchev personally regard the agreement that was achieved in Rapallo (...) as a great historic act, which was of no little use to both sides’, and they intended ‘a genuine improvement of the relations between the USSR and the Federal Republic’.⁹³ This was a particularly painful remark, since the treaty concluded at Rapallo in 1922 constituted a Soviet-German agreement in the wake of World War I to cooperate diplomatically, while striving at the revision of the boundaries of Poland. Khrushchev’s renewed interest in something along the lines of the Rapallo agreement now seemed targeted against the GDR and in favour of the FRG. Ulbricht had pushed the limits too far during the Checkpoint Charlie crisis. After the peace treaty had receded into the background, rapprochement to the FRG became all the more imperative. Khrushchev had to find a way to control the consequences of West German rearmament, and now attempted to do so by currying the favour of the West German chancellor. If the German Question could not be solved through Ulbricht, it had to be solved through Adenauer.

The Wall was Khrushchev’s way to silence Ulbricht. Khrushchev had accordingly both outplayed Ulbricht and the West: threatening the West and enticing

⁹¹ Letter from Ulbricht to Khrushchev, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3509, 190-202.

⁹² Cf. Selva, ‘The End of the Berlin Crisis’, 223, for the primary evidence of this meeting.

⁹³ Conversation between the West German ambassador in Moscow, H. Kroll, and Khrushchev, 9 November 1961, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3509, 236.

Ulbricht with a separate peace treaty, both parties had to acquiesce in a Wall without a treaty. The fact that the GDR had been recognised *de facto*, but not *de iure*, did not bother Khrushchev as much as Ulbricht. Khrushchev had solved the refugee problem and the Wall had literally cemented the GDR's place in the Soviet bloc. At the beginning of 1962, Khrushchev officially denounced the need for a separate peace treaty altogether during a CPSU presidium meeting.⁹⁴ He told Ulbricht in a private conversation that the maximum had been achieved on 13 August, and that 'you are willing to provide a signature, but we have to provide for you economically'.⁹⁵ Apart from achieving his aims with the Wall, Khrushchev realised that the Sino-Soviet split had escalated beyond repair, so that he no longer had to worry about appeasing the Chinese leadership by standing firm on the German Question. Although the Wall had proved the end of Ulbricht's leverage over Khrushchev, the latter deliberately continued discussing a separate peace treaty as a lever over the West, even though he had already decided against it in practice.

The East German leadership nevertheless refused to give up on the peace treaty, and in a foreign policy plan of 1962 it was explicitly stated that '[i]t seems necessary, to underline at an appropriate moment during a PCC meeting of the Warsaw Pact states, that the determination exists to conclude a German peace treaty and to resolve the West-Berlin problem on that basis'.⁹⁶ At a brief PCC meeting, which was convened on 7 June 1962 after a COMECON meeting, Khrushchev 'recommended publishing a document (...) on the German Question, although it would not contain anything new,' since not doing so 'might give the impression that we had lost interest or were afraid to deal with these problems'. The fact that he prevented Ulbricht from referring to 'West German revanchists' in the declaration, because 'the negotiations were being conducted between the Soviet Union and the United States and did not involve West German revanchists', was indicative of Ulbricht's loss of leverage over Khrushchev, and of Khrushchev's attempted rapprochement to the FRG.⁹⁷ Although Ulbricht disagreed with Khrushchev that the Berlin Wall had made a separate peace treaty redundant, the other WP leaders sided with the Kremlin.

The GDR no longer entered the equation, and the Wall allowed Khrushchev once again to concentrate on super power negotiations at Ulbricht's expense. Khrushchev even quoted the US commentator Walter Lipmann, who had said 'that Berlin is a blister on the U.S. foot that the Soviet Union steps on when necessary. It really is so. This is why we should not hurry, as we can only benefit from the situation.' The ensuing declaration did, however, refer to the WP's unanimity on not refraining from a separate peace treaty with the GDR if the Western Powers did not agree on a

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁹⁵ Summit between Soviet and East German leadership, 26 February 1962, PA AA, MfAA, G-A 476.

⁹⁶ 'Plan of foreign policy measures in the first half year of 1962', SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3381, 28-57.

⁹⁷ 'Czechoslovak Summary of the PCC meeting', 7 June 1962, PHP,

<http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17903&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

German peace settlement. Neither unanimous, nor in favour of a separate peace treaty, the declaration exposed a painful gap between political reality and public relations. The WP made itself seem much more bellicose and static than it actually was, carefully covering its internal dissent. Explaining once more ‘that we have already achieved what we intended to achieve with a peace treaty’, Khrushchev relegated the peace treaty to the realm of mere propaganda, where it could serve its purpose in the WP declaration. It had become an empty mantra, which was only murmured by Ulbricht.⁹⁸

After the building of the Berlin Wall Khrushchev’s attitude towards Ulbricht accordingly reversed. Instead of supporting him, Khrushchev now used the Warsaw Pact as a platform to further undermine Ulbricht’s credibility. He even confided to the first secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Antonín Novotný, that he had met Ulbricht several times on his own so as to severely criticise him in private. After the construction of the Wall, the ‘super ally’ had turned into a ‘senile’ ally, who was accorded little respect by his allies, and whose ambitions needed to be curbed, as Khrushchev explained to Novotný:

[Ulbricht] sees things very simply. For example, he demanded that a peace treaty be signed with the German Democratic Republic as soon as possible. At the same time, we all know that we have already achieved what we intended to achieve with the peace treaty. The peace treaty could result in an economic blockade of the German Democratic Republic. Comrade Ulbricht would then be the first to come and ask for gold. (...) He always comes and seeks help. (...) The Germans fought against us, now their living standard is higher than ours, and we are expected to give more and more all the time. (...) I am afraid his age is beginning to show; I know this all too well, having known Stalin. Combined with the huge power that Ulbricht holds in his hands, these manifestations of senility are very dangerous indeed.⁹⁹

THE GERMAN QUESTION IN NUCLEAR TERMS

The East German leaders seemed to realise that their strategy had failed, and were particularly well aware of the fact that their Polish neighbours had been more successful in their foreign policy than they had. Commenting on the ‘active involvement of the Polish representatives in the UN and other international organisations’, the annual report on Poland by the East German embassy in Warsaw also underlined that Poland used a ‘[special method] in the treatment of questions concerning the peace treaty and West Berlin’, in order to maintain ‘a greater sense of

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ ‘Extract of Memorandum of Conversation between the First Secretary of the CC of the CPSU (Nikita S. Khrushchev) and the First Secretary of the KSC (Antonín Novotný)’, 8 June 1962, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17902&navinfo=14465>, accessed 25 August 2013.

manoeuvrability'. The East German leaders accordingly regretted that the relations between East Germany and Poland seemed 'to lag remarkably behind the cooperation between the PR Poland, the Soviet Union, the CSSR and Hungary'.¹⁰⁰ During 1962 the East Germans therefore deliberately and successfully tried to intensify and improve its relations with Poland through an active exchange of delegations and reporters, while also intensifying the political and economic bonds.¹⁰¹ This seemed to bear fruit in 1963, considering the report that the 'relations between our parties has become close, manifold, and friendly'.¹⁰²

Good neighbourly relations with the Poles had become particularly important considering Khrushchev's rapprochement with the FRG. With Ulbricht safely hemmed in behind his wall, Khrushchev considered the time ripe to improve East-West relations after four years of tension. The West German foreign minister, Gerhard Schröder, had the same ambitions, and between March 1963 and March 1964 he agreed trade missions with Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, thus isolating the GDR.¹⁰³ In order to mitigate the West, the Kremlin decided to stop its opposition to NATO's plan to create 'multilateral nuclear forces' (MLF) in its alliance, which would allow its allies, including the FRG, joint control over a few strategic nuclear weapons. This form of nuclear sharing had already been proposed during Eisenhower's last year in power, but had clearly come into shape under Kennedy. Although French president Charles de Gaulle categorically rejected MLF in January 1963, and other NATO members 'remained ambivalent', the American administration considered it the best way to remedy 'the shortfall in medium-range ballistic missiles in Europe', as well as catering for the 'West German interest in the nuclear affairs of the alliance'.¹⁰⁴ Whereas Khrushchev had prioritised his fear of West German nuclearisation over East-West relations at the beginning of the Berlin Crisis, he had reversed his priorities after the Crisis had ended. Potential West German control of nuclear weapons would, however, severely impinge on the national security of Poland and the GDR.

Khrushchev realised that dropping the prohibition of the establishment of joint nuclear forces in his negotiations about a non-proliferation treaty with the American leadership was a sensitive issue in the Warsaw Pact, and particularly in Poland and the GDR. On 2 October 1963 he therefore sent Gomulka a memorandum 'to know the opinion of our Polish friends', in which he attempted to justify his reversed stance:

[T]he Soviet Government has reached the conclusion that it is expedient to announce to the Americans our readiness to conclude an agreement on the

¹⁰⁰ 'Annual report of 1961 of the GDR embassy in the People's Republic of Poland', Warsaw, 22 December 1961, DY30/IV/2/20/185, 260-263.

¹⁰¹ Report on exchange of delegations and reporters, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV/2/20/171, 29-46.

¹⁰² 'Estimate of the relations with the PR Poland', 21 October 1963, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/321, 221.

¹⁰³ Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin*, 205.

¹⁰⁴ A. Priest, 'From hardware to Software', 149-150. See also Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, chapter 7 and 8, for an extremely elaborate account of the West German interest in NATO's nuclear affairs.

non-proliferation of nuclear weapons even in the case that the agreement will not contain a statement prohibiting outright the creation of multilateral nuclear forces in NATO, but either in the same declaration or in some other form, the Americans [will have to] take upon themselves the obligation not to permit a situation in which West Germany might obtain the possibility of being in charge of nuclear weapons.¹⁰⁵

As Khrushchev could have expected, Gomulka was outraged by this ‘potential shift in Soviet policy’, which ‘threatened the security and stability of the Polish and East German communist regimes.’¹⁰⁶ Gomulka’s remark in the margin of this memorandum is telling: ‘Prohibit the creation of multilateral nuclear forces now, and you will not [need to] reserve yourself the right to tear up the treaty.’¹⁰⁷ As soon as he had read the letter, Gomulka phoned Khrushchev and demanded the convening of another WP meeting to discuss the issue, since he did not consider Khrushchev’s stance in line with the alliance, whose position he accordingly used as leverage over Khrushchev.¹⁰⁸ Instead of using the WP to pressurise Khrushchev, as Ulbricht had attempted, Gomulka intended to use the alliance as an instrument to moderate Khrushchev’s policies.

Moreover, Gomulka used Khrushchev’s memorandum as a pretext to write him a long letter six days later, in which he both explained ‘why the leadership of our party does not consider it possible to express our agreement with the proposal presented to us by the Soviet government regarding the conclusion of a treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons’, and shared his ‘own, deeply troubling thoughts about the conflict that has flared up with the People’s Republic of China.’ Arguing that ‘the creation of multilateral nuclear forces would strengthen Bonn’s (...) atomic blackmail against the Warsaw Pact states’, Gomulka advised Khrushchev to consult with the Chinese Communist Party instead.¹⁰⁹ Shrewdly detecting the link between Khrushchev’s ‘Rapallo policy’ and the Sino-Soviet split, Gomulka urged Khrushchev to mend the latter at the expense of the former. The East German leadership greatly esteemed the Polish reaction, although it regretted the ‘tactical considerations’, which had pushed the conclusion of a German peace treaty to the background.¹¹⁰

Again, Gomulka’s ability to transcend his own national interests and look at the broader picture starkly contrasted with Ulbricht’s more narrow approach towards the matter. In a meeting between the Soviet deputy foreign minister Vasilii Kuznetsov and

¹⁰⁵ ‘Memorandum, 2 October 1963’, in Selvage, *The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Nonproliferation*, 20.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Memorandum, 2 October 1963’, in *ibid.*, 21.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰⁹ Letter, Gomulka to Khrushchev, 8 October 1963, in *ibid.*, 22–26. Cf. D. Selvage, *Poland and the Sino-Soviet Split, 1963–1965*, CWIHP E-Dossier No. 10, <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/e-dossier-no-10-poland-and-the-sino-soviet-rift-1963-1965>, accessed 25 August 2013.

¹¹⁰ ‘Annual report 1963, embassy of the GDR in the PR Poland, Warsaw’, 3 February 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY30/IVA2/20/331, 84.

the GDR Politburo on 14 October 1963 Ulbricht did not tackle the Soviet proposal at large, but asked ‘for understanding that in conjunction with the results of these negotiations our situation in Germany is somewhat different than the situation of the other socialist states.’¹¹¹ Focusing on his zeal for recognition of the GDR, Ulbricht failed to address the wider consequences of the Soviet proposal.¹¹² The GDR leaders found themselves in an increasingly vulnerable position, since the hardliner Konrad Adenauer was succeeded by the more moderate Ludwig Erhard as chancellor of the FRG on 16 October. This raised the stakes of Khrushchev’s Rapallo policy, which made it more likely that Khrushchev would sacrifice East German interests to his rapprochement with West Germany.

The Polish leaders, meanwhile, attempted to involve their East German neighbours in the broader implications of MLF, and halfway through December 1963 the Polish foreign minister Adam Rapacki even expressed ‘the urgent desire’ to visit the GDR in order ‘to consult the foreign minister of the GDR about the question of the tactical concept of the struggle against the creation of a multilateral nuclear force’ in December 1963, just before he would discuss the issue with the Belgian foreign minister Paul-Henri Spaak in Warsaw. He also planned to consult with the Czechoslovak foreign ministry.¹¹³ This does not only underline the Polish diplomatic activity on the Western front, but also suggests that the Polish leadership must have been aware of the disagreements within NATO, in which Spaak – the former secretary-general – was one of the most important smaller allies. The East German leaders nevertheless concentrated so narrow-mindedly on the ‘somewhat different situation in Germany’ that they did not seize the opportunity to unite with the Poles on MLF and to be informed about the latest developments in NATO, but instead rejected Rapacki’s offer under the pretext of illness and too much work.¹¹⁴ Thus Polish manoeuvrability met with East German inflexibility.

THE ULBRICHT DOCTRINE

Ulbricht was not enthusiastic about the Polish ‘Gomulka plan’ either, an updated version of the ‘Rapacki plan’, in which the Polish leader put forward a proposal for a nuclear freeze in Poland, Czechoslovakia and the two Germanys on 28 December 1963, and Ulbricht argued that ‘recognition of the GDR [was] to take priority over regional disarmament’.¹¹⁵ Ulbricht stole both Soviet and Polish thunder instead, by

¹¹¹ Selvage, *The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Nonproliferation*, 33.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹³ Conversation between deputy minister König and the Polish diplomat, Dr. Tomala, 16 December 1963, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/20/329, 12.

¹¹⁴ Conversation between deputy minister König and the Polish diplomat, Dr. Tomala, 17 December 1963, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV A 2/20/329, 13.

¹¹⁵ See Selvage, *The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Nonproliferation*, 8.

proposing his own pan-German arms-control initiative, which presupposed recognition of the GDR, on 2 January 1964. On the same day Khrushchev wrote a letter to all Warsaw Pact members in which he argued that there was 'a growth of the practice of consultations between socialist countries concerning problems about foreign politics'. He therefore supported 'the representatives of some fraternal parties', who 'expressed the desire (...) to establish a closer contact between socialist countries, (...) especially in the domain of a more complete coordination of their positions in international problems'. In order to do so he proposed 'more systematic consultations', which could be achieved 'through the regular convention of meetings of the ministers of foreign affairs of the Warsaw Pact member states (except Albania).'¹¹⁶

Khrushchev optimistically proposed that a meeting of the WP's deputy foreign ministers could already take place in January 1964, in order to 'consult about some problems concerning the resumption of the Eighteen Nations Disarmament Committee in Geneva' (ENDC). The sudden impetus for foreign policy coordination was, accordingly, clear: several WP leaders considered it opportune to meet in order to coordinate a common stance before negotiating on nuclear issues, such as MLF and non-proliferation, with their colleagues from NATO during the ENDC convention in February 1964. Since five WP countries were members of the ENDC (Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the SU), a convention of the WP deputy foreign ministers seemed a logical move to prepare the meeting. It would, however, mean involving East Germany in the negotiations, even though it was not a member of the ENDC, since its sovereignty was not recognised by the NATO members.

The Romanians nevertheless vehemently opposed Khrushchev's proposal, since they considered the establishment of 'an organ with a permanent character' of foreign policy consultation contrary to 'each country's indisputable sovereign right' to establish its own foreign policy, and therefore preferred the *ad hoc* convention of such meetings when necessary. They also shrewdly reminded Khrushchev that the problem so far had not been the absence of the right kind of organ for consultations, but the absence of consultations *per se*, since the Kremlin could easily have convened the PCC to consult the other WP members on disarmament or the Cuban Missile Crisis, which they failed to do.¹¹⁷ Proving that they had nothing against attending a meeting when necessary, the Romanian leaders agreed to come to Moscow from 8-9 January to prepare the ENDC. The Romanian leadership had, however, carefully kept such a meeting outside the WP framework, thus *de facto* excluding the East Germans from the negotiations. The Romanian move testified to a new Romanian concern to prevent the WP from turning into an instrument, which Ulbricht could use to further East German national interests.

¹¹⁶ Letter from Khrushchev to Gheorgiu-Dej, Moscow, 2 January 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 6/1964, 31-32.

¹¹⁷ Letter from Gheorgiu-Dej to Khrushchev, Bucharest, January 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 6/1964, 36.

The East German leaders nevertheless considered mutual consultations within a WP framework advantageous, for exactly the same reason why their Romanian comrades did *not*. Khrushchev's proposal provided them with a systematic say through further WP consultations, and the East German leaders therefore enthusiastically embraced his proposals for systematic foreign policy consultation. Ulbricht accordingly wrote a letter to Khrushchev on 24 January in which he suggested to convene a PCC meeting on 19 March 1964 to draft a communiqué on 'Questions about the abstention from violence and disarmament'.¹¹⁸ Ulbricht had, in fact, already drafted a speech to this end, thus intending to use the alliance again as a transmission belt for *his* foreign policy interests, while compensating for East German exclusion from the ENDC negotiations.¹¹⁹ Ulbricht accordingly emulated Khrushchev's proposal from early January by attempting to convene the PCC instead of merely the deputy foreign ministers, which testifies to his zeal to use the Warsaw Pact for his own purposes.

Ulbricht had not discussed the proposed date with Khrushchev beforehand, and without waiting for his reply already sent a letter to all WP leaders on 28 January in order to invite them to the suggested PCC meeting without Khrushchev's approval.¹²⁰ In this unprecedented attempt to call the shots within the WP, Ulbricht fully undermined Khrushchev's authority. Khrushchev managed to regain some control over the procedure, by forwarding Ulbricht's letter to the other WP members, together with his reply, in which he suggested convening the PCC in February or April instead.¹²¹ The Romanian remark that '[w]e have not responded yet, but we shall certainly have to take into account what we have to do', already indicated that they were not eager to accept this proposal.¹²² Although Khrushchev embraced Ulbricht's proposal for the WP meeting, the dynamics within the alliance had changed so much that Ulbricht primarily needed the approval of his NSWP comrades. Without their support, Ulbricht would not succeed in using the WP to promote East German interests, as he had learnt at the meeting of WP party leaders from 3-5 August 1961.

Meanwhile, Ulbricht realised that he needed to mend matters with Gomulka in order to also gain his support for convening the PCC. One day after writing Khrushchev, he accordingly also tried to placate Gomulka by proposing in a letter a meeting of WP foreign ministers or deputy foreign ministers to discuss the 'Gomulka plan', to which the SED agreed in principle.¹²³ Ulbricht had thus tried to single-handedly take over the choreography of the WP. Gomulka was, however, not amused by Ulbricht's unilateralism, and strongly 'regretted' the fact that Ulbricht had rejected

¹¹⁸ Letter from Ulbricht to Khrushchev, Berlin, 24 January 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 61-62.

¹¹⁹ Speech by Ulbricht, draft, 1964, no date, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3382, 18-52.

¹²⁰ 'Minutes of the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party', 17 February 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 6/1964, 41-42.

¹²¹ Letter from Ulbricht to Gheorgiu-Dej, 28 January, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 6/1964, 44-45, and letter from Khrushchev to Ulbricht, 11 February, *ibid.*, 45-46.

¹²² 'Minutes of the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party', 17 February 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 6/1964, 46.

¹²³ Letter from Ulbricht to Gomulka, 25 January 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 65-66.

Rapacki's proposal to meet in December 1963, while secretly preparing a 'proposal about the abstention of nuclear weapons of both German states' instead. The remark that the Polish leaders had only heard about this indirectly from countries 'with which the GDR maintains no diplomatic relations' served as a painful reminder of the fact that the GDR had no such relations, because it was not recognised. Although Gomulka agreed to convene a PCC meeting, he opposed convening the foreign ministers or deputy foreign ministers, since 'mutual consultations in the second half of December last year would have been more useful.'¹²⁴ The moment for such consultations had passed.

Moreover, Gomulka emphasised that he had already 'coordinated the foundations' of his proposal 'during consultations with fraternal countries' to prepare the disarmament in Geneva in the framework of the ENDC, thus referring to the consultations in Moscow on 8-9 January. Mentioning 'conversations with representatives of the WP members', and 'preparatory conversations with a number of Western countries', Gomulka shrewdly reduced the East German point of view to irrelevance. He added that both sides had so enthusiastically received his 'initiatives' that 'the proposed meeting of foreign ministers or deputy foreign ministers of WP members would not seem necessary,' although Ulbricht was always welcome to come to Warsaw for further discussions. Stating *en passant* that he would keep 'the ambassadors of the socialist states in Warsaw informed' about the contacts with Western countries, Gomulka clearly underlined the supremacy of Polish diplomacy.¹²⁵ This remark must have been a particular blow to Ulbricht, since diplomatic contacts with the 'Western countries' were not open to Ulbricht, because they had not recognised the GDR. Gomulka was, however, also more in tune with the WP's burgeoning multilateralism than Ulbricht, whose narrow concern with the status of the GDR had prevented him from achieving his goals. Bypassing Gomulka had been a *faux pas*, which had undermined the GDR's own aims.

The East German unilateralism was also thwarted by the Romanians, who first ignored the proposal to convene the PCC and then vetoed it, as we have seen in the previous chapter.¹²⁶ Whereas the East Germans received little support from Khrushchev in this matter,¹²⁷ Khrushchev even confessed to the Romanian delegation at Gagra in March that '[c]omrade Ulbricht sleeps soundly, while we struggle with his problems'.¹²⁸ Meanwhile, the Romanian leaders used this opportunity to play the Kremlin and the East German party-top off against each other by writing to Khrushchev that they only considered a PCC meeting if they could receive all the relevant materials beforehand so as to prepare the meeting, thus echoing the Albanian

¹²⁴ Letter from Gomulka to Ulbricht, Warsaw, 13 February 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY3 0/3387, 72-75.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 72-75.

¹²⁶ Letter from Gheorghiu-Dej to Ulbricht, no date, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 98.

¹²⁷ Letter from Khrushchev to Ulbricht, 20 March 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 90-91.

¹²⁸ 'Minutes of the plenary session of the RWP CC from 15-22 April 1964', ANIC, RWP CC, C, 16/1964, 44.

request three years earlier.¹²⁹ Khrushchev duly replied that '[s]ince the initiative for the convention of this meeting arose not from the CC of the CPSU, it is self-evident that we have no obligation to prepare documents for this meeting.'¹³⁰ Khrushchev's willingness to voluntarily forego the Soviet prerogative of preparing such meetings is unprecedented. Both the meeting's preparation and its convention had become contingent on the consent of the NSWP members.

The Kremlin even prided itself on its flexible attitude concerning the convention of the meeting, in which they had 'shown respect regarding the other parties', *inter alia* by communicating to Ulbricht that the proposed date of 14-15 April did not suit the Romanians and should therefore be postponed. It was only in a bilateral Romanian-Soviet conversation that it came to light that Ulbricht had stubbornly 'insisted on maintaining the date of 14-15 April', without telling the Romanians that the Soviets were willing to postpone it. Moreover, the Kremlin agreed with the Romanians that the East Germans should have announced more clearly what would be at stake in the meeting.¹³¹ The meeting, and its eventual failure, had now become the responsibility of the East German leadership.

Failing to accept their defeat, the East German leaders attempted to entice the Soviet leadership into a meeting of foreign ministers to discuss MLF instead.¹³² Referring to Khrushchev's proposal from early January to organise regular meetings of (deputy) foreign ministers, the SED leadership tried to blackmail the Soviet foreign minister Gromyko into agreeing to exactly such a meeting, or, if other WP countries disagreed, to a bilateral meeting instead. It is interesting to note that this manoeuvre was a brainchild of Ulbricht and his deputy foreign minister Otto Winzer, who also drafted the political parts of Ulbricht's letters on foreign policy, while foreign minister Bolz was bypassed in the first instance.¹³³ At this stage, the Kremlin had lost its enthusiasm at sponsoring another meeting, which would never materialise. Ulbricht had thus been outwitted by the Romanians, who firmly opposed his transmission belt approach, but began to use the WP to assert their own independence instead. The East German struggle for recognition seems to have been more vulnerable than the Romanian striving for independence.

Ulbricht's single-minded preoccupation with the status of the GDR also manifested itself in his concern about Khrushchev's invitation of the West German Chancellor Erhard to Moscow in March 1964. Ulbricht used his fear of a Soviet-FRG rapprochement to talk Khrushchev into concluding a friendship treaty between the SU

¹²⁹ Letter from Gheorgiu-Dej to Khrushchev, 19 February 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 17/1964, 300-1.

¹³⁰ Letter from Khrushchev to Gheorghiu-Dej, 10 March 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 85-87. Cf. Letter from Gheorgiu-Dej to Khrushchev, 19 February 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 17/1964, 304-5.

¹³¹ 'Minutes of the discussion of com. Chivu Stoica with com. E.D. Karpışenko from the International Section (parties of socialist countries) from the CPSU CC', 11 April 1964, RWP CC, C, 16/1964, 1-22.

¹³² Winzer's draft of Ulbricht's letter to Gromyko, 13 April 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3393, 11.

¹³³ Letter from Winzer to Ulbricht, Berlin, 13 April 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3393, 1.

and the GDR in May 1964.¹³⁴ At the same time Ulbricht's deputy foreign minister Winzer proposed to call the East German quest for recognition, equality and a normalisation of relations between both Germans the 'Ulbricht doctrine', as 'our own German peace doctrine' for 'foreign propaganda'. After the 'Rapacki plan' and the 'Gomulka plan' the East Germans also felt like asserting their authority by putting a 'positively formulated proposal' forward.¹³⁵ Ulbricht's deputy foreign minister seemed to sense more acutely that a constructive proposal to counterbalance the Hallstein doctrine might serve East German aims more than Ulbricht's antagonism.¹³⁶

THE DENOUEMENT

The Ulbricht doctrine was, however, quickly undermined by the visit of Khrushchev's notorious son-in-law, Alexei Adzhubei, to West Germany in the summer of 1964. In his talks with West German journalists and politicians Adzhubei openly praised 'the spirit of Rapallo', and stated that 'it was impossible to talk with a man like Ulbricht', who 'would not live long anyhow', since 'he suffered from cancer'.¹³⁷ The East German leadership issued a formal complaint about the lack of Soviet consultation regarding this delicate visit. The Polish move to record some of Adzhubei's compromising conversations on tape was, however, still more effective in undermining Khrushchev. The tape was passed on to Yuri Andropov, the Soviet secretary responsible for relations with the socialist states, who accordingly gained very sensitive information on Khrushchev's son in law.¹³⁸ This time Khrushchev had overplayed his hand in a number of ways: by compromising the interests of two of his WP allies through his intended rapprochement with the FRG, he had inadvertently encouraged their assertiveness, and by sending his son in law to West Germany he had raised more suspicions about his Rapallo policy.

At the beginning of September 1964 Khrushchev nevertheless attempted again to gain support for his initiative on WP foreign policy coordination in an informal setting. He did so by presenting his plans at a reception in Prague to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Slovak uprisings, where the foreign ministers of Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria 'happened' to be present, too. The Romanians appeared to be rather sceptical about this 'coincidence', since 'in politics nothing is coincidental', but argued instead that 'Khrushchev would like to base the relations between the countries participating in the Warsaw Pact on a different foundation', and had organised this gathering of a select group of potentially supportive WP leaders for that purpose.

¹³⁴ Selva, *The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Nonproliferation*, 9.

¹³⁵ Letter from Winzer to Ulbricht, 23 May 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3382, 16-17.

¹³⁶ See for the Hallstein Doctrine Chapter 1 of this book, 36.

¹³⁷ 'Material about some aspects about the journey of Adzhubei to West Germany', Berlin, 3 November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3497, 264-266.

¹³⁸ Selva, *The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Nonproliferation*, 12-13.

According to the Romanians this was ‘the other line through which Khrushchev wanted to exercise control’, while also using Ulbricht, who continued to try convening a PCC meeting, as an instrument to solve his own problems.¹³⁹ The Romanians were, unsurprisingly, excluded from this manoeuvre.

Khrushchev did, however, not exercise any control for much longer. On 14 October 1964 his fellow presidium-members forced him to resign, after he had been compelled to break off his holiday. According to the Soviet ambassador in Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin, it was ‘a real palace revolution’, whose ‘principal architects’, the politburo members Leonid Brezhnev, Mikhail Suslov and Nikolai Podgorny, had organised it long in advance.¹⁴⁰ In *Pravda*, the communist party’s newspaper, Khrushchev’s policies were condemned two days later for their “‘subjectivism and drift in Communist construction, harebrained scheming, half-baked conclusions and hasty decisions and actions divorced from reality.’”¹⁴¹ Both the unforeseen consequences of Khrushchev’s de-Stalinisation and his brinkmanship in the second Berlin Crisis and the Cuban Missile Crisis were severely criticised by his former comrades. Khrushchev, who was taken by surprise, responded in his defence that “‘[t]he fear is gone and we can talk as equals.’”¹⁴² Such a peaceful palace coup would, indeed, have been inconceivable under Stalin. Leonid Brezhnev, who had been in control of the defence industry since 1956, succeeded as General Secretary; his outlook will be discussed at greater length in the next two chapters. Whereas Khrushchev retired – severely depressed – and died from old age in 1971, his successors initially ‘did not suggest any changes whatsoever [in foreign policy].’¹⁴³ Having consolidated their own power, Brezhnev and his comrades still had a lot of difficult nuts to crack in foreign policy.

Khrushchev’s ouster was greatly applauded by Gomulka, who reacted by underlining in an address to the Polish Central Committee in November 1964 that in ‘matters in which our party, our government, our country, are deeply and directly interested, we demand, have the right to demand, and always will demand that these matters be discussed with us and approved.’¹⁴⁴ Moreover, China’s successful detonation of a nuclear device two days after Khrushchev’s downfall changed the Soviet stance on non-proliferation, and the new leadership condemned the MLF on 15 November 1964. Since the Chinese possession of a nuclear device at the height of the Sino-Soviet split posed a particular threat to the Soviet leaders, they had to take a firm stance on any forms of potential nuclear proliferation.

Meanwhile, Ulbricht seized the opportunity to try his luck with Khrushchev’s successor, Leonid Brezhnev, and six days after Khrushchev’s downfall he already

¹³⁹ Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 5 September 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 5/1964, 108.

¹⁴⁰ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 128.

¹⁴¹ Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 620.

¹⁴² G. S. Barrass, *The Great Cold War. A Journey through the Hall of Mirrors* (Stanford, 2009), 146.

¹⁴³ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 128.

¹⁴⁴ Selva, *The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Nonproliferation*, 12.

wrote Brezhnev in order 'to renew [the East German] initiative to convene a PCC meeting' on MLF, while stressing that all party leaders had welcomed Ulbricht's previous proposal to do so apart from the Romanians. Enclosing the draft of a letter, which Ulbricht intended to send 'at short notice' to all Warsaw Pact leaders, and emphasising that the East German deputy foreign minister, Otto Winzer, was ready to come to Moscow straightaway for preliminary consultations, Ulbricht explicitly attempted to pressurise Brezhnev into approving the convention of a meeting.¹⁴⁵ The suggestion for bilateral preparations, reminiscent of the one in January 1961, again seemed to illustrate that Ulbricht preferred to regard the WP as an East German-Soviet coproduction, while using the convention of PCC meetings as an instrument to boost his own status. In the enclosed draft letter to his allies Ulbricht suggested convening a meeting in the second half of November, since 'a unified stance of the Warsaw Pact members could serve to increase the resistance of certain NATO members against MLF' before NATO would convene in December.¹⁴⁶ In addition Ulbricht had enclosed an appeal on MLF that should be published after the PCC meeting.¹⁴⁷

Ulbricht's attempt to choreograph the meeting beforehand was, however, thwarted by no one less than Brezhnev himself. Although Brezhnev approved Ulbricht's proposal to convene a PCC meeting, he reminded him that other WP leaders, too, could add items to the agenda.¹⁴⁸ The East Germans nevertheless seemed hard to restrain: in addition to inviting all WP leaders, apart from the Albanians, to a PCC meeting from 27-28 November,¹⁴⁹ East German government and party delegates also delivered an East German draft of a non-proliferation treaty to the Kremlin in early November.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, the East German foreign ministry drafted a proposal for further foreign policy coordination within the Warsaw Pact, based on the resolution of a PCC meeting in January 1956. The East German officials at the foreign ministry suggested activating the standing committee for foreign policy questions and the secretariat, which had been created on paper during that PCC meeting, but had never materialised.¹⁵¹ What might have been a rhetorical embellishment eight years previously now came to be regarded as a means to turn the WP into a still more useful instrument for (East German) foreign policy coordination. Getting nowhere with the peace treaty, reforms turned into the new East German pet project. It seemed as though Khrushchev's ouster had created a window of opportunity for the East

¹⁴⁵ Letter from Ulbricht to Brezhnev, 20 October 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 100-101.

¹⁴⁶ Letter from Ulbricht to WP leaders, 21 October 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 104-107.

¹⁴⁷ Draft appeal of the PCC, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 113-123.

¹⁴⁸ Confidential letter from Brezhnev to Ulbricht, 4 November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 136-137.

¹⁴⁹ Letter from Ulbricht to all WP leaders, November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 138-141.

¹⁵⁰ Draft appeal of a non-proliferation treaty, 6 November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 138-141.

¹⁵¹ 'Information about the organs of the WP', Berlin, 19 November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 192-193.

Germans: in the first three weeks of Brezhnev's reign they were remarkably active on the foreign policy front.

The Romanian leaders shrewdly observed that the actual invitation was dated '6 November', which was when Ulbricht was with Brezhnev in Moscow. Ulbricht's initiative, however, actually preceded and caused his visit to Moscow.¹⁵² The Romanian remark that 'Ulbricht does not have initiatives, which are not approved by the Soviet leaders' shows that the Romanian leadership underestimated the way in which the GDR charted its own course. Ulbricht was, however, very keen to gain Soviet support for the East German quest for recognition, and Brezhnev's rise to power enabled Ulbricht to do another bid for the GDR as the Soviet Union's 'super ally'. The Romanians, meanwhile, considered the fact that Ulbricht wrote his final letter from Moscow as proof that 'the new Soviet leadership is preoccupied to re-establish the hegemony of the CPSU over the socialist countries', while using the WP 'for [Soviet] confirmation of its political and military dominance over the other socialist countries.' In order to prevent this from happening, the Romanians vehemently opposed the creation of 'a permanent organ of the ministers of foreign affairs, which in fact should direct the entire foreign policy of the countries participating in the Warsaw Pact.'¹⁵³

This time not only the Romanians, but also the Czechoslovaks slowed down the unilateral East German initiatives by disagreeing with the date of the meeting in a letter addressed to all WP leaders.¹⁵⁴ The Romanians did not agree with its convention *per se*, but they proposed convening the PCC meeting in January 1965, in order to await any decisions from the NATO convention on 15 December at which MLF would be discussed, since they considered the opposition of France potentially sufficient to thwart NATO.¹⁵⁵ This seemed a valid argument that was not primarily aimed at paralysing WP procedures. The Czechoslovaks, meanwhile, proposed the second half of January, since they considered November too soon to be well prepared.¹⁵⁶ Two new considerations in convening a meeting thus transpired: in the first place the developments concerning MLF raised the WP leaders' awareness of the potentially disruptive role of specific member states in NATO, such as France, and, secondly, the request for a thorough preparation indicated that the PCC meetings began to be considered as more than a rhetorical accessory of the Kremlin. When the Albanian leaders first requested this in 1961 it seemed a mere ploy to obstruct the alliance's progress.

The East German leaders nevertheless failed to distinguish between substantial and strategic grounds to postpone a PCC meeting, and Otto Winzer therefore

¹⁵² Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 24 November 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 5/1964, 159-61.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹⁵⁵ Letter from Gheorgiu-Dej to Ulbricht, 19 November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 184-185. Cf. Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 24 November 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 5/1964, 164.

¹⁵⁶ Letter from Novotny to Ulbricht, 18 November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY30/3387, 175-176. Cf. Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 24 November 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 5/1964, 166.

suggested sending an identical reply to the Romanian and Czechoslovak party leaders.¹⁵⁷ He had included the East German arguments for preferring the speedy convention of a PCC meeting in a document, which he suggested presenting to the SED politburo for approval, together with the draft of his letter to Gheorgiu-Dej and Novotny.¹⁵⁸ In the draft letter, written in Ulbricht's name on 24 November, Winzer already stated that the SED politburo had 'taken into account the wishes' of the Czechoslovak CC and the RWP CC respectively and had 'agreed to the postponement of the meeting till January 1965.'¹⁵⁹ While stressing the East German role in granting the wishes of other NSWP members, the Kremlin's point of view was not even mentioned. The NSWP members controlled one another instead in the timing of the PCC meeting, and the East Germans proposed convening a meeting of deputy foreign ministers instead on 10 December without prior consultation with the SU.

Moreover, Winzer reminded both the Romanians and the Czechoslovaks in his draft letter that the SED CC 'regretted' that no ordinary PCC meeting had taken place for more than three years, 'although in January 1956 the resolution was approved "that the Political Consultative Committee would convene when necessary, but no less than twice a year".'¹⁶⁰ Alluding to the January 1956 meeting, Winzer already paved the way for more intense forms of consultations within the PCC.

THE SEEDS OF MULTILATERALISATION

The East German role in these reforms also raised the profile of the Warsaw Pact within the East German politburo. After obtaining Ulbricht's approval to present both documents to the politburo, Winzer succeeded in putting both the Warsaw Pact and indirectly himself on the agenda of the East German party top.¹⁶¹ Explaining his 'draft of the SED CC Politburo's position on the necessity of a speedy convention of the Political Consultative Committee', Winzer emphasised that it was 'necessary to convene a meeting of the deputy foreign ministers of the Warsaw Pact members early December' in order 'to ensure the success of the PCC meeting, and its agenda and results'. Moreover, the 'nuclear armament of West Germany' and the 'differences of opinion within the imperialist camp' necessitated 'treating the question of MLF as the central theme' of the PCC meeting. Limiting the PCC meeting to issues that directly

¹⁵⁷ Letter from Winzer to Ulbricht, Stoph, Axen and Florin, 23 November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 195-196.

¹⁵⁸ Position of the SED politburo about the speedy convention of the PCC, 21 November, 1964, DY30/3387, 220-225.

¹⁵⁹ Letter from Ulbricht to Novotny, drafted by Winzer, 24 November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 197-198.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. Identical letter from Ulbricht to Gheorgiu-Dej, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/2287, 201-202.

¹⁶¹ Protocol No. 49/64, of the session of the politburo on Tuesday 24 November 1964, DY 30/ J IV 2/2/964, 1-3.

affected the GDR, other 'political problems' could, instead, be discussed during a 'special meeting of the First Secretaries' after the PCC meeting.¹⁶²

This seemed a way to circumnavigate Brezhnev's recommendation that other Warsaw Pact leaders, too, could add items to the agenda, and it also seemed an attempt to fully choreograph the PCC meeting beforehand. Moreover, Winzer's suggestion that there should not be 'a main speech', but that 'every delegation', including, of course, the East German one, 'should be given the equal possibility to present their opinions and proposals' served to diminish the role of the Kremlin.¹⁶³ Although the Romanians approved of it in this respect, since it would prevent the SU from acting as 'a whip', they assumed that Ulbricht would use this opportunity 'to become the principal referent'.¹⁶⁴ The fact that Winzer's 'draft of the [East German] position' was 'confirmed with a few amendments' shows that the Warsaw Pact was now not only a topic on the agenda of SED-politburo meetings, but that it was also subject to genuine debate.¹⁶⁵ On both a domestic and a foreign policy level the WP had thus gained importance.

Winzer's proposal of a meeting of WP deputy foreign ministers was approved by the SED politburo, and Ulbricht sent a letter immediately after the politburo meeting in order to invite his allies to this meeting.¹⁶⁶ The differences of opinion, inherent in true multilateralism, had thus inadvertently led to the *de facto* creation of a new organ, namely the meeting of deputy foreign ministers, alongside the PCC. Moreover, they also inspired a vehement debate about the topics that would be on the agenda: should it be merely about MLF – which the East German and Hungarian leaderships preferred¹⁶⁷ – or should there be room for other kinds of foreign policy issues – as the Czechoslovak leadership desired?¹⁶⁸ Gomulka once again took the most nuanced position, stressing on the one hand the importance of uniting against MLF, while emphasising on the other that postponing the meeting till January was not a problem.¹⁶⁹

In a meeting between the East German diplomat Mewis and the Polish Politburo member Zenon Kliszko, Kliszko explained to his East German comrade that

¹⁶² 'Appendix No. 1 to protocol No. 49/64 from 24.11.1964', SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/ J IV 2/2/964, 10-16. The Romanians noticed this addition to Ulbricht's proposal, but had no idea that it actually came from Winzer. Cf. Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 12 December 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 5/1964, 187.

¹⁶³ 'Appendix No. 1 to protocol No. 49/64 from 24.11.1964', SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/ J IV 2/2/964, 10-16.

¹⁶⁴ Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 12 December 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 5/1964, 187.

¹⁶⁵ 'Appendix No. 1 to protocol No. 49/64 from 24.11.1964', SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/ J IV 2/2/964, 10-16.

¹⁶⁶ Letters from Ulbricht to Kadar, Gomulka, and Zhivkov, 24 November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 205-216.

¹⁶⁷ Memorandum, Kundermann to Herpold, Berlin, 30 November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 237.

¹⁶⁸ Letter from Novotny to Ulbricht, 3 December 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 247-248.

¹⁶⁹ Letter from Gomulka to Ulbricht, 1 December 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 238-240.

‘the victory of the Labour Party in England’ and ‘the stance of the Gaulle’ would make it likely ‘that the MLF would no longer be created this year’, so it would be advisable to await further developments in NATO.¹⁷⁰ Again, the Poles seemed more in touch with the developments within NATO than their East German counterparts, and, in fact used exactly the same arguments as the Romanians for postponing the PCC meeting till January. Although the GDR leaders were eager to call the shots, they did not seem to have enough know-how to do so. The East German lack of diplomatic channels with Western European countries considerably limited the capacity to be informed.

The East Germans were, nevertheless, still keen to direct the multilateral process in accordance with their own wishes, and Winzer resumed conversations with his Polish colleague Naszkowski and the Soviet Sorin shortly before the deputy foreign ministers convened ‘in order to guarantee a common and coordinated stance at the conference’.¹⁷¹ By this stage the NSWP members took the initiative in these preparatory talks: the Pole Naszkowski defined MLF and the preparation of the PCC meeting in January as the central themes on the agenda of the deputy foreign ministers meeting.¹⁷²

The deputy foreign ministers convened on 10 December 1964 in Warsaw. After the East German deputy foreign minister Winzer had begun the meeting by explaining the necessity of a ‘common stance of all socialist countries’ against the MLF, preferably also within the general assembly of the United Nations, the Soviet Sorin backed up Winzer’s stance, as had been agreed beforehand, and also ‘turned against the aim of the USA, to separate the MLF from the question of non-proliferation’. Despite Khrushchev’s hesitancy at an earlier stage, the Poles, East Germans and Soviets were obviously again united in their unequivocal opposition to MLF, and so were all the other Warsaw Pact deputy foreign ministers. The East Germans managed to rally enough support for defining the ‘struggle against the MLF’ as the ‘main theme’ on the agenda of the PCC meeting in January 1965.¹⁷³ To ensure Brezhnev’s approval, Ulbricht wrote him another letter on the day of the deputy foreign ministers meeting, in which he once again argued *against* Brezhnev’s own suggestion, which was also supported by Novotny, to allow other members to add more issues to the agenda.¹⁷⁴

The Romanian veto of the East German proposal to issue a communiqué and to prepare another one for the PCC meeting nevertheless undermined the ‘unified

¹⁷⁰ ‘Memorandum about conversation between diplomat Mewis und PUWP politburo member, comrade Zenon Kliszko’, 24 November 1964, Warsaw, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 235-236.

¹⁷¹ GDR report of the deputy foreign ministers meeting, December 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3393, 13.

¹⁷² This might be a consequence of the fact that Gomulka was allegedly particularly close to the new leadership. Cf. ‘Minutes of the discussions with a government and party delegation from the R.P.R. with a party and government delegation from the R.P. China’, Moscow, 8 November 1964, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 70/1964, 69.

¹⁷³ GDR report of the deputy foreign ministers meeting, December 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3393, 13-25.

¹⁷⁴ Letter from Ulbricht to Brezhnev, Berlin, 10 December 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3387, 254-255.

stance' that all other WP deputy foreign ministers intended to present to the rest of the world, as we have seen in the previous chapter. A new precedent had accordingly been set: although all WP members agreed on the substance of the meeting, namely the opposition to MLF, Romanian disagreement on procedural matters, in this case the communiqué, still served to prevent the WP members from committing themselves to one particular stance. Whereas the East Germans ensured that the German Question would take centre stage, the Romanians attempted to maintain maximum flexibility. Moreover, they tried to prevent a predominantly East German stamp on the meeting in particular: the Romanian deputy foreign minister conceded that the Polish side *could* propose a draft communiqué, but this was in turn rejected by both Winzer and Sorin.

The meeting seemed to draw the Soviet and East German side even closer to one another, whereas the Polish deputy foreign minister no longer took part in this coalition. The day after the meeting the necessity for more cooperation came up in a private conversation between Winzer and his Soviet colleague Sorin, in which Winzer's suggestion to activate the standing committee for foreign policy questions, which had been created on paper in January 1956, but had never materialised, was applauded by Sorin. The Soviet deputy foreign minister even encouraged the GDR to present the proposal on WP reforms at the PCC meeting in January 1965, since it was 'not necessary that [the Soviet Union] would act as initiator'.¹⁷⁵ Although Winzer had not achieved all East German aims in the multilateral setting of the deputy foreign ministers meeting, since the Romanians had vetoed both communiqués, he had been considerably more successful on a bilateral level: Sorin's enthusiasm for the East German proposal for reforms and for Ulbricht's was, to some extent, a triumph.

Sorin nevertheless also used the conversation to curb East German ambitions. He informed Winzer that the Soviet side in principle agreed with Ulbricht's draft of a non-proliferation treaty, which the East German delegation had handed over to Brezhnev in early November, but added there were still several paragraphs that needed to be rewritten. Sorin also criticised the East German rhetoric, such as the appeal to 'the fight against MLF', which according to the Soviet side should be 'less propagandistic' and more to the point. He added that the Soviet leaders considered the emphasis on the negative consequences of the MLF and of the role of West Germany 'exaggerated'. With the conclusion 'the shorter, the better', Sorin chided the East German tendency of lengthy invectives.¹⁷⁶ The conversation with Sorin was, accordingly, a mixed blessing for Winzer. Although his Soviet colleague had explicitly acknowledged the East German contribution to the proceedings of the Warsaw Pact, he had also emphasised that there were limits to NSWP initiatives. In the Brezhnev era the Kremlin would again attempt to assume control over the dynamics within the Warsaw Pact.

¹⁷⁵ Conversation between Winzer and Sorin, 11 December 1964, PA AA, MfAA, A 1805.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION: MANOEUVRES IN A MULTILATERAL ARENA

Brzezinski's concept of 'de-satellitisation' might be somewhat too extreme, but his observation that the 'satellites' of the Soviet Union turned into its 'junior allies' in the first half of the 1960s does seem to apply to both Poland and – in the light of the previous chapter – Romania.¹⁷⁷ The Polish and Romanian leaders had emerged as the strongest players in the first half of the sixties, after emancipating themselves through asserting their individual stance on the German Question and the Sino-Soviet rift respectively. The position of the GDR, meanwhile, had become less urgent after the Wall had resolved the Berlin Crisis, and its leadership could therefore no longer count on its allies' undivided attention. Moreover, Ulbricht's failure to cast his national interests into a wider framework, like Gomulka did, undermined his credibility. The way in which the dynamics of dissent emancipated not only individual WP members, but also contributed to the evolution of the WP at large, will be examined in the next part of this book.

Ulbricht's awareness of the GDR's status as the Soviet Union's "super-ally" or "superdomino" enabled him to defy the Kremlin only to a certain extent.¹⁷⁸ Although Harrison concludes that the second Berlin Crisis invested Walter Ulbricht with power, since he could use the fragile status of the GDR as leverage over Khrushchev, it transferred even more power to his Polish ally Gomulka, on whose support Ulbricht was to a large extent dependent. The WP angle therefore sheds a new light on Ulbricht's capacity to exercise pressure, which was not quite as large as is often assumed. The Polish leadership in particular had a vested interest in the German Question, which paved the way to its emancipation from the Soviet grip. The multilateral perspective accordingly serves to give Gomulka the credit he is due in the second Berlin Crisis, since the traditional bilateral approach often relegates Gomulka to oblivion. Unlike Ulbricht, he convincingly identified his own interests with those of his WP colleagues, and did not isolate himself from them. Ulbricht's personality was not conducive to compromises. Although Harrison argues that 'Ulbricht simply drove Khrushchev up the wall', Ulbricht seemed to drive himself up the wall most of all, and he almost crushed in the process.¹⁷⁹

Having successfully used the alliance as an instrument to legitimise the closing of the borders, Ulbricht's grip on the WP diminished significantly after the Wall was built. Ulbricht's apparent leverage over Khrushchev in the period between Khrushchev's ultimatum and the building of the Wall seemed to herald East Germany's emancipation from the Soviet grip, but the Warsaw Pact did, ironically, define the limits of this emancipation. The Warsaw Pact meeting from 3-5 August

¹⁷⁷ Z.K. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict. Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Harvard, 1967), 433. Cf. Selva, *The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Nonproliferation*, 2, for a similar observation.

¹⁷⁸ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 143.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 223.

1961 might have briefly seemed Ulbricht's finest hour, since it finally compelled Khrushchev to undertake some action, but his emancipation did not even outlast the meeting. It is safe to surmise that his allies' refusal to assist the GDR economically had contributed to Khrushchev's policy change on a peace treaty, since Khrushchev's justification for doing so echoes their arguments. Narrowly concentrating on the GDR's interests, Ulbricht failed to rally personal support.

Meanwhile, the Berlin Crisis provided Ulbricht's allies with an instrument to formulate their separate stance. Initially a lever of Ulbricht, he had inadvertently transferred his leverage to his NSWP comrades, some of whom were more successful than he was in emancipating themselves from the Soviet grip. Khrushchev's brinkmanship during the second Berlin Crisis briefly provided Ulbricht with a lever over him, but ultimately paved the way for the burgeoning emancipation of Gomulka, who successfully used the Warsaw Pact as a platform to rally support against some of the designs of Khrushchev and Ulbricht. Khrushchev's reversal on the German Question in the meeting of the PCC in Moscow on 7 June 1962, and Ulbricht's subsequent challenge of his authority diminished Khrushchev's power and increased the scope for manoeuvre of the NSWP leaders still further.

The beginning of the German Question obviously preceded the Sino-Soviet split, but the latter seemed to have strongly influenced Khrushchev's increasingly moderate stance on the second Berlin Crisis and his initially pro-Western stance on the MLF, which in turn compelled the East German and Polish leaders to emancipate themselves from the Soviet grip to safeguard their own security interests. Deeming the relationship with China beyond repair, he needed to ensure some Western support, in order to avoid fighting a 'Cold War' on two fronts simultaneously. Moreover, Ulbricht's intransigence during the Checkpoint Charlie Crisis encouraged the Soviet leadership to begin courting the FRG by forging a new 'Rapallo policy', since Ulbricht's ambitions to control Berlin had turned him into a liability. In the following period mounting disagreements between the SU, Poland and the GDR on the FRG's potential access to nuclear weapons gave a novel impetus to the scope for emancipation and dissent.

Comparing the East German and Polish response to the Soviet reversal on MLF, Gomulka manoeuvred more successfully than Ulbricht. As the Polish historian Wanda Jarzabek argues, the Rapallo policy 'motivated the Polish regime to launch a more active policy towards the FRG and other Western countries' in order to prevent 'the Warsaw Pact's German policy to be dictated exclusively by Moscow, or belong to East Germany's special privileges.'¹⁸⁰ Gomulka used a potential convention of the PCC as leverage over Khrushchev, forcing him to take a more moderate stance. At the same time he used his diplomatic clout to gain support for the 'Gomulka plan' both within the Warsaw Pact and beyond. The East German leadership nevertheless did not accept

¹⁸⁰ See W. Jarzabek, *Hope and Reality. Poland and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1964-1989*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 56 (Washington, 2008), 4.

the Polish proposal to coordinate a stance on MLF in December 1963, and bypassed Gomulka with an East German proposal on German disarmament that no one took seriously. The subsequent East German attempt to convene the PCC was thwarted by the Romanians, who strove to prevent the East German transmission belt approach. In the competition for the Kremlin's most powerful ally Gomulka had unquestionably outstripped Ulbricht. The East German zeal for further foreign policy consultation had, however, led to the convention of the WP's deputy foreign ministers in December 1964, thus sealing the alliance's incipient multilateralisation.

This was no mean achievement either, and it testifies to the embryonic East German emancipation into a 'junior ally', too. The East German emancipation is all the more remarkable, since it pertains to a country, which was not even recognised internationally. Although Gomulka had been much more successful in marrying Polish national interests with WP interests, Ulbricht had, however, perceived the WP's potential in providing the East German leadership with an opportunity for boosting the status of the GDR. It was, after all, Ulbricht who already asked Khrushchev in January 1961 to convene a WP meeting. Ulbricht was eager to exploit the fact that the German Question was the Warsaw Pact's *raison d'être*. With the WP as the only framework for East German recognition, the East German insecurity explains Ulbricht's ambition to use the WP as an instrument to further East German national interests. Ulbricht's predicament was, after all, still more difficult than Gomulka's. Even though both countries shared some geopolitical constraints, such as the fact that their German borders were not recognised, the East German material confines were much more serious: ruling a country that was not recognised at all, Ulbricht was not in a position to cultivate diplomatic relations with Western European countries, which Gomulka and Rapacki did so successfully.

This chapter has, however, also shown that the Polish leaders proved to be better diplomats *within* the framework of the WP. Whereas Gomulka and his foreign minister closely worked in tandem, Ulbricht moved almost as unilaterally within the East German politburo as he did within the WP. The insecurity of East Germany's status combined with the intransigence of the East German leader meant that Ulbricht gradually began to overplay his hand. He became more prone than Khrushchev himself to use the WP as a transmission belt for his foreign policy interests, and accordingly caused more opposition, *inter alia* from the Romanian leadership. Ulbricht's vested interest in manoeuvring within the WP in the first half of the 1960s seemed to be greater than Khrushchev's. As we have seen in this chapter and the previous one, Khrushchev seemed better at starting initiatives, than at pursuing them. The dynamics of the impact of the Sino-Soviet split and the German Question on the WP had spiralled out of Khrushchev's control. Khrushchev's brainchild seemed to turn into a liability for the Soviet leadership itself. It remained to Brezhnev to regain control over the process, and to prevent the embryonic emancipation of the NSWP members from eclipsing Soviet choreography altogether, as we shall see in the next part of this book.

II

THE DYNAMICS OF DISSENT



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-F0419-0001-001
Foto: Sturm, Horst | 19. April 1967

Walter Ulbricht (first left), Wladyslaw Gomulka (fourth from the left), and Leonid Brezhnev (in front) at the Seventh Party Conference of the SED, Berlin, 18 April 1967

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a0/Bundesarchiv_Bild_183-F0419-0001-001%2C_Berlin%2C_VII._SED-Parteitag%2C_2.Tag.jpg

4

WARSAW PACT REFORMS AND WESTPOLITIK

We are not against the Warsaw Treaty, but against transgressing it.¹
Nicolae Ceausescu in a conversation with Leonid Brezhnev, July 1966

On 18 January 1965 the Polish leader Wladyslaw Gomulka was casually flicking through East German proposals for the impending PCC meeting, ‘while waiting for the arrival of the delegations [of the other WP members]’ at Warsaw’s railway station.² The Romanian leader Gheorghiu-Dej was, however, furious that the East German leaders had only disseminated their proposals on reforms, non-proliferation, and a draft communiqué a few days before the PCC meeting was to start on 19 January, and he arranged a bilateral meeting with Gomulka to share his frustration. He also organised to meet the East German leader Walter Ulbricht bilaterally to rebuke him strongly ‘about the method, which you have adopted’, since ‘[o]ur politburo has not had the possibility’ to study the documents, and therefore ‘has no mandate to discuss this’.³

This kind of dynamics between the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact members is illustrative for the development of the Warsaw Pact halfway through the sixties. By 1965 the alliance was no longer the ‘instrument of Soviet diplomacy’, which it is often considered to be within historiography.⁴ Under the influence of the Sino-Soviet split and the second Berlin Crisis, it had inadvertently developed into a *multilateral* platform, which the abovementioned Romanian, Polish and East German party leaders in particular began to use to further their own interests. Nor was the ‘sense of mutual interest’ so ‘little’ as tends to be suggested, but most of its members did, *pave* John

¹ Minutes of discussions with the Soviet delegation, 4 July, 19.30-22.30, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, II, 160.

² ‘Meeting between Gheorghiu-Dej, Maurer, and Gomulka’, 18 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 15/1965, 94.

³ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁴ E.g. A. Krobonski, ‘The Warsaw Treaty After Twenty-five Years: An Entangling Alliance or an Empty Shell?’, in Clawson and Kaplan (eds.), *The Warsaw Pact: Political Purpose and Military Means* (Delaware, 1982), 17.

Lewis Gaddis, share a vested interest in *inter alia* consolidating the structure of the alliance and using it as a vehicle to formulate their view on European Security.⁵

This chapter will therefore examine the way in which the NSWP members used the discussion on reforms and European Security as an instrument to further their own interests, with particular emphasis on the Romanian members on the one hand, and the East German and Polish ones on the other, who represented both extremes in the ensuing debate. Both topics are manifestations of the German Question, in which the East German and Polish side had a particular stake, striving for recognition of the GDR and the Oder-Neisse line respectively, whereas the Romanian leadership sought to normalise relations with West Germany instead. Tracing the developments from the PCC meeting in January 1965 to the meeting of deputy foreign ministers in February 1967, just after the Romanians had succeeded in establishing diplomatic contacts with the FRG, this chapter serves to analyse the conflicting interests within the WP on the German Question, and its impact on the alliance at large. The next chapter will complement this one, by analysing the way in which the conflicting interests on both non-proliferation and the Vietnam War provided an impetus to further emancipation of the NSWP members in the period from January 1965 to March 1968. Together these two chapters analyse how 'the dynamics of dissent' between all WP members contributed to the Warsaw Pact's evolution into a multilateral institution.

The period from 1965 to 1967 is generally considered the Warsaw Pact's 'gravest crisis', since the East German and Soviet proposals on reforms stagnated and most meetings ended in paralysis, but it was in fact also a period of transformation, in which repeated clashes between the Romanians and the rest breathed life into the previously dormant alliance.⁶ Different conceptions on the meaning of the alliance, foreign policy, and national interests led to a process that had at least as much impact on the alliance as the concurrent crisis within NATO.⁷ But although the crisis within NATO has been extensively researched, with a recent focus on the way in which it provided the smaller allies with more scope for manoeuvre, scholarship on the WP has not followed a comparable trend.⁸ Initiatives within the WP are still often seen as a product of 'overall Soviet policy', as an American report already stressed in 1970.⁹

Research on the WP in the period 1965-1967 tends to focus on the national perspective of one of its members, such as the research by the Polish historian Wanda Jarzabek, and the American scholar Douglas Selva, who both concentrated on the

⁵ J.L. Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford 1997), 289.

⁶ V. Mastny, 'The Warsaw Pact. An Alliance in Search of a Purpose', in M.A. Heiss and S.V. Papacosma (eds.), *NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Intractable Conflicts* (Ohio, 2008), 148.

⁷ Cf. A. Locher, *Crisis? What Crisis? NATO, de Gaulle, and the Future of the Alliance, 1963-1966* (Baden-Baden, 2010), and H. Haftendorn, *NATO and the Nuclear Revolution: A Crisis of Credibility, 1966-1967* (Oxford, 1996).

⁸ E.g. A. Locher, 'A Crisis Foretold: NATO and France, 1963-1966', in A. Wenger et al. (eds.), *Transforming NATO in the Cold War: Challenges beyond Deterrence in the 1960s* (London, 2007), 107-127.

⁹ A. R. Johnson, *The Warsaw Pact's Campaign for "European Security". A Report prepared for United States Air Force Project Rand* (Santa Monica, 1970).

Polish stance on European security.¹⁰ The East German stance has received little attention, whereas the Romanian stance on European security and WP reforms is not even mentioned in several landmark studies on Romania's role within the alliance.¹¹ Moreover, European security and WP reforms tend to be studied separately, whereas an analysis of the interplay between the two is crucial for understanding how the German Question shaped the Soviet alliance.¹²

THE CRISIS IN CONTEXT

Khrushchev's downfall on 14 October 1964 sealed the end of a period in which his theory of 'peaceful coexistence' had been severely damaged by his practice of brinkmanship during *inter alia* the second Berlin Crisis and the Cuban Missile Crisis. The CPSU politburo had charged Khrushchev both for his failures in domestic policy and the decline of the Soviet economy, and for his inclination to take risks in foreign policy. His successor, Leonid Brezhnev, who had been instrumental in organising Khrushchev's downfall, was averse to brinkmanship, and strove after the prevention of war, the preservation of the European borders established after World War II, and peace and stability in Europe. Although he had no experience in international relations, he was not inhibited by ideological qualms either, and established himself as 'the driving force for détente'.¹³

Détente could, according to Brezhnev, only be cultivated from a position of strength, and between 1965 and 1970 the Soviet expenditure on defence increased by 40 percent in order to reach nuclear parity with the United States, which finally happened by the early 1970s. The military build-up was also a reaction to the American strategy of flexible response, which in Eastern Europe was interpreted as an American

¹⁰ Cf. W. Jarzabek, "Ulbricht Doktrin" oder "Gomulka Doktrin"? Das Bemühen der Volksrepublik Polen um eine geschlossene Politik des kommunistischen Blocks gegenüber der westdeutschen Ostpolitik 1966/1967", *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa Forschung* 1:55 (2006), 79 ff, and D. Selvage, 'The Warsaw Pact and the European Security Conference, 1964-69: Sovereignty, Hegemony, and the German Question', in A. Wenger et al. (eds.), *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited* (London and New York, 2008), 85-106.

¹¹ The period 1965-1966 is not even mentioned in D. Deletant, 'Taunting the Bear: Romania and the Warsaw Pact, 1963-89', *Cold War History* 7:4 (2007), 495-507. E. Moreton has studied the East German stance in the WP extensively in her though-provoking monograph *East Germany and the Warsaw Alliance. The Politics of Détente* (Boulder, 1978), but this was written in 1978 when most archival material was not yet available.

¹² On European Security see e.g. C. Békés, 'Der Warschauer Pakt und der KSZE-Prozess 1965 bis 1970', in T. Diedrich et al. (eds.), *Der Warschauer Pakt. Von der Gründung bis zum Zusammenbruch 1955 bis 1991* (Berlin, 2009), 225-244. On WP reforms see e.g. V. Mastny, "'We Are in a Bind': Polish and Czechoslovak Attempts at Reforming the Warsaw Pact, 1956-1969", *CWHP Bulletin* No. 11 (Washington, 1998), 230-249, and C. Rijnoveanu, 'Rumänien und die Militärreformen des Warschauer Paktes 1960 bis 1970', in Diedrich et al. (eds.), *Der Warschauer Pakt*, 209-224.

¹³ S. Savranskaya and W. Taubman, 'Soviet Foreign Policy, 1962-1975', in M. Leffler, and O. A. Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume II: Crisis and Détente* (Cambridge, 2010), 140.

attempt to enable conventional warfare in the nuclear age for the sake of ‘gaining time and reinforcing positions’, before NATO would embark on a nuclear strike anyhow.¹⁴ This military build-up earned Brezhnev the support of the Soviet military-industrial complex, which he had already served since 1956, when he had been promoted to ‘candidate member of the Politburo in charge of the defence industry’.¹⁵ It also served to consolidate his power vis-à-vis his more conservative rivals Mikhail Suslov, Nikolai Podgorny, and Aleksander Shelepin. Meanwhile, prime minister Aleksei Kosygin, who initially represented the Soviet Union abroad, and foreign minister Andrei Gromyko helped Brezhnev to build détente with the United States, such as with the non-proliferation treaty which was signed on 1 July 1968.

The military build-up under Brezhnev also had its impact on the WP. Reversing Khrushchev’s policy of cutting conventional forces, Brezhnev expanded both conventional and nuclear forces, and concluded several agreements with WP allies on installing Soviet nuclear warheads on the territories of other WP members.¹⁶ Both the second Berlin Crisis and the Cuban Missile Crisis had already prompted Khrushchev to arm other WP members ‘for the first time (...) with operational and tactical nuclear-weapon delivery missiles’ from 1961 onwards.¹⁷ Moreover, Khrushchev had conducted joint military manoeuvres with the NSWP armies from October 1962 – i.e. from the Cuban Missile Crisis – onwards,¹⁸ but these manoeuvres had never been discussed within the PCC. Under Khrushchev the WP’s military structures had led a virtually parallel existence to the rest of the WP, with the ‘Statute of the Unified Command’ almost relegated to oblivion. This was, however, no longer possible under Brezhnev’s expansion of nuclear and conventional forces within the WP.

Where Khrushchev had only facilitated the *potential* deployment of nuclear missiles in WP countries, Brezhnev actually concluded several bilateral agreements, which provided for the *actual* stationing of Soviet tactical nuclear warheads on East German, Polish, Czechoslovak and Hungarian territory between 1965 and 1967.¹⁹ The deployment of nuclear warheads was obviously directed against a potential attack from Western Europe, which explains the fact that the Balkans were exempted from such agreements, which also enabled Brezhnev to get round the almost certain Romanian refusal. The abovementioned agreements were nominally concluded “within the

¹⁴ Cf. J. Hoffenaar, ‘East German Military Intelligence for the Warsaw Pact in the Central Sector’, in J. Hoffenaar and D. Krüger (eds.), *Blueprints for Battle. Planning for War in Central Europe, 1948-1968* (Lexington, 2012), 86.

¹⁵ Savranskaya and Taubman, ‘Soviet Foreign Policy’, 142.

¹⁶ M. Kramer, ‘The Kremlin, the Prague Spring, and the Brezhnev Doctrine’, in V. Tismaneanu, *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, and Utopia* (Budapest and New York, 2010), 279-280.

¹⁷ M. Uhl, ‘Soviet and Warsaw Pact Military Strategy from Stalin to Brezhnev: The Transformation from “Strategic Defense” to “Unlimited Nuclear War”, 1945-1968’, in Hoffenaar and Krüger (eds.), *Blueprints for Battle*, 46.

¹⁸ Kramer, ‘The Kremlin’, 279.

¹⁹ M. Kramer, ‘“Lessons” of the Cuban Missile Crisis for Warsaw Pact Nuclear Operations’, in J.G. Hershberg, (ed.), *The Cold War in the Third World and the Collapse of Détente in the 1970s*, CWIHP Bulletin No. 8/9 (Washington, 1996), 350.

framework of the Warsaw Pact',²⁰ but there is no evidence of any PCC meetings where these agreements have actually been discussed. And since the WP had no equivalent to NATO's dual track system, leaving the nuclear warheads in WP countries under direct Soviet command, the exact prerogatives of the Soviet Supreme Commander, and the bearing of the WP's 'Statute of the Unified Command' became an increasingly urgent question for discussion within the WP in the second half of the 1960s, as we shall see in this chapter.

Moreover, the NSWP challenge to Soviet hegemony also continued to manifest itself in political terms. Brezhnev's zeal for super power détente became clouded by the fact that the smaller European countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain began to chart their own course towards détente halfway through the sixties.²¹ Both the second Berlin Crisis and the Cuban Missile Crisis had clearly illustrated the dangers of bipolarity to the junior allies within NATO and the WP alike, who had become increasingly suspect of the way in which the Soviet and American leaderships had determined the course of international relations over their heads. Several allies in both alliances took initiatives to improve intra-European relations of their own accord, and a new kind of détente began to take shape, which was not bipolar but multilateral. 'The multilateralisation of détente' accordingly challenged super power détente, and invested the smaller countries in both NATO and the WP with more power.²²

France and Romania had openly begun to rebel against their respective alliance leaders, while reaching out to potential partners on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The Romanian Declaration of Independence in April 1964 in particular marked a Romanian attempt to look Westwards, while intensifying its contacts with many Western European countries, including the FRG, also to boost the Romanian economy. According to an East German report, which considered the April declaration the foundation of Romanian politics for a long time, the Romanians were striving after a normalisation of relations with the FRG, and would establish diplomatic relations as soon as West Germany consented.²³ Apart from enhancing Romania's prestige internationally, such relations would give an enormous boost to Romania economically: as one of the most backward countries within the WP Romania desperately needed a shortcut to economic growth. Moreover, Romania's trade within Eastern Europe had declined from 70 to 45 percent, because of the Romanian refusal to integrate into COMECON.²⁴ Romania therefore increasingly needed to turn to Western Europe in economic terms.

²⁰ Kramer, 'The Kremlin', 280.

²¹ See J. Hanhimäki, 'Détente in Europe, 1962-1975', in Leffler and Westad (eds.), *Cambridge History of the Cold War II*, 198-218.

²² See A. Wenger, 'Crisis and Opportunity. NATO's Transformation and the Multilateralization of Détente, 1966-1968', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6:1 (2004), 22-74 for this term.

²³ 'INFORMATION FILE, ROMANIAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC. Strictly confidential', Berlin, July 1965, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/364, 360, 389-390.

²⁴ Kramer, 'The Kremlin', 285.

Meanwhile, the West German chancellor Ludwig Erhard, the successor of Konrad Adenauer, had become sceptical about Adenauer's attempts to unify Germany, and began to muse on ways to improve relations with Eastern Europe instead. The German Question thus gained a new dimension. Increased contacts between West Germany and Eastern Europe nevertheless posed a particular threat to the leader of the GDR, Walter Ulbricht, since such relations did not apply to the GDR. On the contrary: the FRG still claimed to represent the whole of Germany according to its 'Alleinvertretungsanspruch', and thus denied the existence of the GDR. Ulbricht's fears that a rapprochement between the FRG and Eastern Europe would come at the expense of East Germany were not without ground, as we have seen in the last chapter: Khrushchev's Rapallo policy, which even consisted of a Soviet approval for West German participation in Multilateral nuclear Forces (MLF), did indeed undermine the status of the GDR. The East German leadership thought that 'West Germany (...) had had too much scope for manoeuvre within the socialist countries in the last couple of years' under Khrushchev, and it accordingly intended to use the WP to increase the East German scope for manoeuvre at West German expense.²⁵ Although Brezhnev had denounced MLF shortly after his rise to power, Ulbricht was thus still desperate to get the German Question on the agenda of the WP.

Finding a more understanding ally in Brezhnev, Ulbricht had already sought to convene the Political Consultative Committee a few weeks after Brezhnev's rise to power, and, when that failed, he convened the WP's deputy foreign ministers instead, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Although the meeting of deputy foreign ministers on 10 December 1964 was meant to put the German Question in the limelight by discussing the alliance's position vis-à-vis NATO's plans on MLF, the Romanian dissent had undermined Ulbricht's attempts to use the WP as a transmission belt for East German interests.²⁶ Behind the scenes Ulbricht had nevertheless proposed to the Soviet leadership several reforms to institutionalise the WP, such as a standing committee on foreign policy, regular PCC meetings, and a secretariat. Brezhnev had gladly given the green light for these proposals, which were in line with the Kremlin's own thinking anyhow, but asked Ulbricht to present them in the name of East Germany.²⁷ These reforms thus appeared on the agenda of the PCC meeting in Warsaw in January 1965.

Ulbricht's attempts to take the lead on the German Question were, however, outwitted by the Polish leadership, which in the first half of the sixties had been increasingly successful in using the burgeoning multilateralism in order to marry Polish interests with those of its allies. Acutely sensing another opportunity to do so, the

²⁵ 'Information about the meetings in Berlin, esp. with Axen', 3-6 February 1965, FIG ACP, GDR, mf 0527, 2595.

²⁶ Cf. Selvaige on the Soviet 'transmission belt' approach in: 'The Warsaw Pact and the German Question, 1955-1970: Conflict and Consensus', in Heiss and Papacosma (eds.), *NATO and the Warsaw Pact*, 179.

²⁷ Letter from Brezhnev to Ulbricht, 13 January 1965, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3388, 52.

Polish foreign minister, Adam Rapacki, had seized the initiative on the German Question by proposing a conference on European Security during the General Assembly of the UN in December 1964.²⁸ Choosing *not* to consult the Kremlin, unlike Ulbricht, the Polish leadership proposed a conference, which was far more sophisticated than Khrushchev's idea for a European Security System under Soviet supervision in 1955.²⁹ Rapacki went beyond mere propaganda by proposing a conference without unrealistic preconditions, and with the potential participation of both Canada and the US.³⁰ Rapacki's proposal accordingly illustrates a keen awareness of the burgeoning multilateralisation of détente, since a junior ally had made a major proposal for the relaxation of international tensions.

At the same time Rapacki's proposal for a European Security Conference was also intended to boost Polish sovereignty, by linking the proposal to 'the recognition of the existing borders in Europe, including the Oder-Neisse Line; recognition of the GDR; and the FRG's renunciation of access to nuclear weapons in any form'.³¹ Thus Rapacki cleverly wedded European détente to the three main goals of Polish foreign policy.³² Under the guise of relaxing international tensions, Rapacki's proposal was, accordingly, a more subtle denunciation of the Soviet Rapallo policy under Khrushchev. Using the multilateral forum of the General Assembly of the UN, the Polish leadership attempted to prevent the Kremlin from sacrificing Polish or East German interests to a rapprochement with West Germany. It had also found a more ingenious way to thwart the project of MLF, by making European Security dependent on its absence. Apart from multilateralising détente in the process, Gomulka also sought 'to multilateralise the foreign policy of the Warsaw Pact' by discussing the proposal of the European Security Conference during the PCC meeting in January 1965.³³

The stakes for the PCC meeting in January 1965 were, accordingly, high. It was not only the first such meeting which Brezhnev would attend, but it also followed from a Polish and East German attempt to put the German Question on the agenda in two very different ways, and consolidate their own sovereignty. It was, at the same time, the first PCC meeting after the Romanian Declaration of Independence, which had signalled a rapprochement with *inter alia* West Germany. The German Question had, accordingly, become a particularly sensitive issue.

²⁸ W. Jarzabek, *Hope and Reality: Poland and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1964-1989*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 56 (Washington, 2008), 6.

²⁹ W. Jarzabek, 'Poland in the Warsaw Pact 1955-1991: An Appraisal of the Role of Poland in the Political Structures of the Warsaw Pact', Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security (PHP), http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll_poland/Introduction.cfm?navinfo=111216, accessed 26 August 2013.

³⁰ Jarzabek, *Hope and Reality*, 6.

³¹ Selva, 'The Warsaw Pact and the European Security Conference', 86.

³² Cf. Jarzabek, "'Ulbricht Doktrin" oder "Gomulka Doktrin"?", 87.

³³ Selva, 'The Warsaw Pact and the European Security Conference', 86.

THE PCC'S PARALYSIS

The year 1965 began with the second PCC meeting since 1956 that did not take place in Moscow, and the first one ever that was not convened by the Kremlin, but by Ulbricht, whose attempts to do so had been thwarted for a year by his Romanian comrades. The PCC meeting's original agenda, which focused on MLF, had not only become obsolete by the fact that MLF had already been shelved by NATO halfway through December 1964, but had also become overshadowed by the Polish proposal for a European Security Conference and the East German push for reforms.

The Romanian leadership had already pre-empted any East German moves on WP reforms by writing to Brezhnev that '[t]he within every communist party prevailing principle, according to which the minority has to yield to the majority, cannot be applied to the relations between communist and workers parties'.³⁴ Thus justifying the right of veto within the WP, Gheorghiu-Dej emphasised that the WP was not a megapolitburo in which democratic centralism could be used to stifle the view of the minority. The Romanians in fact viewed the proposals on reforms as a way 'to strengthen the Soviet Union in the role of the hegemon', as they told their Chinese comrades, and had therefore even considered postponing the meeting yet again.³⁵ At the actual PCC meeting it was in fact Ulbricht who seemed most tireless in his defence of WP reforms, and he emphasised in his speech that the East German proposals on reform were linked to the actual topic of the meeting:

Because of the dangers, which are linked to the atomic armament of West Germany, we consider it necessary that the Warsaw Pact member states consult more regularly and cooperate more closely. The government in Bonn should not cherish any hope that it could succeed by differentiating between the states of the Warsaw Pact to increase the pressure on the GDR and the Soviet Union.³⁶

For the East German leaders the WP reforms were connected with the survival of East Germany, and its proposal to create a special committee of the ministers of foreign affairs was meant to deal with the West German nuclear threat. Brezhnev wholeheartedly agreed, and added that Ulbricht's wish 'to perfection the mechanism of the Warsaw Pact' meant that the structure of the organs of the Supreme Commander should be revised, too, as well as creating a staff of the Unified Command.³⁷ He thus immediately added a military angle to Ulbricht's proposals on foreign policy reforms. In a marked contrast to Khrushchev, Brezhnev intended to use the WP not only as 'a platform for launching his assorted diplomatic initiatives', but primarily as an

³⁴ Letter from RUWP CC to CPSU CC, 4 January 1965, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3655, 185.

³⁵ Meeting between Bodnars and Liu Fan, 1 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 9.

³⁶ Ulbricht's speech at the PCC meeting in January 1965, PA AA, MFAA, G-A 541.

³⁷ Brezhnev's speech at the PCC meeting in January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 15/1965, 37.

instrument to facilitate the military build-up, which he had begun.³⁸ He accordingly utilised the East German push for reforms on foreign policy as a vehicle for his own proposals on military reforms.

The Polish leader Gomulka moved, however, more independently from Soviet consent, and gave a new twist to the meeting's dynamics. Agreeing that the German Question was the central issue in European Security, he reiterated the Polish proposal for a European Security Conference, while emphasising that European Security should stretch further than disarmament, and also include recognition of the GDR. Championing East German recognition, Gomulka in fact made the GDR an object of his own proposals. He even concluded that Ulbricht's foreign policy committee could serve to devise a programme on European security, thus making Ulbricht's proposals instrumental to his own.³⁹ Turning both the GDR and Ulbricht's proposals into an object of the much larger Polish plan for a European Security Conference, Gomulka had once more succeeded in appropriating the German Question.

The greatest blow came, however, from the Romanians. Ignoring the East German and Polish proposals, Gheorghiu-Dej argued for a European Security System that liquidated all military blocks (e.g. both NATO and the WP) and promoted the unity of all socialist countries instead. This was a clever move, since it referred back to article 11 of the Warsaw Treaty, and it showed at the same time that the Romanians, too, took European Security to heart. Moreover, the call for socialist instead of Warsaw Pact unity, sounded politically correct, but was hardly realistic, since it would include China.⁴⁰ Thus Gheorghiu-Dej's speech was subversive in such a subtle manner, that it could not be openly questioned.

In the ensuing discussions Gheorghiu-Dej even justified omitting WP reforms and the European Security conference from his speech, since MLF was the actual topic on the agenda. When Gomulka pushed the issue of reforms, Gheorghiu-Dej riposted that he did 'not understand why these new organs are necessary', since the deputy foreign ministers 'cannot act except under instructions from superior party and government bodies in our countries'. The Romanian attempt to prevent the WP from becoming a supranational body under Soviet hegemony by stressing the role of the national governments in decision-making could, however, count on little support. Brezhnev characteristically backed Ulbricht's proposals and Ulbricht complained that '[s]uch consultations have been extremely sporadic in the last two or three years', clearly referring to the fact that the Romanians had time and again vetoed the convention of the PCC. Gheorghiu-Dej nevertheless outwitted Ulbricht by emphasizing that 'the real issue' was that '[t]he materials should be sent out on time, not twenty-four hours before

³⁸ Mastny, "We Are in a Bind", 232.

³⁹ Gomulka's speech at the PCC meeting in January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 15/1965, 40-49.

⁴⁰ Gheorghiu-Dej's speech at the PCC meeting in January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 15/1965, 66-77.

our departure to Warsaw, as happened now'.⁴¹ Ulbricht's surprise strategy was used against him: blamed for lack of professionalism, he lost the moral high ground.

Gomulka cleverly used the fact that 'Rapacki came forward at the UN with a proposal related to the question of European security' without consulting anyone in advance to stress the fact that more consultations would have been useful. Meanwhile, he inadvertently drew his allies' attention to the fact that the Poles had moved independently of the Soviet leadership, and he blackmailed the Romanians by stressing that 'we would like to consult about its concrete contents. If you do not want to participate, we will consult with those countries that want to.'⁴² Conceding that such a meeting might be necessary, Gheorghiu-Dej nevertheless opposed the East German concept of a statute to *regulate* the foreign minister meetings. Gomulka's observation that there had hardly been any consultations because 'there was no statute' paradoxically confirmed the Romanian success: without a statute they could safeguard their room for manoeuvre. Although the East Germans wanted to commit everything to paper in order to invest the WP and indirectly themselves with more power, the Romanians wanted to retain the utmost flexibility by avoiding exactly that.

Gomulka's emphasis on the fact that the Romanians were the only ones to disagree with the East German proposals accordingly had little effect. The Romanian dissent drove most of their comrades to despair, and caused a passionate, but ineffective, plea from the Hungarian leader Janos Kadar, who had already reminded Ulbricht that the Hungarian leaders, too, had 'repeatedly proposed' a council for foreign ministers:⁴³

The foreign ministers of the NATO countries get together and consult; so do the foreign ministers of the Arab, African, and Latin American countries. We are the only ones who cannot get together. Why? What is happening at this session is a crying shame. Why on earth can't we get together more often and discuss issues of interest to us?⁴⁴

In the editorial committee, which discussed the final communiqué, the same issues arose again. The Romanians succeeded in diluting the originally East German communiqué to such an extent that it undermined the East German aims. Rapacki attempted to convince Manescu that 'the Political Consultative Committee has the right to take decisions', and that the real problem was 'the lack of a permanent council of ministers of foreign affairs.'⁴⁵ Manescu nevertheless objected again, and also rejected the 'compromise' suggested by the East German foreign minister Bolz to at least

⁴¹ Minutes of the meeting of first secretaries, 20 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 15/1965, 124-125.

⁴² 'Polish Minutes of the Discussion at the PCC Meeting in Warsaw', 20 January 1965, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=17921&navinfo=14465>, 14, accessed 26 August 2013.

⁴³ Kádár's speech, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 15/1965, 50-55.

⁴⁴ 'Polish Minutes', 20 January 1965, PHP.

⁴⁵ 'Minutes of the editorial committee', 28 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 48.

arrange one meeting of ministers of foreign affairs in June 1965, because he had no mandate to decide. Since the same applied to the creation of the General Staff of the WP's Unified Armed Forces, the Romanian strategy of referring everything to higher authorities successfully paralysed any discussion on reforms.

The Romanian treatment of the WP as an intergovernmental assembly of representatives of sovereign states had turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Denying any right to decide anything within the confines of the PCC, the alliance was powerless as an institution, let alone a supranational one. Ulbricht's attempts to institutionalise the alliance had achieved nothing: despite the overwhelming support for more regular meetings, the Romanian obstruction had sufficed to undermine the East German initiative on reforms. The East German attempt to boost its own status at the long awaited PCC meeting thus came to nothing; even the German Question was appropriated by the Polish proposal for a European Security conference, which was hardly discussed, but approved nevertheless, although the communiqué merely referred to the participation of 'European states', while omitting the US and Canada.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, Brezhnev had made a modest, but important start at paving the way for military reforms in the alliance under the disguise of supporting the East German initiative on reforms. At the same time, he had stealthily begun to reassert Soviet authority, while also respecting the interests of the other WP members. Although the meeting ended in a stalemate, it testified to the fact that the WP had, against all odds, become a platform to discuss such important issues.

THE ROMANIAN CHANGE OF DIRECTION

The Romanians regarded the PCC meeting as their victory, and proudly stated in a conversation with their Chinese comrades that their allies 'were forced to eliminate the problems from the communiqué with which we did not agree.'⁴⁷ Regarding the Soviet proposal to reform the statute of the Unified Command as a way 'to keep a tighter rein over the countries of the WP', the Romanian prime minister Maurer explained that 'the principle of unanimity' and the 'logical position' of the Romanians had ensured that the assumed Soviet attempt to increase control was frustrated.⁴⁸ The absence of democratic centralism accordingly challenged any attempt to use the WP as a transmission belt for the party leaders' national interests. At the same time, the East German leadership

⁴⁶ 'Communiqué', 20 January 1965, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17910&navinfo=14465>, accessed 26 August 2013.

⁴⁷ Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 27 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 39.

⁴⁸ Conversation between Maurer, Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 28 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 56.

nevertheless also regarded the PCC meeting as an East German triumph, since it had consolidated its position domestically.⁴⁹

The East Germans therefore suggested a meeting of WP foreign ministers in June.⁵⁰ This had quite the opposite effect on the Romanians: fully aware of the unremitting East German drive for reforms, the Romanian ministry of foreign affairs prepared a long report on '[t]he Position of Romania vis-à-vis the Warsaw Pact' in August 1965.⁵¹ This was the first extensive analysis of the alliance, written five months after Nicolae Ceausescu had succeeded Gheorghiu-Dej, who had died in March 1965. Ceausescu had, *inter alia*, been appointed as Gheorghiu-Dej's successor, because of 'his attitude against the control of the Kremlin'.⁵² Moreover, the report coincided with the adoption of a new Romanian constitution in August 1965, in which the country was renamed the 'Socialist Republic of Romania', and the party was no longer called the 'Romanian Workers Party', but the 'Romanian Communist Party' (RCP). This meant a break with the Romanian past as well as with the Soviet Union. The analysis of Romania's position vis-à-vis – rather than *within* – the Warsaw Pact thus heralded further emancipation from the Soviet grip through the WP.

The report also served as a preparation to bilateral talks with the Kremlin, which had been scheduled for September. It contained a detailed analysis of all the PCC meetings, with particular emphasis on the success of Romanian opposition in the WP, such as to the accession of Mongolia to the alliance and to WP reforms. Meanwhile, it underlined that 'some member states have tried to use the Warsaw Pact for goals contrary to its provisions.' In order to prevent this, the Romanian delegation to the SU should discuss items such as the convention of the PCC, the East German proposal for a permanent foreign policy organ, the necessity for preliminary consultations, the signing of documents by government representatives, and the timely dissemination of documents.⁵³ The professionalisation of the alliance had become a distinct Romanian priority.

According to the Romanian report all WP members 'had to agree with the date and place of the PCC meeting, as well as the agenda', since '[s]uch a way of proceeding corresponds to the principle of equality of states and the norms of relations within the fraternal parties and countries'. Moreover, it was underlined that according to article 3 of the Warsaw Treaty, the WP was only meant for 'important problems, which affect the common interests of its member states', whose decisions 'cannot be taken by ministers of foreign affairs or their deputies, since they belong exclusively to the competence of the party and government leaders of each country.' For the first time it

⁴⁹ 'Information about some developments of the SED politics', 7 April 1965, FIG ACP, GDR, mf 0527, 2614.

⁵⁰ Letter from Ulbricht to Gomulka, 22 April 1965, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3388, 455.

⁵¹ 'The Position of Romania vis-à-vis the Warsaw Pact', ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 38/1965 I, 32-47.

⁵² D. Preda et al. (eds.), *România – Republica Federală Germană. Începutul relațiilor diplomatice 1966-1967. Vol. I* (Bucharest, 2009), XXIV.

⁵³ 'The Position of Romania vis-à-vis the Warsaw Pact', ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 38/1965 I, 32-47.

was explicitly stated that the 'Warsaw Treaty was an international intergovernmental concept', which was a term that was not used within the treaty. Moreover, the report emphasised that Soviet unilateralism during the Cuban Missile Crisis was illegal, since it fell within the jurisdiction of the WP.⁵⁴ The Warsaw Treaty thus became an important instrument to prevent both unilateralism and supranationalism.

Armed with such arguments, the Romanian delegation, led by Ceausescu himself, discussed both bilateral and multilateral relations in great detail during its visit to the Kremlin in September 1965. Ceausescu emphasised that the WP should have 'a more democratic base for its activities', and suggested that the meetings would take place by rotation in all participating countries, that the subjects at stake 'would be known in time by every party and government', and that a 'technical secretariat, in which every country would be represented, would be commissioned to prepare the materials, and not some country or other.'⁵⁵ Ceausescu's proposals clearly served to bypass East German unilateralism.

Moreover, Ceausescu suggested improving the unified command by creating an intergovernmental council of all WP defence ministers, each with the right of veto. The armed forces would accordingly be maintained on a national level, instead of being subordinated to the Soviet supreme commander, who would be reduced to the role of 'coordinator'. Pretending to comply with the Soviet desire for reforms, Ceausescu accordingly suggested 'improvements', which would considerably tie the hands of the Soviet leaders.⁵⁶ The Romanians seemed to have slightly modified their strategy: instead of opposing any reforms, they chose the apparently positive route of suggesting them. Thus the Romanians could hardly be blamed for being obstructive, and their proposals seemed to have a legal basis in the Warsaw Treaty, however detrimental to Soviet hegemony.

The Romanian change of direction greatly pleased Brezhnev, who did, however, emphasise the 'principle of unanimity' did not suit the PCC, 'because that would mean the right of veto, which cannot function between socialist countries.' Ceausescu's reply left Brezhnev nonplussed: stating that 'we shall never feel bound to any kind of decision with which we do not agree', especially if it concerns 'our problems', he asked whether Brezhnev would agree if the majority decided about problems concerning the SU. Forced to deny this, Brezhnev conceded that he 'fundamentally agreed' with Ceausescu, even though he 'would not introduce it as a principle', and thus implicitly agreed with Ceausescu's assumption that all WP countries were equal.⁵⁷

Brezhnev had thus unwittingly conceded an essential right to the Romanians: the *de facto* right of veto would enable the Romanians to prevent the WP from developing in any direction that did not appeal to them. It would also force the Kremlin to consult

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Meeting between Ceausescu and Liu Fan, 21 September 1965, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 4/1965, 201.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 203-204.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 204-206.

with the Romanians in order to ensure their minimal support. Brezhnev emphasised that he had never had ‘such [constructive] discussions’, and promised that ‘a phone call would suffice for me to come to Bucharest’.⁵⁸ The Romanians had the last word, and told Brezhnev they preferred official consultations. Both Brezhnev and Ceausescu had set a new precedent: their predecessors Khrushchev and Gheorghiu-Dej had never held bilateral consultations in order to discuss proceedings within the multilateral alliance; they had used the Sino-Soviet split as a pretext for consultations instead.

ALLIED ARGUMENTS

The need for official consultations and a better preparation of WP meetings was something Brezhnev took to heart. Treading his ground more carefully, Brezhnev had also consulted delegations from many other WP countries in the autumn of 1965, which had led to a quest for reforms ‘of the structure and functioning of the pact, especially of its military organs’, as Brezhnev wrote in a letter to his comrades on 7 January 1966. All delegations, apart from the Romanian one, had voiced explicit support for a statute of the PCC, a secretariat, which was not only technical, and a standing committee for foreign policy. The latter had in fact already been agreed upon during the PCC meeting in Prague in January 1956, but had never been implemented by Khrushchev. This again highlights the difference between the two Soviet leaders: Brezhnev practised what Khrushchev had preached. Underlining that ‘the representatives of the fraternal countries (...) had requested that the CC of the CPSU would take the initiative’, Brezhnev took the initiative away from the East German leaders, while emphasising that his proposals were supported by the majority of the WP leaders.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, the suggestion to reform the WP militarily had surreptitiously gained priority over foreign policy reforms, which was in line with the military build-up under Brezhnev. Brezhnev intended to create a unified military staff, as well as clarifying the powers of the supreme commander in order to turn the alliance into a ‘genuine, rather than merely formal, counterpart of NATO’, while facilitating its use for military purposes.⁶⁰ He thus addressed the Polish criticism from 1956-7 on the vague description of the supreme commander’s prerogatives in the Statute of the Unified Command.⁶¹ According to ‘unofficial talks with Soviet comrades’ the Soviet leaders also planned to establish a ‘Military Advisory Council’ as advisory body to the PCC, which ‘would be composed of defence ministers and the Supreme Commander of the Unified Armed Forces, on equal footing’. Although it seemed likely that ‘[k]ey positions, such as

⁵⁸ Conversation between Bodnars and Liu Fan, 28 October 1965, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 4/1965, 215.

⁵⁹ Letter from Brezhnev to Ulbricht, 7 January 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3388, 43-44.

⁶⁰ Mastny, ‘We Are in a Bind’, 232.

⁶¹ See Chapter 1 of this book, 53-55.

supreme commander, chief of staff (...) would be staffed by representatives of the Soviet Army', the Kremlin kept its allies in the dark as to the exact nature of its intentions.⁶²

This was, however, a deliberate strategy. Brezhnev carefully avoided to act in an authoritarian manner, which might provoke dissent, by actively inviting the input of the other allies, and writing them that the Kremlin 'does not intend to put forward any preliminary proposals on the organisation of the command and general staff of the Unified Armed Forces, but instead expects such proposals from the countries concerned'. Brezhnev unprecedentedly suggested convening *two* meetings, one of the deputy ministers or ministers of defence, and another one of the deputy foreign ministers or the foreign ministers to discuss the reforms on military matters and foreign policy respectively. Brezhnev thus curbed the East German transmission belt approach by stimulating other allies to contribute proposals, too, and by convening the meetings himself. The initiative was accordingly firmly in Brezhnev's hands, however much he involved his allies, and Brezhnev even trusted that the foreign policy committee and the secretariat would 'already be formed in 1966'.⁶³

The allies with a vested interest in the German Question were still the most active in formulating their own proposals, and the Czechoslovak leadership suggested that the 'military council [should] function as a subcommittee of the PCC that would ensure common strategy and appropriate military planning'. The emphasis on 'common strategy' was particularly important for the Czechoslovak allies, since they had concluded an agreement with the Kremlin a month earlier to station 'Soviet nuclear warheads on missiles at three Czechoslovak sites'.⁶⁴ The Polish, East German and Hungarian leaders had also consented to the stationing of nuclear warheads on their territory, which explains their vested interest in the coordination of foreign policy and military issues. The Soviet ability to pull the nuclear trigger thus stimulated the NSWP allies to shape the contents of the reforms so far as they could. The WP had not only become an instrument to curb West German nuclear ambitions, but it could serve to regulate Soviet ones, too.

The Poles had agreed to the stationing of nuclear weapons on Polish soil, but were determined to safeguard the influence of the NSWP members on military decision-making, including the Soviet deployment of nuclear weapons, so as to prevent the Kremlin from being able to pull the nuclear trigger on Polish territory.⁶⁵ The Polish ministry of defence accordingly suggested in an internal memorandum proposing an 'Advisory Committee for Defence as a body of the [military] Council', which should consist of the defence ministers within the WP as well as the Supreme Commander

⁶² Document no. 4, Memorandum by the Polish Ministry of National Defence, 26 January 1966', in Mastny (ed.), "We Are in a Bind", 240.

⁶³ Letter from Brezhnev to Ulbricht, 7 January 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3388, 43-44.

⁶⁴ V. Mastny, 'Learning from the Enemy: NATO as Model to the Warsaw Pact', *Zürcher Beiträge zur Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktforschung* No. 58 (2001), 22.

⁶⁵ Mastny, "We Are in a Bind", 232.

who should, in turn, be 'subordinated to the Council'. Proposing that the Supreme Commander and the Chief of Staff 'should be appointed by the Pact's Council', while being 'relieved of their duties in the armed forces of their country', the Polish defence ministry clearly intended to diminish the Supreme Commander's authority, and to decrease the Soviet hold on military matters.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, the Polish foreign minister Rapacki wholeheartedly agreed with Brezhnev's initiative to increase the 'elasticity and efficiency' of the WP, while also adding several proposals of his own in an internal memorandum in order to provide the consultations within the alliance with 'an institutional character'. He severely criticised the PCC for having 'been transformed into summit meetings, called up sporadically, generally not properly prepared, which adopt spectacular resolutions', and suggested creating a Council of the Warsaw Pact for summit meetings, which would 'decide on key issues, with the rule of unanimity', while restoring the PCC 'to its original character', namely 'an elastic forum for consultations of foreign ministers'.⁶⁷ The further institutionalisation of the WP would also require a General Secretary and a Secretariat, which, together with the other Polish proposals, would make the WP a more similar counterpart of NATO. The PCC would thus turn into a consultative and intergovernmental body, which is exactly what the Romanian leaders had in mind for all organs within the WP, whereas the Council would become a supranational and deliberative organ – something the Romanians wanted to avoid at all costs.

The Romanian politburo nevertheless agreed to the convention of the meetings, which Brezhnev had suggested, since Ceausescu, too, thought that 'some improvements are necessary, in the sense that this organisation should not become supranational, as it tends to do'.⁶⁸ The Romanian leadership accordingly welcomed convening the WP members not so as to promote reforms, but in order to *prevent* further institutionalisation of the WP. Meanwhile, Ulbricht was not at all pleased that Brezhnev had seized the East German initiative on reforms, and responded in a letter to Brezhnev that Brezhnev's proposals were in fact his own. Emphasising that 'the increasing aggression of West German imperialism' necessitated 'altogether strengthening the defence organisation of the Warsaw Pact politically and militarily', Ulbricht attempted to appropriate the reforms again: they were, after all, intrinsically linked to the German Question.⁶⁹ Despite mentioning defence, Ulbricht tried to shift the balance in favour of political reforms, since these were essential for promoting the status of the GDR internationally. After Khrushchev's passivity, Ulbricht now had to deal with a Soviet leader who undermined his monopoly on the German Question altogether.

⁶⁶ 'Memorandum of the Polish Ministry of National Defence, 26 January 1966', in Mastny (ed.), "We Are in a Bind", 241.

⁶⁷ 'Memorandum by Polish Foreign Minister Adam Rapacki', 21 January 1966, in *ibid.*, 238-240.

⁶⁸ Meeting of the Romanian Politburo, 20 January 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 6/1966, 5.

⁶⁹ Letter from Ulbricht to Brezhnev, 15 January 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY30/3389, 8-9.

A coordinated stance on foreign policy had become particularly important at a time when the government in Bonn had begun to activate its policy towards Eastern Europe. The East German foreign minister Otto Winzer, who drafted Ulbricht's letters and seemed the brain behind many initiatives, was, therefore, determined to ensure that the initially East German proposals on political reforms would carry the day. He suggested in a letter to the SED leadership to 'immediately start with the elaboration of our own conceptions regarding the proposals enclosed with the letter'. He added that '[a]lthough our representatives should not in any case attend the proposed meetings with their own readymade proposals, they should, however, have a clear conception and argumentation about the important issues', since 'there are various opinions on the proposals for the structure and functioning of the organisation of the Warsaw Pact, which we can partly not agree with.'⁷⁰ The potential Romanian dissent stimulated the East Germans to seriously prepare for the suggested WP meetings. Winzer also seemed to have learned from the fiasco in January 1965 that the East Germans should not present their allies with a *fait accompli*. The East German strategy had grown more subtle.

Ulbricht sent a letter to Brezhnev in early February in which he underlined that the need for more narrow and systematic cooperation was founded on the Warsaw Treaty. Arguing again for more frequent PCC meetings at the highest level of representation and a secretariat in Moscow, Ulbricht also dealt with the issue of unanimity: conceding the principle of unanimity, he nevertheless stressed that one member's disagreement on the implementation of decisions could not prevent its implementation in all other countries.⁷¹ This proposal was clearly meant to bypass the Romanian veto; the Romanian dissent had thus sparked new proposals. But not only Brezhnev was briefed in advance. The GDR delegates received a detailed briefing from their East German superiors full of 'political directives (...) for the meeting of deputy foreign ministers of the Warsaw Pact.'⁷² The East German delegation was better prepared than ever; the East Germans were determined to rise to the Romanian challenge.

THE ROMANIAN REBUTTAL

The Romanians, meanwhile, were at least as well prepared. Maurer had written a detailed memorandum in which he outlined the arguments for the Romanian stance during the meeting for the deputy foreign ministers, which was to take place in Moscow from 10-12 February 1966. He emphasised that the Romanian delegation had always

⁷⁰ Letter from Winzer to Ulbricht, Stoph, and Honecker, Berlin, 13 January 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY30/3388, 92.

⁷¹ Letter from Ulbricht to Brezhnev, 3 February 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3389, 38.

⁷² 'Political directives for the delegation of the GDR for the meeting of deputy foreign ministers of the Warsaw Pact', Berlin, 3 February 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3389, 56-62.

striven for ample preparation of PCC meetings. Clearly referring to the East German surprise proposals in January 1965, Maurer stressed that there was nothing wrong with the WP *per se*, and that a *technical* secretariat would suffice to ensure that every delegation would be well prepared. Moreover, Maurer pre-empted another East German proposal by arguing that compulsory participation at the highest level of representation contradicted the provisions of the Warsaw Treaty.⁷³

The other Soviet/East German proposals were also rejected on legal grounds. The statute for the Political Consultative Committee would entail ‘a change of the legal status of the Political Consultative Committee and, therefore, its transformation from a consultative organ (...), into a deliberative organ, which would mean that there would be regular sessions, in which it would be legitimate to make decisions’. Taking into account that Brezhnev and Kosygin had ‘implicitly left the option to decide by majority [instead of unanimity] open’ in their conversations in September 1965, this would in fact mean ‘the creation of a supranational organism, (...) thus contradicting the provisions of the Warsaw Treaty.’ The Romanian delegation was therefore instructed ‘not to accept the proposal to elaborate a statute of the Political Consultative Committee’.⁷⁴ Thus Maurer had used his background as a lawyer to construct a sophisticated argument, according to which the proposed statute proved to be illegal.

The same applied to a permanent committee on foreign policy, which was deemed ‘unacceptable’, since the ‘[f]oreign policy of each state is established by the party and the government in question.’ Moreover, the ‘[o]rganism provided for in the Treaty for “the accomplishment of the consultations” is according to article 6 of the Treaty only the Political Consultative Committee’.⁷⁵ The Warsaw Treaty was accordingly used in order to prevent the Warsaw Pact from becoming a deliberative and supranational alliance. The Romanian leaders wanted to remain firmly in charge of their own foreign policy, including potential diplomatic relations with Western European countries, such as the FRG.

Moreover, the Romanian delegation was strictly instructed to only base its ‘interventions on the appended directives’, which also contained an explicit manual for ‘the working method’, according to which the Romanian delegation would insist that they only had a ‘mandate (...) for an exchange of opinions with a preliminary character’. The delegation should stress time and again that the proposed reforms contradicted ‘the Warsaw Treaty and the principles on which the relations between sovereign and independent states are based (which are included in the Treaty’s preamble and in article 8)’. The Treaty’s provisions accordingly overruled the ‘“decision”, adopted in January 1956 at the PCC session in Prague’, which ‘cannot constitute an obligation for the WP member states to create a permanent Committee’.⁷⁶

⁷³ Memorandum on the Romanian stance, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 11/1966, 15-19.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Directives for the Romanian delegation, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 11/1966, 20-23.

Not only were the East German and Soviet arguments thus rebutted one by one, but a sophisticated strategy was also devised according to which the Romanians could hijack the entire meeting. Although the East Germans were well prepared, they had failed to devise an overall strategy. The Romanians were one step ahead.

In addition Maurer had instructed the Romanian delegation 'to oppose every proposal tending towards the establishment of any kind of subordination of the Political Consultative Committee to the Command of the United Armed forces or the General Staff, since 'according to the provisions of the Treaty any problems regarding [its] organisation or functioning (...) belong exclusively to the competence of the WP member states, and not to the jurisdiction of the Political Consultative Committee'.⁷⁷ Ceausescu reinforced these arguments during a lengthy speech. Shrewdly equating supranationalism with capitalism, he explained that 'socialism (...) creates, in contrast with capitalism, a new type of intergovernmental relations (...) based on sovereign equality of its participants'.⁷⁸

Thus, Ceausescu argued that the 'proposals and recommendations' of the supreme commander and the chief of the general staff 'should be subjected to approval by the governments of the WP member states'. He even added that 'various studies on armies in capitalist countries, especially of the NATO bloc' indicated that the WP countries distinguished themselves in their intergovernmental approach, respecting 'the principles of independence, sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs', which were firmly enshrined in the Warsaw Treaty. Cleverly insinuating that intergovernmentalism was intrinsic to communism, the proposed reforms inadvertently provided the Romanians with ammunition to limit the PCC's scope still further. Moreover, Ceausescu undermined the drive to model the WP after NATO by reminding his comrades of the fact that NATO, which was at that time in crisis, represented the capitalist world.⁷⁹ Selectively using contested concepts from the debates within NATO, the Romanian challenge to the WP was graver than ever.

ROMANIA'S 'TRIPLE YES!'

At the meeting of the deputy ministers of defence in Moscow from 4-9 February 1966 the Romanian delegation did indeed succeed in blocking any reforms. According to a Hungarian report the Romanian delegation disagreed with the rest that 'the establishment of a Military Consultative Council under the PCC would be desirable, [but] proposed that the Military Council should be subordinated to the Commander in Chief of the United Armed Forces [CCUAF], and that, on the principle of parity it

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ 'Protocol no. 4 of the meeting of the RCP CC Permanent Presidium', 2 February 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 11/1966, 6.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 10. See for NATO's crisis due to De Gaulle's obstruction: Locher, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, 60-92.

should make collective decisions in every question within the authority of the CCUAF.' This meant that any measure 'should only take effect after the approval of the government of the member states'.⁸⁰ Moreover, only the Romanian delegates insisted that the Supreme Commander and the Chief of Staff should not be an army officer from the Soviet Union. Arguing that the Supreme Commander should not be a Soviet officer, the Romanian delegates went even further than the existing practice within NATO, where the Supreme Allied Commander of Europe (SACEUR) was - and still is - always an American officer. This was a fundamental challenge to Soviet authority.

The Romanian delegation did nevertheless 'make concrete proposals to resolve the problems on the agenda', but 'they seemed to be steps in the wrong direction in relation to the existing practices' in the eyes of its allies.⁸¹ By stressing that the armies that participated in the United Armed Forces should only be subordinate to their national leadership and not to the Unified Command, the Romanian proposals blocked further military integration within the alliance.⁸² In an attempt to ensure both an intergovernmental aspect and the right of veto, the Romanians had once again succeeded in undermining Soviet proposals. The Hungarian participants therefore concluded that '[w]e should anticipate the existing differences of opinion between the political bodies also to pose difficulties in the resolution of the fundamental military issues'.⁸³ The WP's military might could well be affected by Romanian dissent, too.

The 'existing differences of opinion' also dominated the meeting of the deputy ministers of foreign affairs in Berlin from 10-12 February, during which everything went according to the Romanian plan. The other WP allies reluctantly accepted the Romanian 'formula' that the 'purpose of the meeting is an exchange of opinions', which prevented the 'creation of organs' – the main item on the agenda.⁸⁴ The Polish deputy foreign minister Marian Naszkowski concluded that the Romanian leaders were 'aiming at nothing less than "to paralyse the alliance and transform its organs into noncommittal discussion clubs"'.⁸⁵ Exasperated by the Romanian dissent during the meeting of deputy ministers of defence, the Polish delegation withdrew its proposals on reforms altogether in an attempt to avoid further paralysis, and so did the Czechoslovak delegation.⁸⁶ Although they inadvertently strengthened the Romanian hand by doing so, the Romanian formula on the 'exchange of opinions' had prevented them from

⁸⁰ 'Report to the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party Political Committee on the Meeting of the Deputy Foreign Ministers [and on the Meeting of the Deputy Ministers of Defense in Moscow]', 10 Feb. 1966, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17226&navinfo=15700>, accessed 26 August 2013.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Rijnoveanu, 'Rumänien und die Militärreformen', 213.

⁸³ 'Report to the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party', 10 February 1966, PHP, 3.

⁸⁴ Minutes of the permanent presidium of the RCP CC, 16 February 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 17/1966, 13.

⁸⁵ Polish deputy foreign minister Naszkowski cited in Mastny, 'Learning from the Enemy', 22.

⁸⁶ Mastny, 'Learning from the Enemy', 25. The withdrawal of the Polish proposal was, however, also due to division within the Polish leadership, since Gomulka thought that Rapacki had begun to act too independently, and wanted to keep control himself. *Ibid.*, 24.

presenting concrete proposals. The other allies were forced to sacrifice their own proposals to WP unity, and rallied behind the Soviet ones instead. The Romanian dissent, primarily meant to increase the Romanian scope for manoeuvre, thus eclipsed the proposals of the other NSWP members, and considerably curbed *their* input.

The Soviet deputy foreign minister Ilichev nevertheless demonstrated his goodwill by conceding the principle of unanimity, but he reiterated all the other proposals on political reforms. Although all representatives invoked the Warsaw Treaty to justify their stance, the Romanian representatives refuted their allies' arguments one by one. The Poles even suggested that the PCC should meet twice a year, and the Bulgarians questioned the rule of unanimity, intending to neutralise the Romanian veto.⁸⁷ As the Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov explained to Maurer and Ceausescu a week after the meeting, he preferred 'democratic centralism' to unanimity, since he could not 'see how the problems can be resolved' if 'someone who did not agree (...) would not submit to the decisions of the majority'.⁸⁸ The meeting thus seemed to follow the same pattern as the PCC meeting in January 1965, during which all WP members apart from Romania agreed to the political reforms.

Ulbricht took the opportunity as host to try to convince the Romanian deputy foreign minister Malita in a private interview of the need for reforms, by underlining that the WP was inferior to NATO, since '[t]he F. R. Germany uses NATO, and is laughing at us, at a time when we cannot even organise consultations'.⁸⁹ Inadvertently alluding to the fact that the GDR would like to use the WP in the way the FRG used NATO in his view, Ulbricht was clearly frustrated that the Romanian stance threatened to undermine any attempts at East German recognition. Fearing to lose the initiative on the German Question, Ulbricht ardently argued for the establishment of a secretary general and a headquarters: this would at least provide the WP members with a focal point. The Polish deputy foreign minister Naszkowski argued along the same lines and privately told Malita that 'a place where we can meet' would enable everyone to 'listen to one another and our actions would be the result of common deliberations.' Emphasising that 'no one attaches more importance to democracy and independence than Poland', he considered the reforms 'a means of strengthening democracy'.⁹⁰ The drive for institutionalising the WP in the same way as NATO seemed irreversible, but the Romanians stuck to their guns.

In a final attempt to break through the stalemate, Ilichev emphasised in another private interview with Malita that 'the Romanian intervention deviated from everyone else's point of view,' and that they had 'said no three times over: no to the secretariat,

⁸⁷ Minutes of the permanent presidium of the RCP CC, 16 February 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 17/1966, 14. See also speech by Malita, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3394, 28-42.

⁸⁸ Conversation between Zhivkov, Maurer, and Ceausescu, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 14 February 1966, 14/1966, 14-16.

⁸⁹ Minutes of the permanent presidium of the RCP CC, 16 February 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 17/1966, 20.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

no to the permanent committee, no to the statute'.⁹¹ The Soviet aim 'to activate the efficacy of the Warsaw Pact and to make it more flexible' was overruled by Romania's 'triple non'.⁹² In his speech Malita had nevertheless argued in favour of the Warsaw Pact's 'elasticity', which would be undermined by 'the limitation of [the PCC's] efficacy through rigid rules'.⁹³ But in fact the Romanians were not interested in a more flexible WP, but in maintaining their flexibility *within* the alliance, even though Malita phrased it differently:

I [Malita] answered that the three questions to which he referred, are nothing but three forms of understanding some greater problems: the improvement of contacts, of consultations and the better preparation of the Committee's sessions, problems to which we would reply yes three times.⁹⁴

Turning the Romanian 'triple non' into a triple yes, Malita strove to show that the Romanian attitude was in fact constructive. Although the Soviets had anticipated disagreements on editorial matters, they had expected to agree over the actual matters under consideration. Ilichev, meanwhile, tried to placate Romanian discontent, and even suggested establishing the secretariat in Bucharest. According to Winzer 'the proceedings of the meeting of deputy ministers of defence had given the Soviet comrades ground to employ such exceptionally careful tactics'.⁹⁵ The Soviets, too, seemed to change their method in light of earlier experiences, but to no avail.

Even though the Soviet delegation had sought the approval of 'one or two delegations' beforehand, it did not succeed in neutralising the Romanian dissent.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, the fact that the Soviets trod their ground carefully provided the other WP members with plenty of opportunity to wield their influence. The East German deputy foreign minister, Oskar Fischer, for example had told his Soviet colleague Ilichev that he was 'interested in obtaining the Soviet documents for the meeting, (...) getting to know the Soviet considerations about the result and the expected difficulties of the meeting, and treating a wide range of problems, which concerned the meeting'.⁹⁷ The Soviets duly complied and Winzer happily concluded that 'there were no fundamental differences of opinion with the Soviet comrades'.⁹⁸

⁹¹ Ibid., 15.

⁹² Speech by Ilichev, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3394, 19. De Gaulle's 'Triple Non' in Locher, 'A Crisis Foretold', 108.

⁹³ Speech by Malita, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3394, 38.

⁹⁴ Minutes of the permanent presidium of the RCP CC, 16 February 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 17/1966, 15.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁹⁶ Letter from Winzer to Ulbricht, Berlin, 9 February 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY30/3382, 68-69.

⁹⁷ 'Aktenvermerk über ein Gespräch des stellvertretenden Aussenministers, Genossen O. Fischer, mit dem stellvertretenden Aussenminister, Genossen L.F. Iljitschow', 7 Feb. 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY30/3382, 70-7.

⁹⁸ Letter from Winzer to Ulbricht, 9 February 1966. Cf. Winzer's speech, SAPMO-BArch, DY30/3394, 1-11.

The only fundamental differences remained those between the Romanians and the rest. In the face of Romanian dissent the other allies had decided to support the Soviet proposals by default. Whereas the other delegations ‘feared that the Romanian delegation would not continue these discussions’, the Romanians were afraid ‘that our position would be treated as obstructionist, isolated’.⁹⁹ They accordingly objected to the first draft of the protocol in which the other delegations ‘wanted to say that they came with positive proposals and we introduced polemics’.¹⁰⁰ This was in itself an improvement on the previous procedure concerning protocols, which were largely written beforehand and concealed any dissent. The Romanian delegation nevertheless stood its ground, since they ‘tried to prevent at all costs that this isolation would become fundamental’. The Romanians practised a delicate balancing act: while fundamentally disagreeing with all other delegations, they refused to be isolated. And, at least on paper, they succeeded. The final protocol contained only one paragraph, and was limited to the ‘strictly factual’ remark that the WP deputy foreign ministers ‘had met in Berlin for an exchange of opinions on the improvement of the activities of the WP’, as the Romanians had requested.¹⁰¹ So much for a meeting, which was intended to turn the WP into an institution that could compete with NATO.

This was another defeat for the East Germans, who had underlined in conversations with Ilichev ‘how useful a declaration would be for the GDR’, since it could serve to boost the status of East Germany, and to create a common stance against the FRG.¹⁰² The Romanian delegates did indeed feel victorious, and remarked in the politburo meeting afterwards that ‘the more uncertainty we sow regarding what is going to happen in the future, the more the idea grows in the other delegations that there should be a new foundation for discussions, which takes our point of view into account’. Although Ceausescu concluded that the other delegations would go home with extra food for thought,¹⁰³ the other delegations were not so optimistic. Emphasising that everyone ‘voiced similar views (...) with the exception of the Romanian delegate’, the Hungarian delegates considered the fact ‘that the Romanian side had no intention to engage in a discussion about the issues raised by the Soviet comrades (...) unacceptable’, and mused on a way ‘to persuade the Romanian side to give up their position’.¹⁰⁴ The meeting of deputy foreign ministers had certainly given them food for thought, albeit very different ones from Ceausescu’s.

⁹⁹ Minutes of the permanent presidium of the RCP CC, 16 February 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 17/1966, 19.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 19. See SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3394, 63-74 for the suggested protocol.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 19. See SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3394, 75-76 for the actual protocol.

¹⁰² ‘Memorandum about a conversation between the deputy prime minister, comrade O. Fischer, with the deputy prime minister, comrade L.F. Ilichev, 7 Feb. 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3382, 76.

¹⁰³ Minutes of the permanent presidium of the RCP CC, 16 February 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 17/1966, 19, 21.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Report to the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party’, 10 February 1966, PHP. The other NSWP reports are very similar in tone.

A WEST GERMAN MOVE

The Romanian strategy had frustrated the Soviet push for reforms, too, and the East German leadership felt it could reclaim the initiative on political reforms. Several weeks after the deputy foreign ministers' meeting Ulbricht sent a letter to all WP leaders in which he emphasised the necessity of reforms and further cooperation, and argued again in favour of making decisions at PCC meetings, which should take place at the highest level of representation. Refuting Romania's objections one by one, he even turned the Romanian arguments on sovereignty and independence on their head:

The experiences of the German Democratic Republic prove that there are no contradictions between the national interests and sovereignty of the Warsaw Pact states and a closer, and institutionally broadened cooperation in the community of the Warsaw Pact. On the contrary: the sovereignty and independence of every member state is consolidated to the extent that all members strengthen their unity in the organisation of the Warsaw Treaty.¹⁰⁵

For the GDR, and to a lesser extent for Poland and Czechoslovakia, the WP was, indeed, essential for their sovereignty, since the division of Germany had prevented their German borders from being officially sanctioned. The WP was the only international institution that recognised the GDR at all. But other countries, too, considered the alliance essential for collective security. Thus the Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov explained to Maurer and Ceausescu that Bulgaria was located on NATO's frontline (Greece and Turkey) and needed the alliance to survive.¹⁰⁶ The Romanians seemed alone in considering the WP and sovereignty mutually exclusive; for their allies the reforms would strengthen both the WP and their own status.

The East Germans accordingly felt sufficiently confident to enclose revised proposals for a statute of the PCC, a standing committee on foreign policy issues and a unified secretariat. These drafts were 'based on the Soviet proposals', but also contained East German, Czechoslovak, and Polish suggestions – all of them WP members with a vested interest in the German Question.¹⁰⁷ Ensuring the highest level of representation, Ulbricht proposed a meeting of first secretaries and prime ministers, in order to further discuss questions, 'which were linked to the improvement of the efficacy of the organisation of the Warsaw Pact.'¹⁰⁸

The East German proposal was, however, ironically eclipsed by a West German initiative: the West German government in Bonn had sent a 'peace note' to all WP countries except the GDR on 24 March 1966, which 'proposed to conclude bilateral

¹⁰⁵ Letter from Ulbricht to all WP first secretaries, Berlin, top secret, 22 February 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3389, 72.

¹⁰⁶ Conversation between Zhivkov, Maurer, and Ceausescu, ANIC, RCP, IR, 14/1966, 12.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Winzer to Ulbricht, 23 February 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3389, 67-68.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Ulbricht to all first secretaries, top secret, 22 February 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3389, 74.

treaties on a mutual renunciation of force', while declaring its willingness to participate in a disarmament conference.¹⁰⁹ This 'peace note' is often regarded a 'turning-point' in Bonn's treatment of Eastern Europe, since it was the first major concession of a West German government to Eastern Europe.¹¹⁰ Although some Eastern European countries perceived this as a chance to improve the bilateral relations with the FRG, and to collaborate more closely economically, the note soon became a bone of contention, because the West German government still refused to recognise the GDR and the Oder-Neisse border, thus failing to sanction the status quo.

The leaders with a vested interest in the German Question were accordingly not so enchanted by the West German overtures. The Polish leadership feared it would stimulate another Rapallo policy in the Kremlin – i.e. rapprochement with the FRG at Polish expense – and the East German leadership was furious about not being addressed at all, because the West German government still stuck to its 'Alleinvertretungsanspruch', despite its gesture of reaching out towards Eastern Europe. The Poles accordingly replied that they would not consider any negotiations unless Bonn would recognise the Oder-Neisse border and the GDR, while renouncing the use of nuclear weapons, and thus repeated the same conditions as those for a European Security Conference. A peace note that failed to recognise the post-war reality seemed nothing but a Trojan horse to the Polish and East German leaders.

The Czechoslovak leadership nevertheless reneged on these Polish conditions, which it had usually supported. Although it refused to enter into dialogue unless the West German government would declare the Munich agreement, which had permitted Nazi Germany's annexation of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland in 1938, invalid, it failed to condition a potential dialogue on the recognition of the Oder-Neisse border and the GDR, and the renunciation of nuclear weapons.¹¹¹ Prague was, in fact, already negotiating with Bonn about further economic ties, and even considered establishing diplomatic relations.¹¹² The Czechoslovak response caused particular concerns in the GDR, since it seemed as though an ally was compromising on the German Question.

The Romanian leadership embraced the Eastern policy ('Ostpolitik') by the FRG still more enthusiastically, since it was a real boost for any attempts at establishing diplomatic relations, and after the peace note both cultural and economic ties between Romania and the FRG flourished more than ever.¹¹³ The Kremlin, meanwhile, was also interested in a new beginning in the relations with West Germany, which was in line with Brezhnev's quest for détente, and could serve to boost the SU economically. Although the Soviet Union was the only Eastern European country that already had

¹⁰⁹ W. Jarzabek, 'Preserving the Status Quo or Promoting Change. The Role of the CSCE in the Perception of Polish Authorities, 1964-1989', in O. Bange and G. Niedhart (eds.), *Helsinki 1975 and the Transformation of Europe* (London and New York, 2008), 145.

¹¹⁰ Jarzabek, "Ulbricht Doktrin" oder "Gomulka Doktrin"?, 88.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 90.

¹¹² Ibid., 93-94.

¹¹³ Preda et al. (eds.), *România – Republica Federală Germania*, 23-31.

diplomatic relations with the FRG since 1955, Brezhnev was eager to normalise relations with the FRG *de facto*. On this topic Brezhnev unwittingly shared a vested interest with his Romanian comrades.

In order not to bypass his Polish allies Brezhnev sent a draft reply to the Polish government, in which he showed his willingness to enter into a dialogue with the FRG. Brezhnev added that the Oder-Neisse border had ‘nothing to do’ with the FRG, since it was the border between the GDR and Poland, and thus fully undermined Polish aims for consolidating the borders, while failing to mention that the proposal for a European Security Conference was originally Polish.¹¹⁴ Instead of defending the interests of his Polish and East German comrades, Brezhnev even echoed the Romanian point of view by proposing to dissolve the military blocks and replace it with a European security system. The Soviet perspective on the German Question thus seemed to have shifted in a new direction.

The Polish reaction was predictably furious, and Rapacki told a Soviet foreign policy official that the draft was unacceptable.¹¹⁵ The final Soviet reply to the FRG on 17 May was much more amenable to the Polish goals, and stressed the importance of recognising both the post-war borders and the GDR, while condemning West German foreign policy. The Kremlin had apparently decided to sacrifice a rapprochement to the FRG for Polish and East German interests. Thus Warsaw had undermined a rebirth of the Rapallo policy.

THE ROMANIAN METHOD REVISITED

Meanwhile, Ulbricht had once more lost control over the German Question. When Brezhnev finally convened the WP’s first secretaries, as Ulbricht had initially suggested, he claimed that he had decided to do so after meeting with Ceausescu, Gomulka, and Novotny, while failing to involve Ulbricht. The meeting took place on 7 April 1966 in Moscow, two weeks after the West German peace note, and therefore prioritised ‘the problem of European Security’ over Ulbricht’s proposals for reforms. The alliance’s initial division in the wake of the peace note had made a united stance on European Security and the German Question all the more imperative, and Brezhnev had accordingly appropriated the Polish emphasis on European Security, which had been discussed during the PCC meeting in January 1965. The next PCC meeting was scheduled for July 1966, and Brezhnev suggested putting ‘[t]he problem of European Security’ on the agenda, as well as the ‘improvements of the activities of the Warsaw Pact’. Brezhnev proposed ‘adopting a political document’ at that meeting, ‘which would be directed against aggression, against militarism, against [West] Germany’, and ‘in

¹¹⁴ Jarzabek, “Ulbricht Doktrin” oder “Gomulka Doktrin”?, 90.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

favour of security in Europe'.¹¹⁶ Since East Germany was not in a position to reply to the West German peace note, the WP would reply instead with a fully-fledged declaration on European security. The ball would again be in West Germany's court.

Brezhnev thus seemed to close ranks with the hard-liners on the German Question, but Ceausescu was delighted that 'for the first time since the Warsaw Pact exists we discuss the problems on time, as well as the agenda of the following session'. Moreover, his proposal to host the meeting in Bucharest was unanimously accepted. Emphasising that 'we should make the maximum effort to ensure that the materials are prepared as well as possible', Brezhnev clearly showed that he took the Romanian criticism on preparation seriously. Brezhnev thus prioritised ensuring Romanian goodwill over pleasing Ulbricht, whose revised proposals had to wait till July. In a meeting of WP defence ministers in May 1966 the Soviet delegation even conceded that the Unified Command of the armed forces would coordinate, rather than command, the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact, and that the armed forces from each country would be subordinate to their national leadership instead of the Unified Command. The Soviet delegation accordingly took the Romanian requests into account.¹¹⁷ In the wake of the West German peace note Brezhnev seemed to side with the ally who had responded as constructively as he would have liked to do, even though his rhetoric on the German Question seemed designed to please Gomulka and Ulbricht instead of Ceausescu.

Brezhnev lived up to his promise, and convened a meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs a month before the PCC meeting in order to ensure that the materials were well prepared. European security, the international political situation, and the improvement of the WP structure would be on the agenda.¹¹⁸ The Romanian leaders eagerly seized the opportunity to be as well prepared as possible, and carefully studied the Soviet proposal for a 'Declaration on the Improvement of Peace and Security in Europe'.¹¹⁹ The Kremlin had obviously succumbed to Polish and East German pressure in the wake of the West German peace note, and stressed the 'rebirth of revanchism and militarism in West Germany' after the Potsdam agreement in 1945, while contrasting the aggression from the NATO countries with the Warsaw Pact's peaceful stance. Strongly denouncing the axis Washington-Bonn, and West Germany's 'aggressive' stance vis-à-vis the GDR, the Soviet declaration seemed a rather incongruous reply to the West German 'peace note'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Minutes of the meeting of first secretaries in Moscow, April 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 48/1966, 3-9.

¹¹⁷ Rijnoveanu, 'Rumänien und die Militärreformen', 215.

¹¹⁸ 'Minutes of Meeting', 6 June 1966, PHP,

<http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=19335&navinfo=15699>, accessed 26 August 2013.

¹¹⁹ Soviet proposal for a Declaration on the Improvement of Peace and Security in Europe, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 65/1966, 59 ff.

¹²⁰ Internal Soviet draft, 9 June 1966, PA AA, MfAA, G-A 546, 28-41.

Some of the proposals were, however, more directed towards the relaxation of international tensions, such as ‘the convention of a pan-European conference’ on European Security and the proposal that all WP members should participate actively in the conference, which would considerably increase their room for manoeuvre in the international arena. Although the Romanian leaders wholeheartedly approved of these proposals, they nevertheless considered the Soviet draft in the first instance ‘an attack against the FRG’, in which the ‘constructive proposals’ played only a ‘secondary’ role, and ‘the danger of the European situation’ was exaggerated.¹²¹ The Romanians proposed to emphasise the ‘favourable conditions for détente’, as well as the necessity for a normalisation of bilateral and multilateral relations between NATO and WP countries instead. Calling the ‘solution of the German Question’ crucial to European Security, the Romanians exhorted both German states to contribute to the development of inter-European relations. They thus implicitly justified the way in which the West German government had reached out to Eastern Europe, while condemning the rigid stance of their East German and Polish allies.¹²²

Moreover, the Romanians used the declaration to once again stress the principles of ‘independence, sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, equality, and mutual advantage’, and to argue for a collective security system and the dissolution of military blocks.¹²³ Thus the Romanians attacked the Soviets with their own weapons yet again, which provided them with ammunition for challenging ‘the predominant role of the great powers’.¹²⁴ The Romanian leaders argued instead that the declaration should result from a broader initiative – i.e. one that went beyond the WP, and criticised the Soviet leaders for failing to conceive ‘methods (...) in attaining the proposed goals’.¹²⁵ Attempting to steer the declaration away from the confines of the Warsaw Pact, the Romanian leadership only favoured participating in a European Security conference, so long as it would ‘not become a rigid platform that would hinder the initiatives and actions of every socialist state in European questions’. The Romanian message was clear: they would, for once, go along with their WP allies, if the declaration served to *increase* their scope for manoeuvre.

In an ironic reversal of roles, the Romanian leaders even composed their own communiqué in advance; a procedure they had so much condemned in the past. Emphasising that ‘the existence of military blocks (...) represents an anachronism,

¹²¹ ‘Observations about the Soviet draft of the “Declaration Concerning the Improvement of Peace and Security in Europe”, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 65/1966, 59-68.

¹²² Declaration about the foundation of peace and security in Europe, Proposal of the Romanian delegation, 5 June 1966, 7-27, PA AA, MfAA, G-A 546.

¹²³ The Romanians even went public on this. Cf. V. Mastny, ‘Meeting of the PCC, Bucharest, 4-6 July 1966, Editorial Note’, PHP, http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll_pcc/ednote_66.cfm, accessed 26 August 2013.

¹²⁴ Cf. E. Dragomir, ‘The Perceived Threat of Hegemonism in Romania during the Second Détente’, *Cold War History* 12/1 (2012), 128: ‘Romania’s independence-seeking foreign policy should (...) not be placed in the framework of anti-Sovietism, but rather (...) anti-hegemonism’.

¹²⁵ ‘Observations about the Soviet draft of the “Declaration Concerning the Improvement of Peace and Security in Europe”, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 65/1966, 59-68.

which is incompatible with the independence and national sovereignty of the people', the Romanians considered the European conference an opportunity 'for the multilateral development of normal relations between all European states'.¹²⁶ Implicitly facilitating their burgeoning relations with the FRG, while undermining the Polish attempt to use the conference to pressurise West Germany into recognising the borders of Poland and the GDR, the Romanians had appropriated the Polish proposal for a European Security Conference for their own purposes.

'SOME' AGAINST 'OTHERS'

The Romanian draft was, in fact, very close to the initial Soviet response to the West German peace note, which had been denounced by Rapacki, and therefore provided the Kremlin with a convenient pretext to present the rest of the WP with an alternative. The Soviet leadership accordingly forwarded the complete Romanian draft to the other WP members one day before the start of the conference of the WP foreign ministers, who were not amused.¹²⁷ The East German delegation was, ironically, particularly displeased by this *fait accompli*, especially since it eclipsed Ulbricht's attempt a few days earlier to put reforms on the agenda.¹²⁸ The other six allies decided to meet informally without their Romanian comrades in order to agree on a common declaration, and outwit the Romanians just before the conference began.¹²⁹ This sealed the division between the one (Romania) and the remaining six. This deliberate strategy against the Romanians was both unprecedented and futile: the official meeting from 6 till 17 June 1966 in Moscow – the longest such meeting in the WP's history – followed the usual pattern.¹³⁰ The Romanian delegates rejected all proposals on reforms and stood their ground on European Security.

The East German foreign minister Otto Winzer accused the Romanians of *underestimating* the international situation and downplaying West German 'revanchism and imperialism', and emphasised his full agreement 'with all the other proposals of the Soviet and Polish comrades', since 'the axis Bonn-Washington should not be overlooked'.¹³¹ Winzer clearly formed a united front with the Polish and Soviet

¹²⁶ Communiqué of the Political Consultative Committee meeting of the member states of the Warsaw Pact, Romanian draft, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 65/1966, 86-97.

¹²⁷ Draft of the Romanian declaration, Moscow, 5 June 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3395, 27-47.

¹²⁸ See PA AA, MFAA, G-A 546 for East German documents on this meeting, incl. the proposals on reforms.

¹²⁹ See 'Minutes of the Bulgarian Communist Party CC Plenum - Report on the PCC Meeting by the Deputy Head of State (Stanko Todorov)', 12 July 1966, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17948&navinfo=14465>, accessed 26 August 2013.

¹³⁰ Békés, 'Der Warschauer Pakt und der KSZE-Prozess', 227.

¹³¹ Speech by the foreign minister of the GDR, Otto Winzer, 6 June 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3395, 55-66.

delegations, with whom he had regular discussions behind the scenes.¹³² Meanwhile, the Romanian foreign minister Manescu eloquently defended the Romanian draft, including the principles of sovereignty and independence, and greatly exhausted the patience of the other WP members, when they had still not come to an agreement two days later.¹³³ The East German allies were particularly exasperated by the Romanian ‘deliberate delaying tactics’, which threatened to undermine their drive for recognition.¹³⁴

The Soviet foreign minister Gromyko also complained about the ‘slow’ pace of the consultations and the ‘pessimistic atmosphere’, and appealed to ‘the will for constructive cooperation’ in order to prepare ‘a common document as a foundation for the PCC meeting’ after all.¹³⁵ Manescu riposted ‘that all remarks are equal’ so that all seven drafts could serve as foundation for the ‘common text’, instead of the Soviet proposal alone. He added that ‘the declaration should be an appeal, which the European people expect of us’, which implied ‘reaching out to those forces, which take measures against revanchism and militarism.’¹³⁶ The Romanian delegation thus took a fundamentally different view on the purpose of a European Security Conference, which should not primarily be directed *against* West Germany, but *in favour* of more diplomatic contacts between all European countries, including the FRG.

The Romanian delegates clearly envisaged the declaration as a positive response to the West German peace note, rather than an attack against West Germany. The new ‘Ostpolitik’ should be complemented by a new ‘Westpolitik’ within the Warsaw Pact: in the Romanian view the time was ripe to reach out to West Germany, too. The Romanians were *obstructive inside* the Warsaw Pact, but *constructive outside*, as opposed to their WP allies, who were more interested in strengthening the ties *within* the alliance. This time the Romanian delegation nevertheless had a vested interest in being ‘determined to cooperate with the other representatives to reach a common declaration’, since it very much supported the *concept* of a European Security Conference.¹³⁷

The result of the fundamental disagreement was nevertheless the same: the Polish deputy prime minister Naszkowski argued that the ‘six delegations had shown a maximum of goodwill regarding the Romanian stance’, and that it was impossible ‘to take seven texts as a starting-point’. In a message to Warsaw Naszkowski shrewdly observed that ‘the [Romanian] mild assessment of West German policy has a clear motive’, since the Romanian leaders ‘strove to draw closer to the FRG, especially where it concerns the economic advantages’.¹³⁸ Agreeing with Manescu that the ‘document

¹³² Letter from Hegen to Ulbricht, Stoph, Honecker, and Axen, 16 June 1966, *ibid.*, 99-100.

¹³³ Speech by the Romanian minister of foreign affairs, Manescu, 6 June 1966, *ibid.*, 67-72.

¹³⁴ Letter from Hegen to Ulbricht et al., 16 June 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3395, 99-100.

¹³⁵ Introductory remarks by the Soviet foreign minister Gromyko, 8 June 1966, *ibid.*, 73-74.

¹³⁶ Speech by Romanian foreign minister Manescu, 8 June 1966, *ibid.*, 75-76.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Naszkowski cited in W. Jarzabek, ‘Die Volksrepublik Polen in den politischen Strukturen des Warschauer Vertrags zu Zeiten der Entspannung und der “Ostpolitik”’, in T. Diedrich, et al. (eds.), *Der Warschauer Pakt: Von der Gründung bis zum Zusammenbruch, 1955 bis 1991* (Berlin, 2009), 136.

should have a constructive character', Naszkowski nevertheless underlined that it 'should unmask and reject the aggressive forces'.¹³⁹ Winzer supported both Naszkowski and the proposal of his Hungarian comrade Janos Peter to 'create a common document while taking the proposals of the Romanian comrades into account', and suggested that the Romanian comrades could 'publish their deviating opinions separately'. He thus facilitated a Romanian 'Alleingang'.¹⁴⁰

Meanwhile, Gromyko concentrated on the contents, and stressed that 'a conference should be convened without discriminations and preconditions in order to treat the problem of European Security'.¹⁴¹ Although West Germany could participate, 'the specific interests of our countries' would be defended, too, such as the recognition of the GDR. Gromyko obviously attempted to compromise by including both Germanys, without taking a stance against his Romanian comrades. Manescu, too, stressed that '[w]e do not want to isolate ourselves from the other delegations and do not regard our opinion as being in principle different from the other opinions'.¹⁴² Testing the fine line between independence and isolation, Manescu added that a distinction between six delegations and one would make it impossible for the meeting to proceed. He thus made the other delegates responsible for a potential impasse, while trying to prevent a break on the issue of a European Security Conference.

Brezhnev, for whom European Security was a priority, was adamant to prevent a break, too, and although he did not attend the conference, since he was not a foreign minister, he used his position as a host to have a long conversation with Manescu halfway through the conference, who complained about the attitude of "some" against "others". Brezhnev, who seemed 'nervous and agitated', emphasised that 'the Soviet leadership would be delighted if at the Bucharest conference a good declaration would be adopted.' He even argued that 'the fact that the meeting would take place in Bucharest gives it the right to say that the success or the failure of the meeting would be attributed in the first place to its hosts, and to comrade Ceausescu personally'.¹⁴³

Both sides showed their willingness to compromise in a secret meeting between Manescu and Gromyko later that day. Rewriting the Soviet draft together, the Soviet side agreed to greater emphasis on principles, foreign relations, and a more constructive tone, and the Romanian side conceded quoting the Potsdam agreement and criticizing the politicians from the militarist circles in the FRG.¹⁴⁴ The Romanian insistence on rewriting the document inadvertently served a Soviet purpose: although the Kremlin

¹³⁹ Speech by Polish deputy foreign minister Naszkowski, 8 June 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3395, 77.

¹⁴⁰ Speech by East German foreign minister Winzer, 8 June 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3395, 55-66.

¹⁴¹ Speech by Soviet foreign minister Gromyko, 8 June 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3395, 83-89.

¹⁴² Speech by Romanian foreign minister Manescu, 8 June 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3395, 90.

¹⁴³ 'Conversation between Brezhnev and Manescu, Top Secret, Extremely Important', ANIC, RCP CC, C, 73/1966, 26-39.

¹⁴⁴ 'Conversation between C. Manescu and A. Gromyko, Top Secret, Of Utmost Importance', ANIC, RCP CC, C, 73/1966, 40-45.

was loth to antagonise its Polish and East German allies, it actually shared the Romanian view on the need for a normalisation of relations with the FRG. Meanwhile, the Romanians clearly had the political will to agree on a declaration on European Security, and managed to put a decisive stamp on a declaration that had deliberately been drafted in their absence. The stakes of the other WP members in European Security were so high that the Romanians successfully capitalised on their willingness to compromise.

THE SUCCESS OF THE ROMANIAN STRATEGY

The Romanian leaders were determined to cultivate the impasse on reforms during the PCC meeting they hosted in Bucharest from 4-6 July 1966, while gaining approval for the Soviet-Romanian proposal on European Security. The East German leaders, meanwhile, had become increasingly insistent in their zeal for foreign policy coordination, since the West German *Ostpolitik* had made a united Eastern European stance all the more urgent, and they had, accordingly, presented another 'draft decision' on reforms.¹⁴⁵ Having riddled the East German proposal with question marks and the word 'no',¹⁴⁶ the Romanian leaders decided 'to prevent at all costs that a decision would be taken about establishing any such organ [on foreign policy]'.¹⁴⁷ In order to do so they arranged daily meetings with the Soviet delegation, which they used to sow confusion, and to gain concessions behind closed doors. In their first meeting with Brezhnev and Soviet premier Kosygin Ceausescu and Maurer claimed that the East Germans had retracted their proposals on foreign policy coordination, and suggested taking it off the agenda. Brezhnev agreed with apparent relief, ironically stating that it was 'a problem, which had not been sufficiently prepared'.¹⁴⁸ In the wake of the West German peace note he seemed displeased that Ulbricht had once again taken the initiative, and was amenable to the Romanian wishes instead.

The East German delegation was, however, blissfully unaware of this move, and insisted in a conversation with Ceausescu later that day that they had never intended to take reforms off the agenda. Winzer had, instead, suggested treating the reforms together with the first issue, European Security, thus upgrading their importance, and emphasising the linkage between the two. Pretending it was an unfortunate misunderstanding, Ceausescu insisted that the Soviets had agreed to take the reforms

¹⁴⁵ Draft decision on reforms, 1 June 1966, PA AA, MfAA, G-A 546, 107-112.

¹⁴⁶ 'Draft decision of the Political Consultative Committee concerning measures regarding the improvement of the Warsaw Pact', ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 95/1966, 239-243.

¹⁴⁷ 'Meeting between Bodnarus and Hoang Tu, the ambassador of R.D. Vietnam', 2 June 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 181/1966, 104-105.

¹⁴⁸ Minutes of discussions with the Soviet delegation, 3 July 1966, 10.30-12.30, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, II, 130.

off the agenda and that the meeting had been prepared accordingly.¹⁴⁹ Although Ulbricht still attempted to link European Security to reforms in his opening speech, since he considered a stronger foreign policy coordination essential for ‘a still more flexible and effective policy’ to safeguard European security, this linkage had inadvertently removed the reforms from the agenda altogether.¹⁵⁰ Thus the Romanians had brilliantly used their position as hosts to manipulate the agenda.

The Romanians nevertheless intended to prevent discussing military reforms at all costs, too, despite recent concessions from the Kremlin, such as the hypothetical agreement to appoint a supreme commander from any WP country instead of the SU.¹⁵¹ Ceausescu and Maurer entered into a dense discussion with Brezhnev and Kosygin on the legal implications of WP reforms. Explaining the difference between deliberative and consultative, supranational and intergovernmental, and majority rule versus unanimity the Romanian delegation insisted that they were ‘not against the Warsaw Treaty, but against transgressing it’.¹⁵² Brezhnev and Kosygin failed to understand ‘who would take decisions if the PCC could not decide’, and were shocked to hear that ‘when six countries want something, but the seventh does not want it (...), no decision can be taken’. Brezhnev feared that ‘nothing would remain of his alliance’, and that the Romanian proposals ‘would enchain the activity of the whole organism’, to which Ceausescu replied that ‘everything must be viewed through another prism’.¹⁵³

With their claim that ‘[w]e want to introduce order and legality in all this’, the Romanians completely checkmated the Soviet leadership. They compelled Brezhnev to concede that the most recent East German proposals, which insisted that the PCC could ‘take decisions’, conflicted with ‘the principles of the Warsaw Treaty’, where its consultative nature is underlined. Moreover, Brezhnev was forced to admit that the Warsaw Treaty did not cater for military reforms, so that hypothetical reforms would imply that there was something wrong with the current treaty. Maurer even used Brezhnev’s inexperience in PCC meetings against him, by stressing that he had ‘participated many more times’, and that the lack of legality had ‘raised very many problems’. Brezhnev exclaimed ‘we are not prepared. Give us time to prepare!’ After Maurer emphasised that it was time that the Soviets, too, would get into action, Brezhnev answered that he ‘needed at least a year’, even though the reforms had already been discussed for eighteen months.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Discussions with the East German delegation, 3 July 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 5/1966, 15-16.

¹⁵⁰ Speech by Ulbricht, 4 July 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3389, 165 ff.

¹⁵¹ See ‘Soviet Draft Statute on the Unified Command of the Warsaw Pact’, 2 July 1966, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17990&navinfo=14465>, accessed 26 August 2013.

¹⁵² Minutes of discussions with the Soviet delegation, 4 July, 19.30-22.30, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, II, 160.

¹⁵³ Minutes of discussions with the Soviet delegation, 4 July, 19.30-22.30, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, II, 153-176.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Brezhnev and Kosygin, who had not attended any meetings within the WP since the PCC meeting in January 1965, did not seem to have been well informed by the Soviet delegates of the proceedings during the other meetings within the WP. In sharp contrast to the Romanian leaders, their Soviet comrades had failed to devise a strategy to further their own interests. It only seemed to dawn on Brezhnev during this meeting that Soviet authority was contested and that Romanian dissent was a serious challenge, not only to other NSWP members, but also to the SU itself.

The Soviet drive for military reforms was thus thwarted, too, and Brezhnev succeeded in persuading his allies at the PCC meeting to postpone the discussion on reforms altogether for the sake of 'our real unity', while referring to his 'exchange of opinions with comrade Ceausescu'. Explaining that the ministers of defence had not reached a unanimous conclusion yet during their meeting in Moscow, Brezhnev argued that 'the problems, which have not been interpreted in a unanimous way need time', and that it was therefore desirable 'to still continue with the consultations'.¹⁵⁵ Since the Romanian leadership strove to improve its relations with the FRG without having to worry about Soviet nuclear warheads on Romanian soil, any further coordination on military or political issues was not in Romanian interest.

The fact that all proposals on reforms were removed from the agenda was clearly a defeat for Ulbricht, who, according to the Romanians, 'had no clue'.¹⁵⁶ What remained, was the declaration on European Security, which Ceausescu had used as an example of good practice, since every government had had plenty of time to comment on it beforehand.¹⁵⁷ The Romanian-Soviet cooperation on European Security seemed far more fruitful than the East German-Soviet collaboration on reforms:¹⁵⁸ the declaration was unanimously accepted with only a few minor concessions to accommodate East German interests, such as adding the word 'sovereign' to German Democratic Republic.¹⁵⁹ With the Romanians agreeing on their own proposal, there was no one left to disagree.

Meanwhile, the declaration served Polish and Czechoslovak interests, too, since it made 'the inviolability of the borders a foundation of a lasting peace in Europe', while conditioning 'the normalisation of the situation in Europe' on 'the recognition of the actually existing borders', including the Oder-Neisse border. This was, in fact, a Romanian concession, since it was still involved in a border dispute with the Soviet

¹⁵⁵ 'Minutes of the meeting of first secretaries and prime ministers, afternoon session', 6 July 1967, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, I, 197.

¹⁵⁶ 'Minutes of the Romanian Party Politburo Meeting, Report on the PCC Meeting by the General Secretary of the PCR (Nicolae Ceausescu)', 12 July 1966, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=17947&navinfo=14465>, accessed 26 August 2013.

¹⁵⁷ Minutes of discussions with the Soviet delegation, 4 July, 19.30-22.30, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, II, 159.

¹⁵⁸ 'Common Romanian-Soviet draft declaration on Peace and Security in Europe', ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 95/1966, 181-99.

¹⁵⁹ 'Minutes of the meeting of ministers of foreign affairs', 5 July 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, II, 39.

Union about Bessarabia, which was a severely disputed region on the Soviet-Romanian border, which the SU successfully integrated in 1940 at the beginning of World War II.¹⁶⁰ The Romanian appeal for the simultaneous dissolution of both military blocs had, nevertheless, been approved, as well as the emphasis on a normalisation of intra-European relations. The Romanian delegation had successfully managed to prevent a condemnation of West Germany, and had kept the road to diplomatic relations with the FRG open by casting the WP response to the peace note in a more positive mould.

The Romanian strategy proved most effective. The reforms were not discussed for the first time in eighteen months and the declaration on European Security was unanimously approved.¹⁶¹ Even though the proposal was originally Polish, the Romanians could claim credit, since it was approved at the meeting they hosted, and based on a Soviet-Romanian draft. It soon came to be known as the 'Bucharest declaration'. Ironically, the only positive measure the Warsaw Pact had achieved in several years was thus associated with Romania. The Bucharest conference is, indeed, considered 'the first serious initiative of Eastern Europe in institutionalising the East-West relations', as well as 'the first important step on the road to signing the Helsinki Final Act in 1975'.¹⁶² The way to Helsinki had been paved in Romania.

Ceausescu had taken Brezhnev's warning to heart: the success or failure of the PCC meeting in Bucharest would, indeed, be considered a Romanian responsibility. The Romanian choreography had turned it into a Romanian triumph. The Romanians had begun to turn the Warsaw Pact into *their* transmission belt, after ensuring that no one else had the scope for manoeuvre to do so.

THE AFTERMATH

In the period after the Bucharest declaration, the Romanian leadership became even more active on the diplomatic front outside Eastern Europe, as was noted with some apprehension by diplomats from other WP countries.¹⁶³ Having insisted on the emphasis on the 'normalisation' of relations with other European countries including the FRG, the Romanian leadership could now use this part of the declaration to justify potential diplomatic relations with the FRG. Ignoring the insistence on the recognition of the Oder-Neisse border and the GDR, the Romanian politicians attempted to lure their West German colleagues into diplomatic relations by not posing any preconditions. The East German and Polish diplomats in Bucharest duly reported to

¹⁶⁰ Jarzabek, "Ulbricht Doktrin" oder "Gomulka Doktrin"?, 92.

¹⁶¹ See for the actual declaration 'Public Declaration on Security in Europe', 8 July 1966, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17953&navinfo=14465>, accessed 26 August 2013. A lot of Romanian requests seem to be implemented.

¹⁶² Békés, 'Der Warschauer Pakt und der KSZE-Prozess', 227.

¹⁶³ 'Information report, 14.-26.10.1966', Bucharest, 26 October 1966, SAPMO BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/372, 209.

their superiors in Berlin and Warsaw about the intensified contacts between Romania and West Germany, though adding with relief that foreign minister Manescu had postponed a visit to the FRG, while awaiting more 'favourable conditions', after Ludwig Erhard's CDU-FDP coalition had collapsed in October 1966.¹⁶⁴

In December 1966 a new West German government was formed, led by the Grand Coalition of the chancellor Kurt Kiesinger (CDU) and the social democrat Willy Brandt as vice-chancellor and foreign minister. Willy Brandt had personally witnessed the adverse effects of the division of Germany as mayor of West-Berlin, and therefore strove to improve the relations with Eastern Europe. Although the new government still refused to recognise the GDR or the Oder-Neisse border, it emphasised in a declaration on 13 December that 'it was very much interested in putting its relations with the Warsaw Pact states on a new footing'.¹⁶⁵ After Ulbricht had 'explicitly condemned the SPD for forming a "revanchist" government alliance with the Christian Democrats',¹⁶⁶ he wrote a letter to the Soviet ambassador in Berlin Abrassimov to request the convening of a conference of WP foreign ministers as the 'next step (...) in the German Question', and in order to bypass any Romanian 'initiatives'.¹⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the GDR ministry of Foreign Affairs published a series of declarations 'on the question of diplomatic relations of socialist countries with the Federal Republic of Germany' in order to forestall any such relations.¹⁶⁸ The passages of the Bucharest Declaration were emphasised in which the West German recognition of the GDR and the Oder-Neisse border was demanded, which should be a precondition for 'normal diplomatic relations between West Germany and the socialist countries'.¹⁶⁹ The linkage of the normalisation of intra-European relations to the demands for recognition thus created a different interpretation from the Romanian one. The Romanian response to the establishment of a new West German government was, therefore, quite the opposite: they immediately organised Manescu's visit to the FRG.

In the meantime the Polish leader Gomulka had also pressurised the Kremlin to convene the WP countries so as to unite on the German Question, and prevent Romania from developing any further initiatives with the FRG. Although Brezhnev told a Polish delegation during a meeting in Lansko (Poland) on 18 January that he was intending 'to give the bloc countries green light for talks with West Germany', he added that he was 'worried' that the situation would spin out of control, since 'the Romanians

¹⁶⁴ 'Information report, 30.9.-13.10.1966', Bucharest, 13 October 1966, *ibid.*, 192. Cf. Jarzabek, "Ulbricht Doktrin" oder "Gomulka Doktrin"?, 94, for the Polish stance.

¹⁶⁵ Moreton, *East Germany and the Warsaw Alliance*, 52.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁶⁷ Letter from Ulbricht to Abrassimov, 17 January 1967, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3396, 192-3.

¹⁶⁸ 'Document on diplomatic relations of socialist countries with the FRG', 24 January 1967, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3396, 196-199, and 'Evaluation about diplomatic relations with the FRG', 25 January 1967, *ibid.*, 200-208.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 204.

were already establishing diplomatic relations with the FRG'.¹⁷⁰ Brezhnev was no longer in a position to sanction the foreign policy of other WP members. Gomulka cultivated Brezhnev's concerns, and warned him that 'the Warsaw Pact is dissolving', while pressurising him to backtrack on his German policy.¹⁷¹ Gomulka even attempted to convince Brezhnev to make any diplomatic relations with the FRG conditional upon Poland's traditional demands: the recognition of the Oder-Neisse line, recognition of the GDR, and renunciation of nuclear weapons.¹⁷² It was nevertheless not only Polish pressure, but also the fact that the Romanians moved too fast that impelled Brezhnev to change his course again, and convene the WP foreign ministers. Although he favoured a normalisation of relations with the FRG, the establishment of diplomatic relations was still one step too far.

The Soviet ambassador in Bucharest, A.V. Basov, could, however, count on little sympathy when he attempted to convince Ceausescu to approve a meeting of WP foreign ministers in Berlin from 6-10 February. Emphasising that it would concern 'a mere exchange of opinions', Basov coveted Ceausescu's consent.¹⁷³ But Ceausescu insisted that the meeting seemed premature, since the West German government had only just been established, and that Manescu was busy. Manescu was in fact 'busy' travelling to the FRG. The Romanian politburo nevertheless reluctantly decided to approve the meeting in question on the condition that it would *not* take place in Berlin, while attempting to postpone it till 20 February, when Manescu would return from his travels abroad.¹⁷⁴ The Romanian leadership kept the Kremlin in the dark, until Manescu had succeeded in officially establishing diplomatic relations with the FRG on 31 January 1967. Using the Bucharest declaration in support of this measure, Manescu attempted to bestow this move with the aura of legitimacy.¹⁷⁵ Since this move 'represented the first major breach in East European solidarity with respect to the German problem', the East German leadership was not so easily convinced, and publicly condemned it, which infuriated the Romanians.¹⁷⁶

The Soviet prime minister Kosygin even had to call Ceausescu personally on 4 February, two days before the meeting was scheduled, in order to persuade him to participate. Ceausescu replied again that he would only consider it if the meeting did not take place in Berlin. Bearing in mind the East German condemnation, he added that he would only consent, if at all, to 'an exchange of opinions', as Basov had promised, in which 'the actions of Romanian foreign policy would not be the subject of

¹⁷⁰ Jarzabek, "Ulbricht Doktrin" oder "Gomulka Doktrin"?, 96.

¹⁷¹ Selvage, 'The Warsaw Pact and the European Security Conference', 87.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Meeting between Basov and Ceausescu, 25 January 1967, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 3/1967, 6.

¹⁷⁴ Romanian politburo meeting about convention of meeting, 26 January 1967, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 7/1967, 2-3.

¹⁷⁵ Statement in 'Scinteia' (Romanian party newspaper), SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3396, 218-225.

¹⁷⁶ Moreton, *East Germany and the Warsaw Alliance*, 51.

discussion'.¹⁷⁷ After one more phone call they agreed that the meeting would take place under Romanian conditions: two days later than planned, from 8-10 February, in Warsaw, as an exchange of opinions. The Romanian leadership had thus undermined all the East German aims: the diplomatic relations between Romania and the FRG were irreversible, and the meeting could neither be used to condemn the Romanian move, nor did it take place in Berlin. Thus the Kremlin, too, was prevented from condemning Romania's 'Alleingang' in its foreign policy.

The Polish leadership was furious at the Romanian interference in the meeting, which was indeed intended to serve as condemnation of Romanian foreign policy. The Polish ambassador Baramowski told the East German deputy foreign minister Oskar Fischer that the Polish leadership was planning to take a stance against Romania anyhow during the conference, and that it supported the East German condemnation of the Romanian move. The Romanians had, after all, failed to consult any of their allies by stealthily establishing diplomatic relations with the FRG in full awareness of the fact that a conference of the ministers of foreign affairs was about to take place.¹⁷⁸ The East German politburo was particularly vexed with the Romanian move, since it had made the need for consultations on this issue public in a declaration on 27 January.¹⁷⁹

The Polish and East German indignation stemmed in particular from the fear that other WP countries would follow the Romanian example, and leave Poland and the GDR isolated. According to a report of the East German foreign ministry on the diplomatic relations between Romania and the FRG both Hungary and Czechoslovakia showed a 'weakening attitude' and a 'willingness to compromise' where it concerned relations with the FRG. The Hungarian comrades even seemed to 'approve the Romanian actions to a certain extent'.¹⁸⁰ They did, indeed, want to keep all options for diplomatic contacts with the FRG open, and were, in fact, already engaging in conversations with their West German colleagues.¹⁸¹ The Hungarian leader Janos Kadar considered 'the economic benefits of normal relations with West Germany (...) in his country's "state interest," albeit not in the interest of "proletarian internationalism."' ¹⁸² Although all other WP members condemned the Romanian 'Alleingang', Gomulka and Ulbricht now needed to rally their allies behind them in also condemning the concept of diplomatic relations with the FRG, which was a much trickier issue. The

¹⁷⁷ 'Phone conversation between Ceausescu and Kosygin', 4 February 1967, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 14/1967, 4-9.

¹⁷⁸ 'Memorandum about a conversation between Oskar Fischer und Baramowski', 5 February 1967, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3396, 215-217.

¹⁷⁹ 'Position of the politburo', 7 February 1967 (cf. 'Denkschrift'), SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3396, 230.

¹⁸⁰ 'Attitude from Bulgarian Comrades and diplomats from other embassies on the establishment of diplomatic relations between Romania and the FRG', February 1967, 244-248, PA AA, MfAA, A 5394.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Ceausescu's remark in his conversation with Basov, 25 January 1967, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 3/1967, 6.

¹⁸² Mastny, 'The Warsaw Pact', 148.

normalisation of relations with West Germany did not only serve the national interests of Romania.

In their past zeal for condemning Soviet unilateralism, the Romanians had ironically become the champion of unilateralism when it suited their purpose. Their East German and Polish allies meanwhile found themselves in a considerably weakened position: the West German government had gained an Eastern European ally, without recognising the GDR and the Oder-Neisse border. While using the Bucharest declaration to justify their move, the Romanian leaders had thus ignored the part that was most crucial to some of its allies. They had employed the declaration on European Security for exactly the opposite goals of the Polish intentions: instead of boosting the status of the GDR and Poland, the diplomatic relations with the FRG primarily served Romanian prestige and the Romanian economy at Polish and East German expense.

DIVISION ON THE GERMAN QUESTION

During the actual conference the Romanian conditions seemed to be fulfilled: the diplomatic relations between Romania and the FRG were not mentioned *explicitly*, and the conference dealt primarily with the resonance of the Bucharest Declaration, instead of the new West German government. The Polish delegate, Adam Rapacki, used this slight change of agenda to put a stamp on the meeting by mentioning *en passant* that he 'had forgotten to mention that we had got in touch with the USA' to discuss the convention of a European Security conference with the American minister of foreign affairs, Dean Rusk. Although Rusk had not seemed 'particularly interested', Rapacki had repeated 'that Poland had already proposed in 1964 to convene a conference with the participation of the USA', and accordingly used the meeting to stress that Poland, contrary to the SU, still considered inviting Canada and the USA to the conference. Highlighting the need for 'flexibility' and 'manoeuvrability', Rapacki also suggested establishing a group of countries to take the initiative on such a conference.¹⁸³ Rapacki thus succeeded in drawing attention to Polish initiatives on European Security, and he used the Polish-American talks on European Security to boost Polish status during the conference. This could, in turn, serve to rally the allies behind Poland on the German Question.

The Soviet delegate Basov was duly impressed, but the concern for the diplomatic relations with West Germany still carried the day. All WP foreign ministers apart from the Romanian one closed ranks in condemning the current West German foreign policy moves, and underlining that diplomatic relations with the FRG should only be considered if the FRG recognised East Germany and the Oder-Neisse border. The six also emphasised the need for a united front against the FRG, thus implicitly condemning the Romanian breach of this unity. The Romanian deputy prime minister,

¹⁸³ Speech by Rapacki, 9 February 1967, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3396, 67, 68, 72.

Malita, meanwhile, justified the Romanian move by explaining that the diplomatic relations with the FRG were in line with the Bucharest declaration and formed a boost to the recognition of the GDR, since it had inadvertently forced the West German government to break with the Hallstein doctrine: by establishing diplomatic relations with a country that recognised the GDR, the West German government had *de facto* recognised the existence of two Germanys and sanctioned the status quo.¹⁸⁴

Although no one sided with Malita, there was, however, a difference of nuance between the speeches: whereas the foreign ministers of Poland, the SU and the GDR were most vocal in their condemnation of the FRG, the Hungarian foreign minister focused on the need for a normalisation of bilateral relations with Western European countries, and the Czechoslovak delegate was also more moderate. Thus a different interpretation of the Bucharest declaration again seemed to lie at the core of these speeches: using the declaration either to emphasise the necessity for the normalisation of diplomatic relations or for the demands of the FRG to recognise the status quo, the WP six, too, were less united than they appeared to be.

They did nevertheless issue a protocol on Polish, East German and Soviet initiative and under Polish pressure in which they stated that diplomatic contacts with the FRG could only be considered if West Germany 'recognised the existing borders', ceased its claim to sole representation of Germany, and stopped any attempt to attain access to nuclear weapons.¹⁸⁵ Although the Romanian conditions seemed fulfilled on the surface, the eventual fulfilment of the Polish conditions had a profound impact, too. The acceptance of Gomulka's preconditions, which would come to be known as the 'Warsaw Package' both served 'to defend the sovereignty of Poland and the GDR by taking a hard-line stance towards Bonn', and prevented Gomulka's allies from establishing diplomatic relations with the FRG unless Bonn recognised Polish and East German borders.¹⁸⁶ During a conference of European communist leaders in Karlovy Vary in April 1967, which Romania boycotted, the delegates even approved a 'declaration for peace and security in Europe', which conditioned a collective European Security system on recognition of the existing borders in Europe.¹⁸⁷

Since the document was not signed by Malita, it both sealed the Romanian 'Alleingang' and, unprecedentedly, the lack of unity within the WP. Whereas the other WP allies had concluded a whole range of new friendship treaties with the GDR to prevent it from becoming isolated in Europe, it underlined Romania's isolation within the Warsaw Pact. Although Romania's allies had implicitly condemned Romania in their declaration, Romania was not the declaration's greatest victim: the Romanian scope for manoeuvre had already been safeguarded by Romania itself, but the other WP members were severely constrained by the Polish demands. Romania had moved too fast for the

¹⁸⁴ Speech by Malita, 8 February 1967, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3396, 48-49.

¹⁸⁵ 'Minutes of an agreement', Warsaw, January 1967, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3396, 153-154.

¹⁸⁶ Selva, 'The Warsaw Pact and the European Security Conference', 87.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 87-88.

other allies, since the Kremlin was not yet ready to sanction diplomatic relations with the FRG altogether, but not in a position to prevent such relations either. Gomulka had now attempted to outstrip the Kremlin by doing so. The Romanian move had enabled the Polish and East German allies to compel their Soviet comrades to condemn something, which they did not oppose in principle, and had thus done them an inadvertent favour. But the declaration considerably limited the scope for manoeuvre of the other allies.

The Hungarian leadership was particularly displeased with the strong stance against the FRG, and directly after the meeting the Hungarian secretary Zoltan Komoczin sent a letter to the East German secretary Hermann Axen. He underlined that the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) agreed with the fact that 'under the current circumstances' other countries should not establish diplomatic contacts with the FRG, but was vexed about the fact 'that in Warsaw a text was actually accepted without a fundamental discussion, which was not even known within our CC'. The text itself was considered to 'eliminate the possibility of the necessary tactical moves in politics'.¹⁸⁸ The declaration of the 'six' had clearly been drafted in a hurry and without consent from various WP leaders. Komoczin therefore suggested that the six foreign ministers should continue with their proceedings to avoid further 'misunderstandings', and even invited them to do so during a follow-up meeting in Budapest. Addressing the letter also to all other WP secretaries, the Hungarian leadership clearly showed that it, too, wanted to safeguard its scope for manoeuvre in terms of foreign policy.

The East German reaction was predictable: the politburo issued an internal memo in which it accused the Hungarian leadership of siding with the Romanians, suspected it of far developed negotiations with the West Germans, and ironically refused to convene another meeting. The East Germans decided instead to consult with the Soviet and Polish leaders, so as to close ranks with their more likeminded comrades.¹⁸⁹ The German Question thus began to divide the Warsaw Pact in a more complicated manner, since other WP leaders started to assert their room for manoeuvre against Polish and East German interests. The 'Warsaw Package' was initially a Polish triumph, but it would alienate some of Warsaw's allies in the long run. The Romanian 'Alleingang' would not be 'allein' for much longer.

¹⁸⁸ Letter from Komoczin to Axen and all other WP secretaries, 17 February 1967, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3396, 234-235.

¹⁸⁹ 'East German position in reaction to the letter of comrade Zoltan Comoczin', 21 February 1967, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3396, 238-242.

CONCLUSION: THE WARSAW PACT'S TRANSFORMATION

During the second half of the sixties the WP members began to develop a more self-conscious attitude towards the alliance, which seemed to transform the so called 'cardboard castle' into a platform for serious discussions. Instead of being convened on an *ad hoc* basis to discuss isolated issues without any preparation, the WP grew into a multifaceted organism, in which different organs, whether officially sanctioned or not, began to take shape. Although the PCC had only met sporadically in the first half of the sixties, in the years 1965-1967 there were meetings at the level of military representatives, deputy ministers of defence, deputy foreign ministers, foreign ministers, first secretaries, and, last but not least, the PCC meetings themselves. Whereas most members backed the East German and Soviet proposals to streamline the WP still further, the Romanian leadership prevented its allies from turning the WP into an institution, in which decisions were made supranationally. Claiming that the proposed reforms lacked any legitimacy in the Warsaw Treaty and refusing to commit any suggestions on reforms to paper, the Romanians succeeded in maintaining their scope for manoeuvre.

Brezhnev's leadership of the Soviet Union also contributed to a new kind of dynamics within the WP. In contrast to Khrushchev, Brezhnev attempted to regain some control over the alliance, especially in military terms, by proposing military reforms. Although the NSWP members had already emancipated themselves to such an extent that Brezhnev's proposals on military reforms had to compete with Ulbricht's political ones, Brezhnev's willingness to consult his allies was an important step towards the alliance's multilateralisation. Moreover, Brezhnev's stationing of nuclear warheads in several WP countries raised the stakes for consultations: although the party leaders in question had bilaterally agreed to the Soviet nuclear warheads on their soil, these bilateral agreements had made it all the more necessary to constrain potential Soviet unilateralism on nuclear matters in a multilateral arena. In this sense the Romanian opposition to the military reforms did their allies a service, however much it might have paralysed the discussions in the WP. The Soviet preponderance in military might did, accordingly, not translate into an equal amount of political clout within the WP, where the Kremlin had to struggle to withstand the Romanian challenge, which actually prevented the Soviet leadership from pushing on with its reforms.

The Romanian dissent entailed more than merely exercising the right of veto; it was founded on a sophisticated analysis of the Warsaw Treaty, which served as a yardstick to gauge the legitimacy of the proposals. The Romanians were the first to develop an explicit 'method' in furthering their national interests at WP meetings, instead of focusing only on the contents. Wielding the Warsaw Treaty, the principle of unanimity, and the lack of mandate as their weapons, the Romanians succeeded in determining the WP meetings to a great extent. Moreover, in their examination of supranationalism versus intergovernmentalism the Romanians were far ahead within

Eastern Europe. Brezhnev's failure to grasp these concepts during the PCC meeting in July 1966 was even a reason to shelve the reforms another year after optimistically claiming earlier that year that the reforms could be completed in several months.¹⁹⁰

The Romanian critical attitude heightened the consciousness of the other WP members, too: the East Germans began to prepare the meetings with much greater care, and the Kremlin started consulting with the delegations in advance and developed a willingness to compromise. Several NSWP reports show an increasingly critical reflection of the WP meetings, and the realisation that they, too, needed to develop a strategy to counter the Romanian dissent. At the heart of the disagreements between Romania and the other WP members lay a different interpretation of the concept 'flexibility': whereas the Romanians wanted a loosely structured WP to maintain their flexibility *inside* the alliance, most other members wanted a clearly structured alliance, so as to make the WP more flexible in dealing with the *outside* world as an alliance. The institutionalisation of the WP, especially in terms of its foreign policy, would serve the interest of those members who had a vested interest in the German Question; it would, however, limit the WP members' scope for manoeuvre in the international arena as individuals. The Romanians therefore favoured professionalising the procedures within the alliance to institutionalising it.

Thus the German Question lay at the core of the proposed reforms in two ways: it was the Romanian zeal to establish diplomatic relations with the FRG that drove the Romanian leaders to categorically reject any attempt to restructure the WP, whereas the fear of a potentially nuclearised West Germany drove the East Germans, the Poles, and almost all other WP members to turn the WP into a more serious counterpart of NATO, which could withstand the West German threat. The Romanians wanted a weak Warsaw Pact so as to strengthen their independent stance towards Western Europe, whereas other NSWP members, notably the GDR and Poland, wanted to gain strength vis-à-vis West Germany by strengthening the Warsaw Pact. Although the Polish role within this process is often stressed in historiography, the East German initiatives actually put a far greater stamp on the development of the WP in this period.¹⁹¹ The Poles even withdrew their proposals in February 1966 in order to avoid further paralysis. They preferred to concentrate on European Security instead.

The German Question was also the great catalyst for the WP drive on a declaration on European Security. Here the difference between the WP members seemed to come to a climax: Romania had an interest in promoting the emphasis on 'normalisation' in the Bucharest declaration, which served the opposite goal of what Poles had striven for, and in preventing reforms in order to be free in their politics towards FRG. The WP members with a vested interest in the German Question, such as the GDR and the Poland, preferred to interpret the Bucharest declaration as an

¹⁹⁰ Minutes of discussions with the Soviet delegation, 4 July, 19.30-22.30, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, II, 153-176.

¹⁹¹ See for the emphasis on the Polish role e.g. Mastny, 'The Warsaw Pact', 147.

appeal to cement the status quo, which could be further safeguarded by transforming the WP into a supranational institution that could meet the West German challenge. The condemnation of the Romanian unilateralism in its policy vis-à-vis the FRG followed the usual pattern of 'six' against 'one'. But the distinction between Romania and some other WP countries began to blur underneath the seemingly united surface where it concerned the actual opening towards West Germany.

The Bucharest declaration in fact allowed the Romanian leadership to use the WP as a cover for a serious and unprecedented breach in coordinated WP foreign policy by going it alone on the German Question.¹⁹² Whereas the East German government had openly condemned the Romanian move towards the FRG, the Soviet leadership dared to do no such thing, and agreed with the Romanians not to mention the topic at the WP foreign ministers meeting in February 1967. The Soviet attitude in the wake of the peace note in March 1966 was a delicate matter: forced to defend Polish and East German interests, the Kremlin was in fact more amenable to the Romanian emphasis on a normalisation of relations with the FRG. The Polish leader Gomulka therefore had to promote his own national interests, and succeeded in implicitly condemning diplomatic relations with West Germany by rallying his allies behind the Warsaw Package, and thus making diplomatic relations with the FRG conditional upon the recognition of the GDR and the Oder-Neisse line. Although this served Polish and East German national interests, it considerably limited the scope for manoeuvre of Gomulka's allies.

The Romanian emphasis on a normalisation of intra-European relations in the Bucharest declaration not only did the Kremlin an inadvertent service, but it also proved a boost for the bilateral relations of most WP members with Western European countries, which enabled them to develop their own foreign policy. Through the increased number of *bilateral* relations, the WP inadvertently *multilateralised*: each WP member began to define its own interests more explicitly, while regarding the WP as an instrument to further these. The Bucharest declaration thus served as a catalyst of NSWP 'emancipation'.¹⁹³ The fact that some allies only reluctantly rallied behind the Polish and East German delegates during the meeting in February 1967 shows that the traditional division of Romania versus the rest no longer applied. Some WP members began to respond to West German 'Ostpolitik' with their own 'Westpolitik'. Bilateral relations beyond the Iron Curtain gained importance over WP unity. The multilateralisation of détente thus facilitated the multilateralisation of the WP, and vice versa.

It is, therefore, too simplistic to merely blame the Romanians for paralysing the alliance.¹⁹⁴ Nor was it primarily the 'contradiction between the Romanian and the

¹⁹² Cf. Moreton, *East Germany and the Warsaw Alliance*, 51: 'It carried Romania's pursuit of an independent policy within the East European Alliance into the previously forbidden realm of foreign policy.'

¹⁹³ Békés, 'Der Warschauer Pakt und der KSZE-Prozess', 229.

¹⁹⁴ Polish deputy foreign minister Naszkowski cited in Mastny, 'Learning from the Enemy', 22.

Soviet perspective about reforms' that 'determined the (...) development of the communist alliance', as is often assumed.¹⁹⁵ The Romanian strategy was not primarily directed against the Soviet Union, but against any ally, whose proposals would limit the Romanian scope for manoeuvre. It was the Romanian resistance to the East German transmission belt approach *and* to the Soviet tendencies to coordinate the alliance that stimulated a surprising extent of critical reflection on the actual purpose of the Warsaw Pact and the intention of the Warsaw Treaty. Although the Romanians frustrated the aims of their allies time and again, they also prevented the alliance from turning into an instrument of one single member, whether it be a Soviet, East German or Polish one.

The Romanians could prevent the actual reforms, but not the transformation of the alliance itself. Almost in spite of themselves did the Romanians contribute to the WP's transformation. Triggered by Romanian dissent the 'cardboard castle' was perhaps not reformed, but certainly revamped. The dynamics of dissent thus proved more constructive than is generally assumed. Since it forced each WP member to critically reflect on its national stance, it stimulated each member to formulate an individual stance. Far from paralysing the alliance, it contributed to its multilateralisation, since its members became increasingly aware of the interests that either united or divided them. The quest for European Security remained in the mutual interest of all WP members. The existence of the WP facilitated conducting this quest in a multilateral context, and *that* in itself was in the interest of all WP members, however much they disagreed on its actual definition.

At the same time the Romanians increased their own room for manoeuvre at the expense of that of their allies: by blocking the reforms, the Romanians also curbed the policy options of many of its allies. Gomulka seemed to have taken this strategy to heart, when he considerably narrowed his allies' scope for manoeuvre with the Warsaw Package. The WP thus increasingly became the arena in which NSWP members competed for more scope for manoeuvre, not with the SU, but with one another. This mutual competition sparked the emancipation of the NSWP members, both from the Soviet Union, and from one another.

¹⁹⁵ E.g. Rijnoveanu, 'Rumänien und die Militärreformen', 222.



Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife on a state visit to the PRC with Zhou Enlai (right), June 1971

ANIC, fototeca online a comunismului românesc, photo #37058X9X66

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7a/Vizita_oficiala_a_lui_Nicolae_Ceausescu_si_a_Elenei_Ceausescu_in_Republica_Populara_Chineza._Vizita_protocolara_la_Ciu_En_Lai.%28_iunie_1971%29..jpg

5

GAULLISM IN THE WARSAW PACT: CEAUSESCU'S CHALLENGE

It used to be very easy: the SU proposed something, and the other socialist countries adopted it without discussions. Now it is no longer that simple.

Every [country] has its own opinions.¹

Gromyko's personal secretary at the PCC meeting in July 1966

The Romanian leaders not only successfully blocked any initiative to limit their scope for manoeuvre by resisting reforms within the WP. Apart from preventing the alliance from superseding national interests by turning into a supranational institution, they also strove to stretch the limits of the alliance in another way: after they had used their mediation within the Sino-Soviet Split in 1964 to emancipate themselves *outside* WP confines, they now intended to exploit their *special relationship* with the Chinese leadership *inside* the alliance. Since its Declaration of Independence in April 1964 the Romanian leadership had begun to cultivate relations with China, the rest of Asia, and Albania, whereas the relations with other Eastern European countries had deteriorated.² Romania began to adopt an increasingly idiosyncratic stance within the communist movement, while also attempting to include Albania and China again in the WP. This chapter will therefore continue the theme of the second chapter, and examine how the Romanian leadership attempted to use several global issues, which were affected by the Sino-Soviet split, such as the Vietnam War and non-proliferation, to maintain its scope for manoeuvre within the WP, while playing the Chinese card to call the Soviet bluff.

After focusing on various WP countries in the previous chapter, the actual facts vindicate an almost exclusive focus on Romania within the alliance in this one. Whereas the views on European Security and reforms differed among several WP leaderships, the Romanian leadership was the only one not to unequivocally side with the Kremlin during the Sino-Soviet split. This also affected the Romanian stance on the Vietnam War and a non-proliferation treaty, and sealed a division between 'the six'

¹ 'Informative note on the Bucharest conference', Bucharest, 12 July 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 95/1966, 257.

² 'INFORMATION FILE, Romanian People's Republic', Berlin, July 1965, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/364, 364.

other WP members and Romania. At least until the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the summer of 1966 the Romanian leaders regularly consulted their Chinese comrades on issues that were discussed within the alliance, and cultivated a more militant stance on the Vietnam War, and they were the only WP member to oppose a non-proliferation treaty almost until its conclusion in July 1968. Covering the period from the first acrimonious debate on the non-proliferation treaty during the PCC meeting in January 1965 till the meeting convened by the Romanians in March 1968 in an attempt to reach a coordinated stance on – or against – non-proliferation, this chapter serves to investigate the motives behind the Romanian ‘Alleingang’ within the WP on issues related to the Sino-Soviet Split, such as non-proliferation and the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War has commonly been studied from an American angle.³ The end of the Cold War has nevertheless led to a few successful attempts to also examine the Vietnam War from a Chinese or Soviet perspective, or, more recently, from the perspective of the Sino-Soviet split.⁴ Research on the Eastern European stance on the Vietnam War, however, tends to focus on the Polish and Romanian attempts at mediation, but the way in which the Vietnam War affected the debates within the WP seems to have been overlooked.⁵ The same applies to the importance of Sino-Romanian relations in this period. The Romanian scholar Eliza Gheorghe has recently drawn a link between the Romanian stance on the Vietnam War and on non-proliferation, but she neither mentions the WP context, nor the Chinese influence on the Romanian leadership in both issues.⁶ She is, however, the only one who concentrates on the Romanian stance on non-proliferation, and thus somewhat redresses the balance of secondary literature, which predominantly deals with the debates on non-proliferation within NATO.⁷ The admirable attempt by the American

³ Cf. D. E. Kaiser, *American Tragedy. Kennedy, Johnson, and the Origins of the Vietnam War* (Massachusetts, 2000), and G. C. Herring, *America's Longest War. The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York, 1979) for the American perspective.

⁴ Cf. Q. Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill, 2000) for the Chinese perspective; I. V. Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* (Chicago, 1996) for the Soviet perspective; L.M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split. Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton, 2008) and S. Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens. The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967* (Stanford, 2009) for the Sino-Soviet Split, and O. A. Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge, 2005), 158-170, for the Asian perspective.

⁵ See for Polish mediation: J.G. Hershberg, *Who Murdered "Marigold": New Evidence on the Mysterious Failure of Poland's Secret Initiative to Start US-North Vietnamese Peace Talks, 1966*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 72 (Washington, 2000), and Hershberg, *Marigold. The Lost Chance for Peace in Vietnam* (Stanford, 2012). Cf. for Romanian mediation: M. Munteanu, 'Over the Hills and Far Away: Romania's Attempts to Mediate the Start of U.S.-North Vietnamese Negotiations, 1967-1968', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14:3 (2012), 64-96. Cf. for mediation in the Vietnam War in general: G.C. Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War. The Negotiating Volumes of the Pentagon Papers* (Austin, 1983).

⁶ R. E. Gheorghe, 'Atomic Maverick. Romania's Negotiations for Nuclear Technology, 1964-1970', *Cold War History* 13:3 (2013), 373-392, and 'Romania's Nuclear Negotiations Postures in the 1960s. Client, Maverick and International Peace Mediator', *Romanian Nuclear History Project Working Paper No. 1* (2012), <http://www.roec.ro/romanians-nuclear-negotiations/>, accessed 27 August 2013.

⁷ E.g. H. Haftendorn, *NATO and the Nuclear Revolution. A Crisis of Credibility, 1966-1967* (Oxford, 1996), and A. Locher, *Crisis? What Crisis? NATO, de Gaulle, and the Future of the Alliance, 1963-1966* (Berlin, 2010), etc.

historian Hal Brands to discuss the non-proliferation debate on 'both sides of the Iron Curtain' does not remedy this hiatus in historiography either, since he has not conducted any archival research in Eastern Europe.⁸ A reconstruction on the debates within the WP on non-proliferation and the Vietnam War therefore serves to shed a new light on the dynamics within the WP, and the continuing influence of the Sino-Soviet split.

THE VIETNAM WAR

At the beginning of 1965 there was an interplay of several factors, which offered the Romanian leadership a window of opportunity to reap further benefits from the Sino-Soviet Split. In the first place, Khrushchev's ouster on 14 October 1964 brought a new collective leadership into power, whose first secretary Leonid Brezhnev considered 'the strengthening of [socialist] unity' of great importance, and was therefore eager to repair the Sino-Soviet split.⁹ Brezhnev's quest for European Security went hand in hand with an attempt to also relax tensions within the communist world. Together with prime minister Alexei Kosygin Brezhnev defied the scepticism of Soviet foreign policy experts on Sino-Soviet relations in an attempt to 'mend fences with China', by ceasing the polemics.¹⁰ Although talks with a Chinese delegation headed by Zhou Enlai in November 1964 ended in a failure, Kosygin convinced Brezhnev that rapprochement with China was particularly imperative, since the Chinese and Soviet leaderships needed to form a united front against American imperialism in the Vietnam War. As Marxists they should, after all, stand on the same side of the barricades.¹¹ Brezhnev therefore joined Kosygin in attempting to rally the Chinese behind them in the Vietnam War, even though the Chinese did not seem responsive at all.

From the American perspective, however, the Vietnam War simply represented a battleground between communism and anti-communism. The American administration had supported the 'Republic of South Vietnam', led by the anti-communist catholic president Ngo Dinh Diem, since its foundation in 1956, against the communist revolutionary Ho Chi Minh, who was the leader of the North Vietnamese 'Democratic Republic of Vietnam' (DRV). In accordance with the Geneva Accords from 1954 Ho Chi Minh still demanded free elections to overcome the division of Vietnam, and attempted to overthrow the regime in South Vietnam with support from the Viet Minh – a communist coalition for national independence in

⁸ H. Brands, 'Non-Proliferation and the Dynamics of the Middle Cold War', *Cold War History* 7:3 (2007), 391.

⁹ Brezhnev quoted in S. Radchenko, 'The Sino-Soviet Split', in M. Leffler and O. A. Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume II: Crisis and Détente* (Cambridge, 2010), 358.

¹⁰ Cf. Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens*, 120-140 for a further explanation of the failed rapprochement.

¹¹ See Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 302, on the 'overhaul in Soviet policy toward the war in Indochina'.

North Vietnam – and the Viet Cong, who were South Vietnamese insurgents, representing the military arm of the ‘National Liberation Front’ (NLF), founded in 1960. Out of fear lest communism would spread from North Vietnam all through Asia, and cause the so-called ‘domino’ effect, the American army became involved in supporting the South Vietnamese government and liquidating the communist NLF.¹²

A common Sino-Soviet stance in the Vietnam War was all the more pressing since the American president Lyndon Johnson, who had been re-elected in November 1964, decided on a massive expansion of the fighting in early December. This involved retaliatory airstrikes and aerial bombing in North Vietnam as well as sending American ground troops to South Vietnam. After Johnson had already ordered the first direct military attacks on North Vietnam in August 1964, when two American destroyers had reportedly been attacked in the Gulf of Tonkin, he used his massive election victory to justify another escalation, which heralded the ‘Americanisation’ of the Vietnam War. Although this was meant to counteract Chinese hostility and potential ‘Soviet adventurism’, it drove the Soviet leadership into Chinese arms to unite in the face of American aggression, after it had kept a low profile in the war during the Khrushchev era.¹³ Brezhnev was, accordingly, under increasing pressure to repair the Sino-Soviet split.

In addition to an escalation of the war due to American bombings and troop increases, the Kremlin had decided to reverse Khrushchev’s hands off policy, and from February 1965 onwards the Soviets began to aid the North Vietnamese substantially. This coincided with the fact that Johnson had ordered a bombing programme, ‘Operation Rolling Thunder’, which continued almost unabated from February 1965 to October 1968, as well as significantly increasing the number of American troops from more than 180,000 by the end of 1965 to 536,100 in 1968.¹⁴ Although Mao and Brezhnev agreed on the need to support the North Vietnamese, the Soviets aimed at a short war, which would be decided in favour of the North Vietnamese, whereas the Chinese favoured a prolonged battle, which could enhance the revolutionary zeal against the imperialists. Moreover, since Mao was purging all revisionists *within* China, he could ill afford to side with the Soviet revisionists outside China.¹⁵

The factors, which had caused the Sino-Soviet split, therefore made it almost impossible for the Kremlin to reach an understanding with the Chinese leadership on the Vietnam War. Although the Soviet leadership favoured negotiations between Hanoi and the American government so as to salvage its policy of peaceful coexistence

¹² See Herring, *America’s Longest War* on the American involvement. See X. Liu, and V. Mastny (eds.), *China and Eastern Europe, 1960s-1080s. Proceedings of the International Symposium: Reviewing the History of Chinese-East European Relations from the 1960s to the 1980s. Beijing, 24-26 March 2004*, Zürcher Beiträge zur Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktforschung Nr. 72 (Zurich, 2004), and Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* for the Soviet stance.

¹³ Cf. F. Logevall, ‘The Indochina Wars and the Cold War, 1945-1975’, in Leffler and Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War II*, 281-304, for more information on the Vietnam War.

¹⁴ Logevall, ‘The Indochina Wars’, 296.

¹⁵ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 285 and 300.

instead of risking détente, the increasingly radicalising Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Mao intended to ‘fight till the last Vietnamese’, and warned the DRV against reaching a compromise.¹⁶ In the summer of 1966 Mao’s radicalisation culminated in the ‘Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution’, usually known as the ‘Cultural Revolution’, which was launched in order to extricate any capitalist elements from Chinese society by force and firmly establish Maoism. Negotiations between North Vietnam and the American administration were accordingly out of the question for the CCP. As the former Polish ambassador to Beijing, Professor Rowiaski, put it, ‘China’s Vietnam policy was primarily a logical consequence of Mao Zedong’s new strategy to transform his country into “a centre and an armoury of the world revolution”, and to take up a fight on two fronts, against US imperialism and Soviet revisionism.’¹⁷ For the Chinese the Vietnam War represented a struggle *against* rather than *with* the Soviet leadership.

At the same time the Soviet leadership wanted to negotiate a way out of the Vietnam War *with* the support of the Chinese leadership. According to the Chinese ambassador to Moscow, Li Fenglin, the Chinese side ‘regarded Vietnam as a predicament for the United States and wanted the United States to be caught in it’, whereas the Soviet side ‘wanted to help the United States to find a way out in order to avoid a superpower confrontation and, on the other [hand] supported Vietnam’. Caught in this ‘contradictory situation’, the Kremlin not only strove to assist the North Vietnamese, and appease the Americans, but it also aimed to do so without further antagonising the Chinese communists.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the Chinese feared the growth of Soviet influence in North Vietnam, since Hanoi had grown more dependent on Soviet aid throughout 1966.¹⁹ The Vietnam War thus also turned into a Soviet *and* Chinese predicament.

THE NUCLEAR QUESTION

The Sino-Soviet predicament was further complicated by the fact that the Chinese had detonated their first nuclear weapon on 16 October 1964, two days after Khrushchev’s ouster. This confirmed Mao’s belief that the Chinese had an equal right to lead the communist movement, and that the Sino-Soviet split could only be mended on his terms. He therefore demanded ‘complete Soviet capitulation and recognition that Mao

¹⁶ Reply to B. O’Flaherty, ‘How Vietnam sees China’, *The Diplomat*, 18 October 2011, <http://thediplomat.com/asean-beat/2011/10/18/how-vietnam-sees-china/>, accessed on 18 September 2013.

¹⁷ Rowiaski, Polish ambassador to Beijing, in Liu and Mastny (eds.), *China and Eastern Europe*, 80.

¹⁸ Li Fenglin in Liu and Mastny (eds.), *China and Eastern Europe*, 67–68.

¹⁹ O. A. Westad et al. (eds.), *77 Conversations between Chinese and Foreign Leaders on the Wars in Indochina, 1964–1977*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 22 (Washington, 1998), 10–11.

was right all along'.²⁰ China's new status as a nuclear power also reinforced Mao's refusal to participate in an editorial committee meeting on 15 December 1964 to prepare the next international communist conference, after the one in November 1960.

The committee was supposed to consist of the same twenty-six countries as the one that had prepared the groundwork for the conference in November 1960, which was a particularly sensitive issue, since that conference had precipitated the Sino-Soviet split. The convention of such a meeting had been Khrushchev's initiative, intending to prevent the CPSU from becoming isolated in the communist world. Since the Chinese leadership feared the same fate, it had demanded in vain that the editorial board should be reduced to seventeen countries, with at least nine pro-Chinese members in it. After the successful nuclear test Mao insisted all the more strongly that the PRC would never 'surrender to Soviet "great power chauvinism."' ²¹ Brezhnev nevertheless hoped that Khrushchev's downfall was sufficient to restore Sino-Soviet relations, and postponed the editorial meeting to 1 March 1965 in an attempt to mend matters with China in between.

Meanwhile, both the Soviet and American leaders shared the premise that Chinese nuclear ambitions should be curbed at all times. The American administration was particularly concerned that 'China's test (...) could initiate a nuclear domino effect if vigorous action were not taken', and established the blue ribbon Committee on Nuclear Proliferation (also called the 'Gilpatric committee') 'to construct a new US non-proliferation policy in the wake of the PRC's atomic test'.²² For the Soviet leadership the Chinese nuclear detonation was a particular threat, since it meant that the 'Cold War in the Communist World' could go nuclear, too.²³ The Chinese detonation therefore provided an extra impetus to the super powers' ambitions to adopt measures for arms control. The process to do so had already resulted in the formation of the Eighteen Nations Disarmament Committee (ENDC) under the aegis of the United Nations (UN) in 1962. This committee was co-chaired by the American and Soviet leaders, and contained Bulgaria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania as its Eastern European members. Although the other members had had no input in the Limited Test-Ban Treaty, which was concluded by the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States in August 1963, the Chinese nuclear test stimulated both super powers to consult their allies on non-proliferation.

The Warsaw Pact's concerns for the *hypothetical* programme of nuclear sharing within NATO, Multilateral nuclear Forces (MLF), which had dominated the meeting of deputy foreign ministers on 10 December 1964, thus gradually became

²⁰ Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens*, 129.

²¹ Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 289. See 273-301 for a more elaborate explanation of the Sino-Soviet dispute concerning the convention of the editorial committee.

²² F. J. Gavin, 'Nuclear Proliferation and Non-proliferation during the Cold War', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War II*, 405.

²³ Cf. the subtitle of Lüthi's book: *The Sino-Soviet Split. Cold War in the Communist World*.

overshadowed by the *actual* fact that China had turned into a nuclear power.²⁴ In the WP, too, the need for non-proliferation became more pressing. It was therefore no coincidence that Walter Ulbricht, who had taken the initiative for the PCC meeting on 19 January 1965, which was supposed to deal with MLF, suggested in a letter on 13 January to link the discussion on MLF to non-proliferation. He had even appropriated the initiative by attaching a draft non-proliferation treaty.²⁵ Just as in the US, which attempted to rally its NATO-allies behind a programme on non-proliferation, the Chinese nuclear test had turned non-proliferation into a WP priority.

The Kremlin faced the hard task of improving its contacts with China to create a united front against American aggression in the Vietnam War, while cultivating its relations with the American administration to formulate a non-proliferation policy that would curb the Chinese threat. Meanwhile, the Soviet leadership was so afraid of exacerbating the Sino-Soviet split that it dared not mediate between Washington and Hanoi in order to avoid Chinese blame of collaborating with the USA, but allowed other Eastern European leaders instead to initiate negotiations.²⁶ The Polish and Romanian leaders were particularly eager to seize this opportunity for very different reasons, as will become clear in the rest of this chapter. In both cases mediation in the Vietnam War nevertheless became a means to maintain scope for manoeuvre vis-à-vis Moscow, and the conflict therefore began to play an increasingly important role within the Warsaw Pact.

At the same time the Soviet leadership needed the support of its WP allies more than ever. If it failed to convince its allies to sail the same course, it could hardly succeed sailing between the American Scylla and the Chinese Charybdis. The Romanian leadership was, however, acutely aware of the fact that it took little to rock the boat, and explored the Kremlin's precarious position to the full. Eager to develop a Romanian nuclear programme, the Romanian leadership had a particular interest in the discussions on non-proliferation. As the Romanian historian Eliza Gheorghe shows, the Romanians cultivated contacts at both sides of the Iron Curtain to provide them with nuclear energy.²⁷ Although the American administration already had to work hard to curb the Gaullist challenge within NATO, the Romanian leadership had even more ammunition against its hegemon than General De Gaulle.²⁸ With the Sino-Soviet split as its trump, it was determined to push Soviet tolerance to its limits.

²⁴ GDR report of the deputy foreign ministers meeting, December 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3393, 13-25.

²⁵ Letter from Ulbricht to WP leaders, 13 January 1965, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3388, 69-71.

²⁶ Hershberg in Liu and Mastny (eds.), *China and Eastern Europe*, 68.

²⁷ Cf. Gheorghe's article: 'Atomic Maverick', 373-392.

²⁸ Cf. F. Bozo, 'France, "Gaullism," and the Cold War', in Leffler and Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War II*, 158-178.

PLAYING THE CHINESE CARD

The Romanian leadership was well aware of the fact that Khrushchev's ouster had heralded a period in which the new Soviet leadership would go to great lengths to mend Sino-Soviet relations. So long as the Kremlin courted China, it could hardly prevent its Romanian allies from playing the Chinese card. Since the Romanian attempts at mediating in the Sino-Soviet Split in the spring of 1964 the Sino-Romanian relations had intensified so much that representatives from the Romanian leadership met on an almost weekly basis with Liu Fan, the Chinese ambassador in Bucharest. It was, therefore, part of a grander strategy to ask the Chinese opinion for developments within the WP, although the Chinese leadership had already been fully excluded from the alliance since 1961, when it stopped participating as observers in the WP. The Romanian leaders no longer wanted to go it alone, but they wanted to create a joint front with their Chinese comrades.

The Romanians were, accordingly, particularly keen to discuss their preparation of the PCC meeting on 19 January 1965 with the Chinese, and the Romanian politburo member Emil Bodnaras, who was the specialist on Asia, already invited Liu Fan on the first day of the new year 'in order to discuss with the Chinese leadership the way in which we can manage matters better where there are problems of common interest'. He particularly hoped to close ranks with the Chinese on the participation of Albania within the WP, which had been invited to the PCC meeting under Romanian pressure, after its *de facto* exclusion since 1961, and stimulated the Chinese to convince their staunchest ally to use a conditional acceptance to critically question 'the problem of relations within the framework of the WP.'²⁹ After ensuring that the WP would not be directed *against* China by blocking the accession of Mongolia, the Romanian leadership now attempted to draw China *into* the alliance by involving it in matters that were on the WP's agenda.

Moreover, Bodnaras hoped that the Albanian leadership could also 'raise the problem of the participation of observers'. If the Asian observers were to attend the PCC meetings again, as they had done up to 1961, 'there would be five of us, two members, and three observers.'³⁰ The Romanian intention was clear: if Albania, China, North-Vietnam and North-Korea were to side with Romania within the WP, they could form a coalition against the five remaining Eastern European countries. The Romanians thus attempted to use the hypothetical participation of Albania for their own purpose, while realising only retrospectively that the initial years of the WP had provided them with a missed opportunity. Albanian participation could be a useful tool in stressing its independence from the Soviet Union once again.

Meanwhile, the Romanians considered following the Albanian example of August 1961 of *not* sending the party leader, while emphasising that that was 'an

²⁹ Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 1 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 1-12.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

internal matter of every party'. According to Bodnaras the meeting of deputy foreign ministers in December 1964 had stimulated the Romanians to 'change the framework in which we shall act in the scheduled session'. They had decided to 'no longer come along with a document that we give to someone else', but to take the initiative in discussions instead, e.g. by raising the topic of disarmament and supporting 'the proposal of the P.R. China [from October 1964] regarding the general prohibition and the total destruction of nuclear arms'.³¹ The Romanians were thus prepared to take a risky stance during the Sino-Soviet Split. They could kill two birds with one stone: this would both serve to underline the Romanian independence, and it signalled to the Chinese that the Romanians were prepared to do them a service. Hoping for support from the Chinese side within the WP, the Romanians were more than willing to support them in return.

The Chinese leadership greatly welcomed the Romanian support. In a meeting a week later Liu Fan thanked the Romanian leadership on behalf of the Chinese CC and the government for his information on the scheduled PCC meeting. Emphasising that China, too, was against MLF, which was the central topic of the agenda, Liu Fan also explained that the Chinese comrades feared that the Soviet leaders would use that as a 'pretext to (...) take a coordinated stance with the USA and India to turn against the Chinese' and to propose non-proliferation. Because this would in turn favour a nuclear monopoly of the countries, which already possessed nuclear weapons, the Chinese only favoured non-proliferation as 'a first step' for total disarmament. He therefore expected a Romanian attempt to undermine 'the intention of the Soviet Union to direct this session on a course against China', and requested Romania to support the Chinese position in full.³² The Romanian attempt to create an Asian coalition within the WP had turned into a Chinese ploy to use the Romanian delegation as their proxy within the alliance.

The Chinese attitude was all the more striking since the Chinese side refused all the Romanian requests, both concerning the participation as observers at the PCC meeting, since 'it is very hard to exercise influence' as such, and regarding the consultation of their Albanian ally. Bodnaras nevertheless promised Liu Fan not to harm Chinese interests. In a meeting on 14 January Bodnaras once more stressed that the Romanian politburo agreed with all the Chinese requests, and would ensure that 'the session would not adopt any document that could be used against China'.³³ The Chinese would accordingly have the best of both worlds: the Romanians had promised to defend Chinese interests in their absence, and the Chinese had not done anything in return.

In the meeting on 14 January Bodnaras also underlined that the Romanians agreed with the Chinese opposition to the Soviet proposal to convene the editorial

³¹ Ibid.

³² Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 9 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 15-19.

³³ Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 14 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 20-31.

committee of communist parties on 1 March 1965. The Romanian leadership had, in fact, decided to explore the Kremlin's vulnerable position by sending a letter to the Soviet leadership on 4 January, in which it openly sided with the Chinese on this issue. Gheorghiu-Dej agreed with the Chinese that the Soviet proposal represented a ploy to re-establish Soviet hegemony over the communist movement. Emphasising that 'a meeting, in which only a part of the communist parties participates, leads to a deepening and a sharpening of the differences of opinion', Gheorghiu-Dej indirectly made Brezhnev responsible for exacerbating the Sino-Soviet split.³⁴ Even though the Chinese were among a small minority of parties that refused to participate, the fact that the Romanian leaders closed ranks with their Chinese comrades was a severe blow to the Kremlin. The Sino-Soviet split was, as such, imported into the WP.

The refusal to participate in the conference also enabled the Romanian leadership 'to keep all options open', which, as the East German allies observed, was also the reason why the Romanian leadership was so reluctant to participate in PCC meetings.³⁵ The Chinese refusal was a useful pretext for Romanian absence. Although the Romanians blamed the Kremlin for 'collective pressure' in terms of attending the conference, other WP members asked the Romanians whether 'the preparation and execution of a meeting should perish through one party's veto?'³⁶ The Romanian leaders did not see any problem with this: several WP meetings had, after all, been blocked by their veto. The Chinese stance in the communist world seemed a great source of inspiration for the Romanian stance within the WP.

Moreover, the Romanian leadership intended to use the meeting to discuss the 'discriminatory measures' which had been taken vis-à-vis the Albanian delegation and the observers in 1961. Exercising Romanian self-criticism concerning the decisions at the time, Bodnaras also underlined the retrospective Romanian agreement with the Chinese support for the Albanian stance since 1961. The Romanian leadership was particularly eager to insist on abrogating these 'discriminatory measures', since it wanted to ensure that 'in future we do not meet with the same practice, which puts every country under threat of being excluded, because it has not sent a delegation in the composition asked by the SU'.³⁷ The Romanian leadership nevertheless decided to send Gheorghiu-Dej to the meeting after all, which showed that the Romanians by no means wanted to be excluded from the WP, nor did they want to contribute to the image of a weakening socialist camp. They wanted to revise the decision on Albanian participation in order to stretch their own scope for manoeuvre. The reversed Romanian stance on Albania's participation in the WP marked the new position Romania intended to occupy in the WP.

³⁴ Letter from RWP CC to CPSU CC, 4 January 1965, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3655, 179-190.

³⁵ Estimate from the East German embassy in Bucharest on Romanian economic, political, and cultural development in 1964, 7 January 1965, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/369, 21.

³⁶ 'Memorandum about a conversation with the Romanian ambassador in de GDR, comrade Dr. Cleja', 27 November 1964, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3655, 178.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Emphasising that this was the most important issue for the Romanians, Bodnaras explained that the Romanian delegates would 'keep our point of view on non-proliferation in reserve'. Although the Romanian leadership disagreed with a recent letter from Walter Ulbricht, in which he linked the opposition on MLF to non-proliferation, the Romanian delegation would only refer to non-proliferation 'to prevent the discussions from developing on a mistaken road'.³⁸ Asking the Chinese whether the Romanians needed to intervene on any other point, Bodnaras servility vis-à-vis the Chinese seemed an ironic inversion of the Romanian defiance of the Soviet Union. It did nevertheless serve a clear purpose: the Romanians could use the Chinese position to mark their independence within the WP, and the Chinese angle on non-proliferation was particularly useful in undermining Ulbricht's transmission belt approach, as well as coinciding with Romanian interests.

BILATERAL PREPARATIONS

One day after the conversation between Liu Fan and Bodnaras the Albanian leadership did indeed send a reply to the Polish leadership in Warsaw, since Warsaw was the official depository of the Warsaw Treaty, in which they made their participation in the alliance conditional upon a number of requests.³⁹ The conditions were, however, very different from those the Romanian leadership had hoped for. The issue of observers was not even mentioned, and the requests solely focused on the role of Albania within the WP itself. The Albanian leadership demanded a total rehabilitation of their position, including Soviet self-criticism on its past attitude towards Albania, restoration of normal diplomatic relations with all WP members, a revision of the nuclear test-ban treaty with which the Albanians disagreed, a peace treaty with both Germanys, and so forth. Accusing the Soviet leadership under Khrushchev for an 'anti-Marxist and great power chauvinist dictate', the Albanian leadership clearly used Chinese rhetoric. Blaming all WP members for enabling Khrushchev's foreign policy, and condemning them for their 'capitulation' towards the United States, the Albanian leadership could hardly expect a positive reply. Fulfilling the Albanian requests would, in fact, mean reversing all foreign policy in the first half of the sixties as well as admitting that everyone was wrong apart from Albania. It was, however, striking that most of the blame seemed to be shifted to Khrushchev, which provided Brezhnev with a window of opportunity to change direction without losing face.

The Romanian proposal to invite Albania again backfired: the Albanians' reply itself was so far-fetched that the Romanians could hardly continue supporting them. In

³⁸ Ibid. See for the letter from Ulbricht to Gheorghiu-Dej and Maurer, 13 January 1965, linking non-proliferation to MLF, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 15/1965, 164-165.

³⁹ Note by the Albanian government to the PCC, Tirana, 15 January 1965, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3388, 347-371.

a conversation that Gheorghiu-Dej and Maurer had requested with Gomulka before the meeting started, the Albanian question came to haunt the Romanians. After Gomulka had attempted to assuage Romanian anger about Ulbricht's draft declaration on non-proliferation by insisting that he considered it 'on the tenth level of importance', he raised the issue of Albanian participation. This came as a surprise to the Romanians, who had not seen the Albanian reply yet. Underlining that the Albanian conditions for participating were 'unprecedented', Gomulka emphasised that 'in the future it will only be up to the government of Albania whether it will participate in the proceedings of the Political Consultative Committee or not.' Although Gheorghiu-Dej attempted to stand his ground by emphasising that the decision to 'exclude [Albania] from the proceedings' after the meeting in August 1961 was 'illegal', since '[n]owhere in the treaty is the obligation stipulated that the first secretaries and the presidents of the councils of ministers are to participate', Gomulka reposted that for the current PCC meeting 'the Albanians were sent the common invitation of all the other countries and there was no condition as to the participation level'.⁴⁰

Having called Romanian bluff on the Albanian question, Gomulka immediately confronted the Romanian leadership with another sensitive issue: referring to the Romanian opposition on convening an editorial or consultative committee to prepare another conference of communist parties, Gomulka emphasised that the Polish leadership sided with the Kremlin and considered such a conference necessary. He also severely criticised the Chinese obstruction on the convention of such a conference, emphasising that '[i]f a party does not agree to something being done, it cannot obstruct the activity of the other parties'. When Gheorghiu-Dej suggested 'to try once more to discuss with the Chinese comrades and create conditions for convening the conference', Gomulka reposted '[w]hen a party tries to impose its will, (...) what kind of equality is this?'⁴¹

Gomulka clearly undermined a potential Romanian 'Alleingang' and criticised the Romanian stance by saying that '[t]hose who now oppose the convening of the editorial commission actually submit to the Chinese and that is the way you act, too'.⁴² Gomulka had thus successfully exposed Romanian vulnerability: judging from the conversations with Liu Fan the Romanian stance did indeed seem to turn into a Chinese instrument. Having discussed all the topics that had been discussed with Liu Fan, the Romanian leadership now faced a party that occupied the opposite end of the spectrum within the Sino-Soviet split. Although the meeting with Gomulka took place at Romanian request to discuss Ulbricht's proposal on non-proliferation, Gomulka had skilfully used it to oppose the Romanian collusion with the Chinese. Instead of

⁴⁰ Meeting between Gheorghiu-Dej, Maurer, and Gomulka, 18 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 15/1965, 92-102.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

patching up the differences, it became clear that the Romanian delegation would be confronted with strong opposition from its Polish comrades during the meeting.

On the same day the Romanian delegation paid a visit to Walter Ulbricht, at his request. The East German leadership was fully aware of the Romanian collusion with China on its detonation of an atom bomb, disarmament and the communist conference, and desired to speak to the Romanians before the meeting to defend its own proposal on non-proliferation. Ulbricht nevertheless felt more positive about facing his Romanian comrades, since Gheorghiu-Dej was nominated as leader of the Romanian delegation, after the East German diplomats had heard many rumours that he would not participate in the PCC meeting.⁴³ Gheorghiu-Dej's nomination was regarded as an indication that the Romanian leaders did not want to push their limits too far, and that they 'wanted to avoid that the impression would arise that all foreign policy actions were in first instance determined by Comrade Maurer.'⁴⁴ This is a particularly interesting observation, since it did indeed seem to be the case that the Romanian premier Maurer had a far greater stake in determining his country's foreign policy than any other prime minister within the WP.

Ulbricht nevertheless did not seem to feel very comfortable, and started with a long speech on West German revanchism to justify his proposal to raise the issue of non-proliferation at the UN. Ulbricht even hoped this would necessitate the unprecedented participation of the GDR at the UN, since the East Germans had supported the proposal. He thus tried to use the WP as a direct instrument for *de facto* East German recognition: by transmitting his proposal to the UN through the WP, the GDR would indirectly participate in global politics. The Romanian leadership undermined Ulbricht's approach, however, once again, and after strongly rebuking him for sending the materials at such short notice, Gheorghiu-Dej explained that his delegation only had a mandate to discuss MLF, and that '[w]e have information that the Indian government also wants to raise this problem at the UN in order to condemn China'. Warning Ulbricht that 'we would make a grave mistake' if the problem was raised at the UN, Gheorghiu-Dej and Maurer refused to yield on Ulbricht's draft non-proliferation treaty.⁴⁵ Although Gomulka had succeeded in checkmating his Romanian comrades, Gheorghiu-Dej and Maurer had called Ulbricht's bluff: on non-proliferation they would continue to side with the Chinese.

In bilateral meetings without the Kremlin the Romanians had to give way to their Polish comrades on the Albanian issue, but had managed to stand their ground with their East German allies on the non-proliferation treaty. The difference between these two meetings was striking: whereas Gomulka had managed to seize the initiative

⁴³ Report on Romania from the East German embassy in Bucharest, 5 January 1965, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/369, 3-4.

⁴⁴ Report on Romania from the East German embassy in Bucharest, 22 January 1965, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/369, 35.

⁴⁵ Meeting between Gheorghiu-Dej, Maurer, and Ulbricht, 18 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 15/1965, 103-111.

by using the Albanian reply as leverage over his Romanian comrades, Gheorghiu-Dej had succeeded in using potential Chinese condemnation at the UN as leverage over Ulbricht. The fact that the meeting with Gomulka took place at Romanian request, whereas Ulbricht met the Romanian leaders at his own request already testifies to the hierarchy within the WP, according to which Poland ranked very high and the GDR considerably lower. Thus the position of the main protagonists of the PCC meeting had already been defined through bilateral meetings behind the scenes and without the SU, before the PCC meeting even started.

PCC CLASHES

During the actual meeting the protagonists did not budge. All leaders apart from Gheorghiu-Dej united in their strong condemnation of the Albanian stance and in their support for Ulbricht's proposal to present a non-proliferation treaty to the UN, which he considered a logical and effective way to counter MLF. Brezhnev was the first to strongly voice his 'total support', but also offered an opening to the Chinese by arguing that 'concerning the struggle for (...) the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons it would be extremely desirable to coordinate our efforts with the People's Republic of China'. Supporting the Chinese proposal for a disarmament conference, Brezhnev accordingly underlined that he still hoped to repair the relations with the Chinese. Brezhnev's speech also showed a cautious approach towards Romania, since he had altered and then deleted a paragraph on the fact that 'none [of the WP countries] would raise problems concerning the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons'.⁴⁶ Brezhnev thus trod his ground carefully and attempted to defuse Chinese and Romanian antagonism.

Gheorghiu-Dej cleverly used the window of opportunity in Sino-Soviet relations after Khrushchev's ouster by concentrating on the Chinese aspect in his speech. He was the first WP leader to welcome the Chinese nuclear detonation as 'an important triumph (...) for the socialist camp', and strongly supported the Chinese proposal for a conference on 'the total destruction of nuclear weapons'. Ignoring the East German proposal on non-proliferation altogether, the Romanian leader clearly emphasised the importance of unity between *all* socialist countries. At the end of his speech Gheorghiu-Dej even returned to Brezhnev's proposal to coordinate efforts with China, which had pleasantly surprised him, and suggested 'collaboration on all major international problems' with non-WP countries.⁴⁷ This was, in fact, an insidious move to rob the WP of its relevance.

⁴⁶ Cf. minutes of the PCC, 19-20 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 15/1965, 29 for the altered and erased paragraph.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

The Romanian foreign minister Manescu repeated this argument during the meeting of the editorial committee, which met later that day to discuss the East German draft communiqué,⁴⁸ and emphasised that non-proliferation was 'a measure of worldwide width', since it 'directly affected not only the socialist countries participating in the Warsaw Treaty, but all socialist countries, and, generally, all countries in the world'.⁴⁹ Refusing to allow the WP to act as a body to represent the socialist countries, he added that a non-proliferation treaty could lead to a nuclear monopoly of the already existing nuclear powers to keep their weapons. This argument had a particularly interesting dimension to it, since the Romanian leaders seriously intended to keep the option open of developing their own nuclear programme.⁵⁰ Although no agreement was reached on a non-proliferation treaty, the Romanian leadership proved more pliable concerning the Albanian issue, in which the Chinese had not expressed great interest anyhow, and agreed on a resolution against Albania in the second session of the editorial committee.⁵¹ Thus Gomulka's initial proposal to make Albanian participation conditional on the Albanians carried the day.

The Romanian stance during the discussion between first secretaries literally echoed the conversations between Bodnaras and Liu Fan. No longer keeping the non-proliferation issue 'in reserve', Gheorghiu-Dej and Maurer used the Chinese dimension to argue their case. They insisted that the East German draft non-proliferation treaty could be used by India to condemn China at the UN, and reiterated the Chinese point of view that non-proliferation was only useful as a first step in the process towards disarmament. Gomulka was the first to target the Romanian objections, by arguing that 'the idea of non-proliferation' was no longer 'levelled directly against the Chinese Republic', as it had been before the 'experimental detonation' of a Chinese nuclear device.⁵² He also undermined the proposal for total disarmament, since the West would never accept it, whereas 'the problem of non-proliferation is the easiest to solve'.⁵³ The Sino-Romanian collusion nevertheless turned non-proliferation, too, into a thorny issue.

The Romanians were not sensitive to the argument of their Czechoslovak comrade Novotny either, who argued that '[t]he Western press expects Romania to

⁴⁸ Draft communiqué, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 15/1965, 170.

⁴⁹ First session of the editorial committee, 19 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 16/1965, 224.

⁵⁰ Cf. for the Romanian nuclear programme the article by Gheorghe, 'Atomic Maverick', 373-392.

⁵¹ See 'PCC Resolution on Nonparticipation of Albania in the Warsaw Pact', 19 January 1965, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17922&navinfo=14465>, accessed 26 August 2013, and second session of the editorial committee, 20 January, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 16/1965, 231-236.

⁵² 'Polish Minutes of Discussion at the PCC Meeting in Warsaw', 20 January 1965, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17921&navinfo=14465>, 5, accessed 26 August 2013.

⁵³ 'Romanian Minutes of the PCC Meeting', 20 January 1965, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17920&navinfo=14465>, 5, accessed 26 August 2013. Cf. minutes of the PCC, 19-20 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 15/1965, 3-91.

adopt a diverging position (...) at this meeting. If we do not include the issue of non-proliferation in the communiqué, it will be clear to everybody that Romania disagreed.⁵⁴ This might, however, have been exactly what the Romanian leadership hoped for. As Gheorghe shows, the Romanian status as ‘maverick’ could help the Romanians in obtaining certain concessions, even concerning nuclear supplies, from the West.⁵⁵ Maurer accordingly underlined that ‘Romania has the right to justify its position anywhere and at any time it chooses, using whatever arguments it deems suitable for the purpose.’ Appealing to the Romanian lust for autonomy, Gomulka cleverly added that he did not mind the Romanian conversations with the Chinese, ‘but don’t we have our own minds, can’t we evaluate the situation?’⁵⁶ But for the Romanians WP unity was obviously subordinate to contacts with the Chinese. Moreover, the Chinese stance on non-proliferation suited Romanian purposes.

Brezhnev was also wondering whether Gheorghiu-Dej and Maurer were expressing ‘the personal opinion of the Romanian Workers’ Party, or whether you are subordinating [it] to an understanding with the Chinese comrades?’⁵⁷ The extent to which the Romanian delegation had coordinated its opinion with the Chinese was obviously unbeknown to Brezhnev. During a final meeting of first secretaries to fine-tune the communiqué Gomulka managed to formulate a compromise that satisfied his Romanian comrade. Gheorghiu-Dej agreed to the formulation that ‘[t]he creation of MLF, in any form, means the proliferation of nuclear arms and, especially, the access of those arms to West German militarists.’⁵⁸ The Romanian delegation had thus succeeded in limiting any mentioning of proliferation to MLF, while undermining the East German attempt to use a WP proposal for a non-proliferation treaty to raise the status of the WP and indirectly the GDR at the UN. The Romanian leadership had accordingly managed to increase its own scope for manoeuvre on foreign policy issues, while decreasing the importance of the WP. It had, at the same time, ensured that ‘no document would be adopted against China’, as Bodnaras had promised Liu Fan. The potential condemnation of China at the UN had provided the Romanians with a useful argument to achieve their own foreign policy objectives.

Thus the discussions had come full circle: the Romanian delegation had undermined the East German proposals as they had done in the bilateral meeting, whereas Gomulka had withstood the Romanian objections by finding a compromise on non-proliferation. But while the Romanian delegation had been very active before the meeting started, it immediately left afterwards without saying goodbye.⁵⁹ Unbeknown to the Romanians, their six allies inserted one more meeting to discuss the convention of the editorial committee of the international communist conference,

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁵ Gheorghe, ‘Atomic Maverick’, 374.

⁵⁶ ‘Polish minutes’, 20 January 1965, PHP, 7.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁵⁸ Minutes of the PCC, 19-20 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 15/1965, 88.

⁵⁹ Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 27 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 39.

which was scheduled for 1 March. Since the Romanian leadership clearly sided with the Chinese on this issue, the other WP countries decided to bypass their Romanian allies. They nevertheless also bypassed their other comrades within the communist movement by agreeing on the nature of the conference behind their backs, as the leaders from the Italian Communist Party concluded with surprise.⁶⁰ The WP members had emancipated themselves to such an extent that they also appropriated the prerogative of calling the shots within the divided communist movement. Gomulka himself used this opportunity to take the lead again, and suggested calling the 'editorial committee' a 'consultative session' instead, to clearly signal that it was not intended to determine the outcome of the meeting and to accommodate Romanian criticism of the term 'editorial'.⁶¹ Having excluded the Romanians, Gomulka had the last word.

Without Romanian dissent, the other allies quickly agreed to Gomulka's proposal, and thus the only measure that was decided upon was ironically sealed outside the official confines of the WP. Although the Romanians had succeeded in reducing the relevance of the WP during the meeting itself, while also resisting the East German proposals on reforms, as we have seen in the previous chapter, their WP allies had managed to reduce the relevance of Romania by making decisions outside the confines of the alliance. The decision of the six remaining delegations to bypass Romania paved the way for a new trend within the alliance. After the Romanian attempt to create an Asian coalition in the WP had come to nothing, the division of 'the six' – as they came to be called – against one would determine the dynamics of the WP in the years to come.

THE ALLIANCE INSIDE OUT

The way in which the Sino-Soviet split had turned the WP inside out was illustrated by the fact that Romania's exclusion from the final meeting coincided with another meeting between the Romanian and Chinese comrades. At Liu Fan's request Bodnaras hurried to the Chinese ambassador to report in great detail on the manner in which the Romanians had used the WP meeting to defend Chinese interests.⁶² Bodnaras even suggested that the draft non-proliferation treaty had been approved by the USA, which he confirmed the next day with information from Washington.⁶³ It was indeed the case that the non-proliferation discussion at the PCC meeting almost exactly coincided with a report by the Gilpatric Committee on Nuclear Proliferation in which it urged the

⁶⁰ 'Meeting of the leadership', 2 March 1965, FIG APC, Leadership, 1965, mf 029, 581.

⁶¹ 'Hungarian Report on the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee Meeting of 19-20 January 1965', 25 January 1965, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17915&navinfo=14465>, accessed 26 August 2013.

⁶² Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 27 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 34-40.

⁶³ Meeting between Maurer, Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 28 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 43.

American administration to “substantially increase the scope and intensity” of its non-proliferation efforts’, which was issued on 21 January 1965.⁶⁴ Bodnaras thus emphasised that the WP members were uniting against China with the imperialists. After the Romanian attempt to ‘mediate’ in the Sino-Soviet split this seemed a manner to escalate it.

Adapting his speech to the antagonistic rhetoric of the Chinese, Bodnaras described the PCC meeting as a ‘battle’ in which a ‘massive attack’ was carried out against the Romanian delegation, in which Gomulka had ‘the most combative attitude’. Moreover, he explained that the ‘principal battle’ was not about MLF, but about the nuclear monopoly of the ‘monstrous club’ of the traditional nuclear powers. Stressing that Ulbricht and Gomulka had already pressurised the Romanian delegation into succumbing during the preparatory conversation, and that the Romanian speech had been ignored at first, Bodnaras underlined that all Romanian objections were taken into account in the communiqué.⁶⁵ Bodnaras thus used the PCC meeting to emphasise Romania’s successful struggle for the defence of Chinese interests *and* for emphasising Romanian autonomy to the outside world.

One day later no one less than Maurer accompanied Bodnaras on his regular visit to Liu Fan. This time the Romanian delegation had prepared the minutes for the Chinese and had taken all the top secret documents, such as Ulbricht’s letter, the draft communiqué and the draft non-proliferation treaty, from the PCC meeting to Liu Fan. Maurer also underlined the ‘lonely battle’ of the Romanian delegation to defend Chinese interests, but concentrated even more than Bodnaras on Gomulka’s role in opposing those. Blaming Gomulka for his ‘obstinacy’ and his lack of honesty, Maurer nevertheless seemed impressed by Gomulka’s ability:

In the scope of the discussion [on non-proliferation] the principal leader, the most active and most “shrewd” instrument was Gomulka; not only the most “shrewd” leader, but also the most perfidious and able advocate for the cause defended by the others. None of the participants was so active, inventive and obstinate about those ideas as Gomulka. (...) Neither Ulbricht, nor Brezhnev, and even less the others were anywhere near the level of Gomulka in terms of supporting those common proposals, which were probably decided beforehand. (...) The discussions lasted 4 hours. They took place between the Romanian part and all the others.⁶⁶

It was indeed striking that the discussions on non-proliferation seemed to be determined by Gomulka on the one hand and Maurer and Gheorghiu-Dej on the other hand. Brezhnev was at most reduced to an arbiter, but did not seem able to seize the initiative. Nor was he able to push through the East German proposals, which he

⁶⁴ Gavin, ‘Nuclear Proliferation’, 405-406.

⁶⁵ Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 27 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 36-38.

⁶⁶ Meeting between Maurer, Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 28 January 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 50.

vehemently supported. As Maurer emphasised, 'no decision was taken, because we opposed it'.⁶⁷ Liu Fan was duly impressed by the Romanian attitude and thanked Maurer and Bodnaras profusely for the detailed information, which he would pass on to the Chinese leadership. The Romanians had thus become an extremely useful informer within the WP, while ensuring that the Sino-Soviet split also weakened the Kremlin within its own alliance.

A week later Bodnaras even informed Liu Fan that the Soviet leadership was split on the Romanian position within the WP. The Soviet ambassador in Warsaw, Aristov, had told the Romanian ambassador that Brezhnev in fact agreed with Gheorghiu-Dej's ideas on non-proliferation.⁶⁸ The Romanian stance in the Sino-Soviet split had not only divided the WP, but also the Kremlin itself. The division within the Kremlin on non-proliferation logically follows from the fact that Brezhnev and Kosygin believed more strongly in the possibility to mend fences with the Chinese than most of their more conservative comrades. Brezhnev's diffidence within the PCC meeting accordingly resulted from the fact that he still had to position himself within the collective leadership after Khrushchev's ouster. Meanwhile, the Romanian ambassador in Warsaw commented on the 'extraordinary insistence' of the Polish leadership to participate in the preparatory meeting on 1 March. This was a particularly sensitive issue, since a Soviet delegation led by premier Kosygin had just returned from a disastrous trip to China, where Mao Zedong had flatly refused to participate in the editorial committee on 1 March, while cold-shouldering everyone who did.⁶⁹ Mao had called the Soviet delegates 'traitors of Marxism' and had promised that 'the polemics would go on for another 9-10 thousand years'.⁷⁰ This was not far from the truth: it proved to be the last meeting ever between any Soviet leader and Mao.⁷¹

Kosygin had also visited China's traditional allies North Korea and North Vietnam, who nevertheless welcomed the Soviet leader, and did not oppose the meeting on 1 March, although they would not attend it either out of deference to China. Romanian participation in the committee thus became particularly important for Brezhnev, who asked Gheorghiu-Dej in a letter to consider participating in the conference after all. Brezhnev underlined that he had taken Romanian objections into account, and that the committee would be 'consultative' instead of 'editorial', thus appropriating Gomulka's suggestion. He reminisced about the 'friendly meetings and sincere conversations' with the Romanian delegation at the PCC meeting, and expressed his 'positive appreciation of the results'.⁷² This was a far cry from the Romanian analysis of the PCC meeting, whose 'results' they had thwarted. The

⁶⁷ Ibid., 49.

⁶⁸ Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 5 February 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 65-66.

⁶⁹ Minutes of discussion between A. N. Kosygin and Mao Zedong, 11 February 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 12/1965, 14-15. In this discussion Mao Zedong also blames the Soviet leadership for its actions against Albania; thus a WP matter also became a bone of contention within the Sino-Soviet split.

⁷⁰ Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 5 February 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 4/1965, 62.

⁷¹ See Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens*, 144-148 for Kosygin's visit to Mao.

⁷² Letter from Brezhnev to Gheorghiu-Dej, 18 February 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 15/1965, 41-42.

'independent' position of Romania within the Sino-Soviet split had obviously increased Soviet tolerance of Romanian obstinacy within the WP. The Kremlin rather gained an obstinate Romania, than lose it altogether.

The Soviet leadership even sent foreign ministry official Tolkunov to Bucharest in an attempt to win the Romanian comrades over. In a conversation with Bodnaras and Ceausescu he emphasised that the RWP and the Kremlin shared 'the same point of view (...) concerning the development of relations between fraternal parties', as had become clear at the PCC meeting. Emphasising the 'good opinion about the Romanian comrades' and the 'admiration of [their] experience', Tolkunov stressed that 'our Central Committee has displayed a total proof of tact and self-control concerning the positions of the Romanian Workers' Party', as well as 'a complete understanding of the politics and position of the Romanian Workers Party', and requested 'a similar understanding' of the Soviet position in return. The Soviet envoy also emphasised that Kosygin's visit to Vietnam had been 'very fruitful', and that 'our Central Committee and our government adopts urgent measures to help Vietnam with weapons of defence'. The Romanians praised the Soviet assistance to Vietnam as a 'concrete contribution to the strengthening of trust and solidarity between socialist countries', but the Chinese continued to 'attack' the Soviets, even though they shared 'an open battle front' in Vietnam, which considerably 'complicated the situation'.⁷³ The Sino-Soviet split manifested itself in a totally different approach towards the Vietnam War, in which the Soviet and Chinese leaders competed in the way they intended to solve the conflict.

The Soviet attempt to win the Romanian comrades over nevertheless fell on deaf ears: Bodnaras duly reported his entire conversation with Tolkunov a day later to the Chinese diplomat Van Tung, and regarded the Soviet overture as a 'manoeuvre to attempt (...) to salvage the old orientation', and replied that the Romanians refused to 'make concessions' and therefore would not attend. Refusing to cooperate with the Soviets on this delicate issue, the Romanians emphatically told the Chinese that they were eager to communicate their decision 'in the context of our collaboration'. The Romanians' dissidence within the WP had tightened their bond with China, instead of deepening their 'understanding' of the Soviet Union.⁷⁴

Meanwhile, the meeting on 1 March in Moscow, 'which was initially "intended to have a decisive importance for the destiny of the revolutionary movement"', had turned into a miscarriage' according to the Romanian ambassador in Beijing.⁷⁵ The Chinese stuck to their guns, and the countries that participated – which included all WP members except Romania and Albania – had issued a half-hearted communiqué

⁷³ Minutes of discussions between comrades Nicolae Ceausescu and Emil Bodnaras with L. N. Tolkunov, Bucharest, 23-24 February 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, C, 15/1965, 17, 28.

⁷⁴ Meeting between Bodnaras and Van Tung, 24 February 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, 91-99

⁷⁵ 'Information about some aspects on Sino-Soviet relations', 3 June 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 1/1965, 17-21.

for the sake of unity, in which their support for Moscow remained ambivalent.⁷⁶ Although the Kremlin had suggested writing a letter to the other communist parties, which would implicitly condemn the Chinese, the leaders of the Italian Communist Party strongly opposed this proposal, and were supported by their East German and Polish comrades, whom they praised in particular.⁷⁷ The Eastern European leaders, who had become most active within the WP framework, also were the most proactive within the communist movement. In this case, too, the Kremlin, which was initially determined to write the letter, was forced to compromise, and admitted that 'it should be the conference to decide'.⁷⁸ The conference had, accordingly, stimulated a new *modus operandi*, with more 'respect for the equality and autonomy' of each party, since 'an international monolithic organisation does not and cannot exist', as a Polish delegate put it.⁷⁹ The Soviet monolith had become an anachronism.

Meanwhile, Mao had sent a Chinese delegation to Hanoi on the same day as the Moscow meeting, where the Chinese prime minister Zhou Enlai strongly criticised the 'new Soviet leadership' for 'carrying out nothing but Khrushchevism' in a conversation with Ho Chi Minh, while undermining the Soviet attempt to formulate a united socialist stance on the Vietnam War, since 'each country had its own position and judgement'.⁸⁰ With the WP divided and North Vietnam under pressure from China, the Soviet attempt to close ranks with the other communist parties was doomed to fail. Instead of reasserting Soviet hegemony, the meeting on 1 March was another blow to the Soviet claim for leadership of the communist movement.

CLOSING RANKS ON VIETNAM?

In April 1965 the Soviet leaders intensified their attempts to close ranks with the Chinese on the Vietnam issue. On 3 April Brezhnev and Kosygin wrote a letter to Mao and Zhou Enlai, in which they proposed a meeting between Chinese, North Vietnamese and Soviet representatives at the highest level of representation in order to 'discuss together the measures, which should be taken in future for the defence of the security of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam'.⁸¹ The Soviets warned that 'the aggressor can go still further', if no 'common action' was undertaken. The Chinese leadership replied that it already met frequently with the Vietnamese comrades to

⁷⁶ Communiqué of the Moscow Meeting, March 1965, FIG ACP, 802/I, International meetings, mf 0528, 0814-18.

⁷⁷ 'Material relating to the Moscow meeting', FIG ACP, 802/I, International meetings, mf 0528, 0883.

⁷⁸ 'Meeting of the party leadership [of the PCI]', 8 March 1965, FIG ACP, Leadership, 1965, mf 029, 610.

⁷⁹ Discussion at the 3rd plenum of the Polish United Workers' Party, 7 April 1965, FIG ACP, Poland, mf 0528, 51-2.

⁸⁰ Westad et al. (eds.), *77 Conversations*, Zhou Enlai and Ho Chi Minh, Hanoi, 1 March 1965, 75.

⁸¹ Letter from Brezhnev and Kosygin to Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, 3 April 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 50/1965, 11-12.

‘support’ them ‘in the struggle against the aggression of American imperialism’. They called the Soviet ‘assistance up to the present (...) very insignificant’, and advised the Soviets to discuss ‘this problem’ bilaterally with the Vietnamese.⁸² The Kremlin forwarded both letters to the Romanian Workers’ Party, which was led by Nicolae Ceausescu since Gheorghiu-Dej’s death in March 1965.⁸³ The Soviet leaders intended to show their willingness to find a way out of the Sino-Soviet split, while also expressing their indignity about the fact that the Soviet help had been considered ‘very insignificant’.⁸⁴ In contrast to the lengthy conversations with the Chinese ambassador Liu Fan, the Soviet ambassador I. K. Jegalin was allocated ten minutes to hand over the letters to Ceausescu and to convince him that the ‘the Soviet aid’ was, in fact, ‘sufficient’.⁸⁵ The Soviet attempts to win both the Romanians and the Chinese over remained unrequited.

Matters between Moscow and Beijing had escalated to such an extent that the Soviets complained to the Romanians that ‘the Chinese refused to allow Soviet planes to cross their territory’ on the way to Vietnam.⁸⁶ A top level Chinese delegation, consisting of Den Siao-Pin, Kan Sheng and Liu Fan, meanwhile complained to Maurer and Ceausescu that ‘the Soviets do not respect the sovereignty of our country’, which they ‘consider a province of the Soviet Union.’ According to the Chinese the ‘real purpose’ of closing ranks on Vietnam was to enable ‘collaboration between the United States of America and the Soviet Union’. In Chinese eyes the Kremlin was ready to sacrifice Vietnam for the sake of détente. Den Siao-Pin insidiously added to this: ‘Their real purpose is to isolate China. (...) As we see, you, too, have this experience.’ Maurer reported: ‘But we fight it’.⁸⁷ Praising Romania’s independent stance in the Vietnam War, the Chinese obviously hoped to break through their own isolation by creating a united Sino-Romanian front against the SU.

The Kremlin was also keen not to isolate Romania, since it needed Romanian support in the Sino-Soviet split, which was inadvertently deepened by the Vietnam War. When Brezhnev invited a Romanian delegation led by Ceausescu to Moscow in September 1965, he therefore tried to close ranks on the Vietnam War. But when he suggested signing a common declaration to support Vietnam, the Romanian delegation flatly refused, since it demanded the approval of China and Vietnam, as Ceausescu himself proudly reported to Liu Fan.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, the Romanian leadership had attempted to maintain an independent stance in the Vietnam War by supporting the

⁸² Letter from CPC CC to CPSU CC, 11 April 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 50/1965, 9-10.

⁸³ See Chapter 4 of this book, 164.

⁸⁴ Letter from CPSU CC to CCP CC, 20 April 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 50/1965, 6-8.

⁸⁵ Minutes of the discussions between Jegalin and Ceausescu, 23 April 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 50/1965, 2.

⁸⁶ Conversation between Romanian ambassador Rosianu and Soviet ambassador Denisov, 23 April 1965, ANIC, RWP CC, IR, 1/1965, 12.

⁸⁷ ‘Minutes of discussions with a delegation of the CCP, which participated to the works of the IXth congress of the RCP’, 26 July 1965, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 105/1965, 5, 7.

⁸⁸ Meeting between Ceausescu and Liu Fan, 21 September 1965, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 4/1965, 199-212.

Vietnamese independently. From January 1965 onwards there had been many manifestations in favour of the Vietnamese people in Romania,⁸⁹ although the Vietnamese complained halfway through the year that the Romanian assistance to Vietnam had 'almost exclusively a moral character'.⁹⁰ The Vietnamese communists were particularly popular in Romania, since the Romanian people identified the Vietnamese struggle against the Americans with 'their resistance to the other big power [the SU]', and the Romanian leadership gladly capitalised on this sentiment.⁹¹

The Romanian leadership nevertheless stepped up its support in the summer, and after it had signed a declaration against the American military intervention in Vietnam in August,⁹² it also invited a delegation of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam to Romania in November, which it provided with maximal *material* support.⁹³ By 1967 Romania had in fact become the third largest supporter of Vietnam after the Soviet Union and China.⁹⁴ The other WP allies were nevertheless sceptical about Romania's ulterior motives, since the Romanians cherished particularly cordial relations with the American ambassador, too.⁹⁵ As will become clear later in this chapter, the Romanians strove to remain good relations with as many actors as possible in order to be able to play them off against one another when necessary. Although this enabled Romania to cultivate an autonomous stance in the Vietnam War, without defining its position in the Sino-Soviet split, the Romanian leadership was increasingly turning into a pawn in its own game.

During the assembly of the UN in October 1965 it became painfully evident that the Kremlin had failed to win the Romanians over to its side: although the Soviet leadership attempted yet again to put a non-proliferation treaty forward with the support of its allies, it was under so much pressure from the Romanians that it could only do so in its own name.⁹⁶ The Romanian delegation was furious that the Kremlin put the treaty on the agenda, but it had successfully prevented it from legitimising it in a WP framework. The Romanian delegation ironically used the PCC meeting in January 1965 to undermine the Soviet stance: since the treaty had been vetoed there, the Soviets had no right to present it in their allies' name at the UN. The Soviets succumbed and had thus been checkmated by the machinations of their own alliance.

⁸⁹ Diplomatic report from Bucharest, 4 February 1965, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/369, 52-75.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24 June 1965, Bucharest, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/369, 228.

⁹¹ Budura, Romanian ambassador to Beijing, in Liu and Mastny (eds.), *China and Eastern Europe*, 70.

⁹² Diplomatic report from Bucharest, 19 August 1965, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/369, 313

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 25 November 1965, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/369, 480.

⁹⁴ Cf. Gheorghie, 'Atomic Maverick', 373-392.

⁹⁵ 'Information Report, 5.8.1965-19.8.1965', Bucharest, DY 30/IVA2/20/369, 312-334.

⁹⁶ Meeting between Bodnaras and Liu Fan, 28 October 1965, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 4/1965, 222. The Romanians also wrote a report on their position on nonproliferation in which they expressed their satisfaction with the Chinese position. Cf. memorandum on a non-proliferation treaty, August 1965, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 38/1965, vol. I, 99-107.

THE POLISH MOVE

The Romanian leadership diverged within the WP just as much on the Vietnam War as on non-proliferation, and in the issue on Vietnam it also found Gomulka its most mighty opponent. A great believer in the consultative meeting of communist parties on 1 March, Gomulka was not only extremely critical of the Chinese attempt to thwart it, but also of its uncooperative stance in the Vietnam War.⁹⁷ Gomulka's support for a conference to resolve the Vietnam War was even such that it caught the attention of the American administration, whose top diplomat W. Averell Harriman approached Gomulka in December 1965 in order to mediate between the Soviet, Chinese and North Vietnamese leaderships to attain a negotiated peace. Loath to be bypassed by its Romanian rivals, the Polish leadership asked the American representative in Warsaw if the Americans would not approach the Romanians with the same request, and rejected the American request in the first instance. The Poles were assured that this would not be the case, since the Romanians would fear Chinese disapproval of mediating in the Vietnam War.⁹⁸ The Romanian refusal to take sides in the Sino-Soviet split thus prevented it from resuming the role as mediator, and the Polish leadership decided in the end to accept the American request. This started a grand scale operation of Polish mediation, later known as 'Operation Marigold'.⁹⁹

The Polish leadership had a vested interest in the peaceful resolution of the Vietnam War, since it feared that the Vietnam War 'could exacerbate East-West relations, pose a threat to détente, and relegate to the back seat the questions of key importance to Warsaw, namely those pertaining to European security', and therefore attempted to mediate in 1966. It also feared that an exacerbation of the Sino-Soviet split through the Vietnam War might 'lead to a greater Soviet control in Central and Eastern Europe', and a rapprochement with Bonn 'at the expense of Warsaw's interests'.¹⁰⁰ The same motive, which drove Gomulka and Rapacki to force their allies to accept the 'Warsaw Package' during the conference of WP foreign ministers in February 1967, inspired them to adopt an active stance in the Vietnam War, too.¹⁰¹

Gomulka accordingly sent a letter to the Chinese leadership in December 1965 in which he suggested a conference of the Asian communist parties and those of the WP at the highest level of representation in order to reach an agreement on aid to Vietnam. Arguing that the lack of unity within the socialist camp strengthened the

⁹⁷ See Lüthi, *Cold War in the Communist World*, 331.

⁹⁸ 'Information Report, 26.11.1965-9.12.1965', Bucharest, DY 30/IVA2/20/369, 503-524.

⁹⁹ J. G. Hershberg, *Who Murdered "Marigold": New Evidence on the Mysterious Failure of Poland's Secret Initiative to Start US-North Vietnamese Peace Talks, 1966*, Cold War International History Project Working Paper no. 72 (Washington, April 2000).

¹⁰⁰ Rowiaski, Polish ambassador to Beijing, in Liu and Mastny (eds.), *China and Eastern Europe*, 79. See also J.G. Hershberg, *Marigold. The Lost Chance for Peace in Vietnam* (Stanford, 2012) and *Who Murdered "Marigold"*, for a minute account of the Polish negotiations during the Vietnam War.

¹⁰¹ See Chapter 4, 192, for the Warsaw Package, which conditioned potential diplomatic relations with the FRG on recognition of the Oder-Neisse border and the GDR.

‘American aggression’, the Polish leader succeeded in pretending to act on his own initiative.¹⁰² He also sent a cover letter to all his WP comrades, in which he asked them to ‘examine the proposals contained in our letter’.¹⁰³ Seemingly consulting his WP-allies, he had in fact confronted them with a *fait accompli*, since he had sent a letter to the Chinese leadership a week earlier. Most WP members welcomed the Polish initiative, as did the Vietnamese Communist Party.¹⁰⁴

The Romanian leaders were, however, predictably furious at the way in which they had been presented with another *fait accompli* by a WP ally. Whereas they had attempted to include the Asian observers again in order to sow discord within the WP, Gomulka tried to involve the Asian communist parties for the sake of unity. Gomulka’s proposal placed them in a difficult position, since it forced them to openly side with either the Soviet leaders, who were likely to accept it, or the Chinese, who would probably reject the proposal. The Sino-Soviet split had escalated to such an extent that the Vietnam War had also turned into a battleground of communism against communism. According to Bodnaras there were ‘two wars in Vietnam – Vietnam with the USA, and China with the SU’.¹⁰⁵

The Romanian balancing act thus became particularly difficult to sustain. Maurer therefore warned to treat the letter ‘with the greatest possible caution’, since he regarded it as an attempt to isolate the Chinese even further under the pretext of socialist unity. He emphasised that ‘we have done everything we could to cultivate good relations with the Chinese’, which he called ‘one of the fundamental elements of our foreign policy’. Although the relations with the SU had improved after the visit to Moscow in September 1965, Maurer was particularly keen to avoid ‘problems in our relations with China’, and did not want to jeopardise the impending visit of Zhou Enlai to Romania. Bodnaras nevertheless added that ‘our friendship with China is useful so long as the rest has to take China into account. At the moment when they no longer take it into account, that friendship disappears’.¹⁰⁶ The Romanian relations with the Chinese were, accordingly, merely of an instrumental kind.

Ceausescu agreed that ‘we cannot support that letter’, but emphasised that the situation was critical, and even feared that the ‘extension of this war’ could lead to ‘very serious repercussions, not just in Asia, but also in Europe’, since it could provoke ‘extreme measures on behalf of the USA’, including even the use of nuclear weapons. Ceausescu therefore suggested to become ‘more active’ in the Vietnam War, *inter alia* by visiting Vietnam. Rightly summarising that the Polish initiative was welcomed elsewhere, Ceausescu argued to become ‘more active with the neighbouring socialist

¹⁰² Letter from PUWP CC to CCP CC, 28 December 1965, ANIC, RCP CC, C 5/1966, 31.

¹⁰³ Letter from Gomulka to Ceausescu, 5 January 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 5/1966, 25.

¹⁰⁴ See e.g. letter from Kadar to Gomulka, 12 January 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/3389, 17a-18, and *ibid.*, letter from Novotny to SED CC, 20 January 1966, 26-27, and *ibid.*, letter from Vietnamese CC to PUWP CC, 14 April 1966, 120-122.

¹⁰⁵ Minutes of the session of the RCP permanent presidium, 19 January 1966, 18.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 7-21.

countries, in order to explain our point of view', and to prevent further isolation of China, while also intensifying 'relations with capitalist countries' so as to 'unmask and isolate the USA'.¹⁰⁷ The other politburo members stressed that they should visit Vietnam before the next session of the PCC in order to strengthen their hand and avoid being isolated themselves within the WP. Competing with the Poles for the position of most influential NSWP member, the Polish move had stimulated the Romanians to move even faster.

THE ROMANIAN COUNTERMOVE

At roughly the same time the visit from the French foreign minister Couve de Murville to Romania in April 1966 considerably strengthened the Romanian hand. It was the first visit of a French foreign minister to Romania during the Cold War, and it took place within a month of France's announced withdrawal from the military structures of NATO.¹⁰⁸ Ceausescu accordingly displayed a particular interest 'in the French position within NATO', and argued 'that the French politics supports the Romanian position within the Warsaw Pact', since it was an example of the politics of all states, which strove after independence'.¹⁰⁹

Meanwhile, the Romanian leaders appropriated the Polish initiative by sending a Romanian delegation to Hanoi in May 1966 'concerning the possibility of some common actions of all socialist countries to support the struggle of the Vietnamese people against the imperialism of the US'.¹¹⁰ The Romanian effort to support Vietnam nevertheless served a further purpose, which is ignored in historiography.¹¹¹ In a conversation with Hoang Tu, the extraordinary ambassador of North Vietnam in Bucharest, Bodnaras talked at length about the impending PCC meeting, which would take place in July 1966 in Bucharest, and about the Soviet attempts to turn the WP into a supranational institution.¹¹² In order to prevent this, he suggested using the Romanian position as hosts to invite the North Vietnamese, North Koreans, and Chinese again as observers in another attempt to create a Romanian-Asian coalition. Bodnaras stressed that the Romanian leadership had not consulted any WP members about this.

The Romanian leadership thus attempted to use the Vietnamese 'extraordinary appreciation' of their visit to Vietnam to gain support for its stance in the WP, and to

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Bozo, 'France, "Gaullism," and the Cold War', 172.

¹⁰⁹ Information about the visit of the French foreign minister Couve de Murville from 25-28 April 1966 in Romania, Bucharest, 6 May 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/365, 11.

¹¹⁰ Protocol Nr. 25 of the session of the Permanent Presidium of the RCP CC, 24 May 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, C 81/1966, 3.

¹¹¹ Cf. Munteanu, 'Over the Hills', who hardly mentions the WP.

¹¹² Cf. Chapter 4 of this book, 184.

broaden the scope of the WP through another attempt to include Asian observers.¹¹³ Meanwhile, Bodnaras reported at great length to both the American and the Chinese ambassador about his visit to Vietnam, carrying with him several proposals to improve the situation. Although the Romanian leadership did not publish anything about this, the East German diplomat in Bucharest duly reported that Romania now unequivocally posed as a 'mediator' in the Vietnam War, too, thus reversing its previous stance, and bypassing the Poles.¹¹⁴ The Romanian visit to Vietnam in May 1966 is, indeed, generally regarded as the 'start' of the Romanian mediation, even though the 'Chinese were obviously unenthusiastic about the Romanian discussions with the Vietnamese and with the Romanian position'.¹¹⁵ The Polish move had forced the Romanians to jeopardise their relations with the Chinese.

The Romanian leaders ironically intended to use the WP to outwit their Polish comrades on the Vietnam issue, and decided that at the PCC meeting the Romanian delegation would propose 'to adopt (...) a common position in the problem of supporting the struggle of the Vietnamese people'.¹¹⁶ The Romanian foreign minister Manescu was ordered to prepare a separate declaration or a text that could be included in the final communiqué.¹¹⁷ During the conference of WP foreign ministers in Moscow in June 1966, which served to prepare the declaration on European Security of the impending PCC meeting, Brezhnev asked Manescu in a private interview to support 'the Soviet proposal to adopt a Declaration on Solidarity with Vietnam in the context of the conference of the Political Consultative Committee'. Playing for time, Manescu suggested consulting the Vietnamese before discussing it within the WP, which Brezhnev, who praised the Romanian stance on the Vietnam War, considered 'really useful'. He even wondered 'who should take that initiative', since the time before the PCC meeting was short. Although Gromyko hastened to add that the Soviet comrades could 'undertake that task', Brezhnev was so keen to involve his Romanian comrades that he promised to phone Ceausescu to discuss the matter after a CPSU politburo meeting, which would take place in the afternoon.¹¹⁸ Since the Vietnam War had become such a sensitive issue in the relations with China, Brezhnev was eager to side with the Romanians in order to avoid further antagonising the Chinese.

Brezhnev also questioned Manescu about the impending visit of Zhou Enlai to Romania from 16 June to 24 June. The Chinese refusal to close ranks on the Vietnam War threatened to seal the Sino-Soviet split. Since Sino-Soviet relations were almost beyond repair, the Soviet leadership was particularly nervous about Zhou Enlai's visit.

¹¹³ Conversation between Emil Bodnaras and Hoang Tu, TOP SECRET, 2 June 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 181/1966, 102-107.

¹¹⁴ Diplomatic report from Bucharest, 9 June 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/370, 253.

¹¹⁵ Munteanu, 'Over the Hills', 73.

¹¹⁶ Protocol Nr. 25 of the session of the Permanent Presidium of the RCP CC, 24 May 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 81/1966, 3.

¹¹⁷ Decision of the presidium, 3 June 1966, *ibid.*, 51.

¹¹⁸ Discussion between L. I. Brezhnev and C. Manescu, Top Secret, Extremely Important, Single Copy, 11 June 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 73/1966, 38.

Visibly 'agitated' and occasionally 'raising his voice', he expressed his concern about potential 'anti-Soviet discussions', which Ceausescu had promised 'not to allow'.¹¹⁹ Brezhnev's agitation was, however, justified: in his announcement of Zhou Enlai's impending visit the new Chinese ambassador, Tzen Iun-cuan, started by assuring that '[w]e decisively support Romania in defence of its independence and sovereignty, against the Soviet use of the organisation of the Warsaw Treaty and COMECON for the control over its member states'.¹²⁰ Adding that the Chinese delegation would continue to Tirana after visiting Romania, it was quite clear that the Chinese regarded the Romanians as another potential ally in the Sino-Soviet split.

The Romanians had nevertheless overplayed their hand in their attempt to mediate between Hanoi and Washington. Zhou Enlai was not at all enchanted with Ceausescu's suggestion to engage in a 'multilateral discussion' with other governing communist parties on the Vietnam War, and he was not sensitive to Ceausescu's argument to reach a coordinated stance before the PCC meeting in July, so that 'neither country was left isolated in the Communist camp'.¹²¹ Reposting that the Chinese did not 'feel isolated', Zhou Enlai called the Soviet desire for a negotiated peace in Vietnam a "betrayal of the Vietnamese liberation forces", and thus indirectly condemned the Romanian mediation, too.¹²² The Chinese obviously had no desire to contribute to a united Asian front within the WP.

'ONE' AGAINST 'SIX'

The stakes were accordingly high for the PCC meeting from 4 to 6 July 1966 in Bucharest. Although the agenda was partly similar to the one in January 1965, since it also featured a declaration on European Security and WP reforms, the Chinese aspect returned in the guise of a declaration on Vietnam instead of non-proliferation.¹²³ Meanwhile, Bucharest was swamped by Western journalists, who were curious to learn more about Romania's attitude vis-à-vis the WP. According to their Eastern European allies the Romanian leaders did not seem to mind at all that they were perceived as diverging from the rest of the alliance.¹²⁴ Thus the presence of Western press in their own capital also worked in Romanian favour by underscoring the image of the Romanian 'maverick'.¹²⁵

As in 1965 the Romanian leaders arranged a number of bilateral meetings before the PCC session started in order to define their position. They first met with the

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹²⁰ Meeting between Emil Bodnaras and Tzen Iun-cuan, 7 June 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 82/1966, 3.

¹²¹ Munteanu, 'Over the Hills', 74.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ See for European Security and WP reforms Chapter 4 of this book, 184-187.

¹²⁴ Diplomatic report from Bucharest, 26 May 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/370, 228.

¹²⁵ See for this image: Gheorghie, 'Atomic Maverick', 373-392,

Soviet leadership, which showed a great willingness to accommodate Romanian wishes. Brezhnev suggested adopting a declaration on Vietnam 'on the first day' so that it would have 'a good political resonance'.¹²⁶ The Soviet leaders had composed their own declaration after consulting the Vietnamese, as Manescu had recommended in Moscow in June.¹²⁷ This time the Romanian leaders nevertheless came clean, and presented their Soviet comrades with their own version.¹²⁸ Since the Romanians had also consulted the Vietnamese, Ceausescu suggested asking the Romanian and Soviet ministers of foreign affairs to merge the two 'into one single proposal so as to ease tomorrow's discussions'.¹²⁹

Brezhnev reacted enthusiastically, although he regretted that the East German and Polish ministers were not there yet 'so that we could work with the four of us'. It was, however, again Gromyko who severely intervened by claiming that '[a] Soviet-Romanian proposal will not be published, because we had agreed in Moscow that the Soviets would present a proposal'. As in Moscow in June, Brezhnev seemed much more willing than his foreign minister Gromyko to allow the Romanian comrades to take the initiative. Ceausescu nevertheless seemingly accepted Gromyko's objections, and conceded that he would not call it 'a Soviet-Romanian proposal'.¹³⁰ Stressing that he had 'the same thoughts' on Vietnam, he appeased the Kremlin.¹³¹

Ceausescu's next mission was to see if he could also gain the support of the Polish comrades. The Polish delegation was, however, not at all enchanted with the Romanian suggestion to publish a 'Soviet' declaration on Vietnam the next day. It would give the impression 'that we have met here only for the problem of Vietnam', when the *raison d'être* of the PCC meeting was in fact the adoption of a declaration on European Security.¹³² The Romanian zeal on Vietnam thus threatened to overshadow the initially Polish endeavours on European Security. Gomulka in particular was loth to allow Ceausescu to undermine his campaign for European Security after he had already appropriated his initiative on Vietnam.

The customary disagreement between the Polish and Romanian delegation gained an interesting dynamics during the first session of the first secretaries. Presumably aiming to forestall the Romanian-Soviet attempt to publish a Vietnam Declaration on the first day, the Polish declaration had quickly prepared its own draft,

¹²⁶ 'Minutes of the discussions with the Soviet delegation', 3 July 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, vol. II, 138.

¹²⁷ Soviet draft of the declaration on Vietnam, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 95/1966, 115-120.

¹²⁸ Romanian draft of the declaration on Vietnam, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 95/1966, 101-107.

¹²⁹ 'Minutes of the discussions with the Soviet delegation', 3 July 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, vol. II, 143.

¹³⁰ Romanian-Soviet draft of the declaration on Vietnam, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 95/1966, 126-135.

¹³¹ 'Minutes of the discussions with the Soviet delegation', 3 July 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, vol. II, 143.

¹³² 'Minutes of the discussions with the delegation of the P. R. Poland', 3 July 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 95/1966, 9.

in which it had suggested some considerable changes to the Soviet one.¹³³ The Romanian delegation had, in turn, decided to present a separate proposal after all, in addition to the Soviet-Romanian proposal (presented as the *Soviet* declaration), which the party leaders had received. The first secretaries were thus suddenly confronted with *three* different proposals of the Vietnam Declaration, two of which they had not even received. The Soviet declaration had only been distributed just before the meeting.

The champion of surprise proposals, Walter Ulbricht, was particularly annoyed by this course of events, and suggested 'taking the Soviet draft as the basis', since '[w]e only possess the Soviet draft'. Ulbricht's objections were, however, ironically undermined by both Gomulka and Ceausescu, who wanted all three drafts to be considered. This was supported by Brezhnev, who stated that 'all delegations have the right to submit their own drafts'.¹³⁴ Although all other allies were equally indignant about being surprised with two more drafts, they concurred with the suggestion that the foreign ministers should take all three proposals as a basis. The Polish delegation was, however, not at all pleased with the course of events, and engaged in a long conversation with its Soviet comrades immediately after the session.¹³⁵ So much for the Romanian suggestion 'to ease [the] discussions'.¹³⁶

During the ensuing meeting of foreign ministers the impasse on the proposals was such that the only decision that was reached was to create a working party to resolve the issue. Although the Polish foreign minister Adam Rapacki argued that the Polish draft took the changed political situation into account by 'putting less emphasis on the historical aggression, and more on the possibility of a peaceful resolution', he failed to convince his Romanian allies.¹³⁷ Ceausescu was, meanwhile, keen to keep the initiative on Vietnam, and convened the first secretaries the next morning to discuss the matter again. Gomulka explained that the declaration needed to have 'a very serious character', whose tone should be 'closer to a note instead of a resolution'. When Ceausescu objected that the declaration 'should be a firm Declaration, not with the character of a diplomatic note', Gomulka reposted that he was 'surprised' that the Romanian proposal seemed more appropriate for 'a dinner party' or 'a newspaper article' than for 'such an elevated institution' as the Warsaw Pact. With this remark hell broke loose: echoing Chinese and Vietnamese rhetoric on an inclination to negotiate, Ceausescu responded that he 'had not wanted to characterise the Polish draft', but that

¹³³ Polish draft of the declaration on Vietnam, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 95/1966, 121-123.

¹³⁴ 'Minutes of the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee, 4-6 July 1966, session of 4 July 1966', ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, vol. I, 11-12. See also the 'Bulgarian Minutes of the PCC Meeting', 4 July 1966, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=17962&navinfo=14465>, accessed 26 August 2013, which are identical.

¹³⁵ 'Informative note on the Bucharest conference', Bucharest, 12 July 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 95/1966, 255-258.

¹³⁶ 'Minutes of the discussions with the Soviet delegation', 3 July 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, vol. II, 143.

¹³⁷ 'Minutes of the session of foreign ministers, TOP SECRET', 4 July 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, vol. II, 24.

it in fact represented 'a stimulus for capitulation in the face of aggression'. Gomulka strongly rebuked Ceausescu for 'not controlling his words', in 'his position as a host', and added that the Polish delegation had felt compelled to compose its own draft after it had been suddenly confronted with the Romanian one.¹³⁸

Brezhnev, meanwhile, had lost control of the conversation, and only succeeded in intervening with the apology that he 'did not want to enter in these polemics', and that it was 'incorrect' to blame the Polish draft for 'capitulation in the face of American imperialism'.¹³⁹ Brezhnev's reference to 'polemics' was unwittingly adequate, since it did indeed seem as though the Sino-Soviet polemics had been imported once more into the WP through the Romanian and Polish delegations. The crux of the different drafts was indeed that the Romanians sided with the Chinese in emphasising American aggression, whereas the Poles agreed with the Americans that the option for a peaceful resolution, and indirectly Polish mediation, should be left open. The WP dynamics had thus once again been determined by Polish and Romanian disagreements on the Sino-Soviet Split, which had reduced Brezhnev to the role of a bystander. The acrimonious debate was in fact a culmination of the very different angle the Poles and the Romanians had taken on the issue in the first half of 1966. The irony resided nevertheless in the fact that the Romanian delegation had managed to coordinate its draft with the Soviets, even though the Soviets had been much closer to the Polish position in the run-up to the PCC meeting.

The acrimony of the meeting of the first secretaries spilled over into the foreign ministers, who failed to agree on a draft by the abovementioned working party. The Romanian delegation was furious that the Polish delegation had added some amendments to the working party's draft, and when Manescu forced the issue, all other foreign ministers had to concede that they in fact found the version with Polish amendments a better one than the one of the working party, which they considered 'unsatisfactory', and even 'unacceptable'. Gromyko accordingly remarked that 'six participants could not accept the procedure of one', to which Manescu reposted that 'six parties cannot impose their will on one party either'. Since the foreign ministers 'had exhausted all possibilities', and found themselves in 'an impossible situation', as Gromyko stressed time and again, it was decided 'to report to the first secretaries (...) that this document was accepted by six ministers as a basis'.¹⁴⁰ The Romanian delegation had emphatically failed to reap the fruits of its coordination with the Soviet comrades. Despite the Romanian initiative, the Polish proposal prevailed. The Poles were, once more, ahead on the Vietnam issue. Meanwhile, the meeting had painfully

¹³⁸ 'Minutes of the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee, 4-6 July 1966, session of 5 July 1966', ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, vol. I, 150-154. See also the 'Polish Minutes of the PCC Meeting', 5 July 1966, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17959&navinfo=14465>, accessed 26 August 2013.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹⁴⁰ 'Minutes of the session of foreign ministers, morning session', 6 July 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, vol. II, 50-75.

revealed a complete failure to deal with disunity. In the tradition of democratic centralism, there was little experience on reaching a compromise.

In the meeting of first secretaries and prime ministers the same arguments were repeated, and Maurer and Ceausescu insisted that the latest version was 'unacceptable' as a basis. This time Brezhnev lost his patience, and mentioned that time was running out. According to the Romanian report, 'he stood up – as he does when he wants to seem imposing,' and underlined that he was particularly vexed that the WP members had lost several days on deciding which document to use as a basis, while the Soviet Union was being plagued by earth quakes and floods, and the Vietnam War was going on.¹⁴¹ He also emphasised that the current draft included all the Vietnamese wishes.¹⁴² Appealing to 'the opinion of the collective', he added that '[i]f the worst comes to the worst, the declaration can be signed by six countries'.¹⁴³

This infuriated Ceausescu, who strongly condemned 'this kind of pressure', and claimed that the Romanians would write 'a letter to all [communist] parties' to explain their stance, and that they, too, would publish a separate declaration. Gomulka angrily reposted that '[w]e, comrades, do not exercise pressure on you, (...) but you attempt to exercise pressure on us, on all other six delegations', and Brezhnev 'categorically rejected the accusation', while blaming the Romanian delegation for 'the threat' of writing to all other communist parties.¹⁴⁴ This was, indeed, a serious threat, since it would mean an open break within the WP after the one within the communist movement.

The matter was referred again to the ministers of foreign affairs, who decided after a five hour long discussion, which mainly focused on more than twenty Romanian comments on the so-called 'Polish draft', to accept ten of the comments as a compromise and refer the last six to the first secretaries and prime ministers, because everyone refused to yield.¹⁴⁵ During the final discussions Ceausescu withdrew most of his objections, but he categorically rejected the Polish amendment that the communist countries would cultivate 'permanent contacts' with each other considering their support to Vietnam.¹⁴⁶ Emphasising that the Vietnamese leadership itself had to be consulted in the first place, Ceausescu clearly wanted to undermine another Polish attempt at mediation. After Maurer proposed 'to erase point 3 completely', Gomulka

¹⁴¹ 'Minutes of the Romanian Party Politburo Meeting, Report on the PCC Meeting by the General Secretary of the PCR (Nicolae Ceausescu)', 12 July 1966, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17947&navinfo=14465>, 5, accessed 26 August 2013.

¹⁴² See for the Vietnamese draft: ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 95/1966, 179-180.

¹⁴³ 'Minutes of the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee, 4-6 July 1966, session of 6 July 1966', ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, vol. I, 186. See also the 'Polish Minutes', 5 July 1966, PHP.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 187-188.

¹⁴⁵ 'Minutes of the session of foreign ministers, afternoon session', 6 July 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, vol. II, 76-124.

¹⁴⁶ 'Minutes of the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee, 4-6 July 1966, session of the afternoon of 6 July 1966', ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, vol. I, 195-196. See also the 'Polish Minutes', 5 July 1966, PHP.

agreed to do so '[a]s a last resort, (...) if because of this the Romanians would sign the Declaration; in that case we are forced to concede, since there is no other solution'. Thus the Romanian delegation had the last word after all.¹⁴⁷ The Vietnam declaration had taken up so much time that the Kremlin had to postpone the discussion on reforms, which the Romanian delegation had compelled it to do, anyhow, as we have seen in the previous chapter.¹⁴⁸

The Kremlin was, however, not at all pleased with the course of events. According to the Romanian participants, the Soviet delegation had been in 'a permanent condition of nervousness and irritation', and had displayed 'a lack of tact and politeness vis-à-vis the Romanian part'. Moreover, the personal secretary of Gromyko was overheard to say to a translator of the Soviet delegation, 'that it is presently very difficult to work with the socialist countries and realise a unity of views.' Referring to the Vietnam Declaration in particular, he said: 'It used to be very easy (...): the SU proposed something, and the other socialist countries adopted it without discussions. Now it is no longer that simple. Every [country] has its own opinions.' He added that 'this is very good, (...) but we lose too much time'. The conversation was 'bluntly interrupted' when a Soviet delegate approached.¹⁴⁹ The emancipatory process within the alliance could, however, not be stemmed so easily. The views of the NSWP members began to overshadow those of the Soviet leaders, who failed to formulate an adequate response to the lack of unity.

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

Not only the Soviet leaders were ill at ease with the way in which the PCC meeting proceeded. Several NSWP members, too, felt that the Romanian position had left little space for their own point of view. The East German delegation had withdrawn all its amendments on the Vietnam declaration, because so much time was spent on the Romanian ones.¹⁵⁰ The Hungarian delegation found the way in which 'the documents came into being' extremely unsatisfactory, and concluded that the Romanian delegation was particularly obstinate in 'procedural matters'.¹⁵¹ Kadar commented on the fact that 'the Romanian comrades were a step closer to the demagogic position of the Chinese',

¹⁴⁷ Declaration on US aggression in Vietnam, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 94/1966, vol. I, 166-171.

¹⁴⁸ See Chapter 4 of this book, 186.

¹⁴⁹ 'Informative note on the Bucharest conference', Bucharest, 12 July 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 95/1966, 255-258.

¹⁵⁰ 'East German Substantive Summary of the PCC Meeting', 8 July 1966, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17955&navinfo=14465>, accessed 26 August 2013.

¹⁵¹ 'Minutes of the Hungarian Party Politburo Session - Report on the PCC Meeting by the First Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (János Kádár)', 12 July 1966, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17949&navinfo=14465>, 1, accessed 26 August 2013.

and they saw this reflected ‘in their being extremely anti-American’. Moreover, they ‘were waiting for an opportunity to be insulted’ in order to pick a quarrel on the Vietnam Declaration. The fact that the party leaders managed to reach a compromise on the Vietnam Declaration was, according to Kadar, due to the unity of the ‘six’:

It also played a role to some extent that there was a unified front against the Romanians without any kind of “conspiracy.” This influenced the Romanians to a certain degree. They are retreating and coming closer without surrendering their independence. We do not know what impact this will have in the future, but it is certain that the Romanians will deliberate on their experiences as we have done and will reach certain conclusions.¹⁵²

The Romanians did, indeed, deliberate on their experiences, and reached very different conclusions. Ceausescu emphasised the Romanian input in the Vietnam Declaration, and stressed that the Poles ‘were the ones who fought for every single issue’, whereas ‘the others (...) supported our position’. Although the support for the Romanian position did not conform to reality, Ceausescu rightly underlined that ‘the most zealous proponents of a different position (...) were the Poles’. Another Politburo member added that the Soviets ‘were easily persuaded, until the Polish [delegation] showed up.’ The Polish opposition was a real setback for the Romanian delegation, whose Romanian-Soviet declaration would probably have been easily approved if there had not been a Polish alternative. It is striking that the Soviet position seemed so susceptible to input from NSWP members, who once again determined the dynamics of the debate. The Romanian delegation was greatly pleased about this, and Bodnaras considered ‘this conference (...) a turning point’, since it was ‘the first time that, as such a high level Summit, divergent points of view were discussed and presented by the most authorised decision-makers.’ He added that ‘[f]rom here [we should] draw conclusions about how [such] discussions should be handled in the future’.¹⁵³

The Bucharest conference was a turning point in a number of ways. Whereas the Romanian leaders considered it a ‘great victory’, and intended to further stretch their room for manoeuvre within the WP, the other WP members were musing on ways to neutralise Romanian dissent. The acrimonious debates on the Vietnam declaration had made all participants more self-conscious about their role in the WP, and stood in sharp contrast to the successful conclusion of the declaration on European Security, which has been treated in the previous chapter. The discussions on Vietnam were a severe blow to the Kremlin, since it had failed to seize the initiative between the Romanian and Polish polemics, and had thus been reduced to an arbiter. The WP had enabled the Romanians to undermine the hegemonic position of the SU to such an extent that only the Poles rose to the challenge of fundamentally opposing

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵³ ‘Minutes of the Romanian Party Politburo Meeting’, 12 July 1966, PHP.

the Romanians. With the Romanians defending Chinese antagonism in the Vietnam War, and the Poles supporting attempts at negotiation, the Sino-Soviet split had been imported into the WP. Meanwhile, the alliance ran the risk of being hijacked by Romanian dissent instead of Soviet hegemony. This looming fate forced the NSWP members to define their position all the more clearly.

VIETNAM REVISITED

A month after the PCC meeting Mao launched his Cultural Revolution, which was intended to provide the Chinese people with a shortcut to communism. After the Great Leap Forward had failed, this was the second concrete policy of radicalisation, in which the propaganda against Soviet revisionism served as a pretext to persecute any 'revisionist' within China. After the refusal to coordinate aid for Vietnam with the Soviet Union had already cost the Chinese leadership several allies, and had exhausted the patience of North Vietnam, the launch of the Cultural Revolution was a further step towards complete Chinese isolation. It was, moreover, another indication that the Sino-Soviet split had reached the point of no return. The Romanian leadership therefore became more cautious in condemning the American aggression in Vietnam, and did not even mention it in any speech after the PCC meeting. Although Maurer went on a secret mission to Hanoi in September 1966, his lunch appointment with Zhou Enlai in Beijing on his return took place in 'a cool atmosphere'.¹⁵⁴ According to the East German diplomat in Bucharest the Romanian leadership intended to attempt to mediate again.¹⁵⁵

The East German observation was a very perceptive one.¹⁵⁶ With the launch of the 'Cultural Revolution' the 'friendship' with the Chinese had become less useful, since it had become increasingly hard to take China seriously as a global player. After the Romanian leadership had already gone it alone within the WP by establishing diplomatic relations with the FRG in January 1967, and by refusing to break off diplomatic relations with Israel after it had taken control in the Six-Day War of the Syrian Golan Heights, the Egyptian Gaza strip, and the West Bank of Jordan in a pre-emptive strike in early June 1967, it needed to develop another initiative so as not to leave itself isolated on all fronts. Moreover, the Romanian lack of support for the Arab cause had jeopardised the prospects of Romanian oil imports from the Middle East, and had prompted the Romanian leadership to concentrate on the development of its nuclear programme instead, by turning once again to the Americans.¹⁵⁷ The Romanian stance in the Vietnam War had, however, compromised American support of the

¹⁵⁴ Diplomatic report from Bucharest, 13 October 1966, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/372, 192.

¹⁵⁵ Embassy, Bucharest, 13/9/1966, PAAA, MfAA, A 5394, 46.

¹⁵⁶ See Munteanu, 'Over the Hills' for a detailed account of the Romanian attempts at negotiations.

¹⁵⁷ Gheorghe, 'Romania's Nuclear Negotiation Postures', 28.

Romanian nuclear programme, and the Romanian leadership had to find a way to 'remain relevant in a context in which the maverick image was no longer enough'.¹⁵⁸ With the Sino-Romanian friendship as a spent force, the Romanian leadership no longer had to worry about antagonising Mao. Mediation between Washington and Hanoi thus seemed the most promising way out of the Romanian predicament.

On 26 June 1967 the Romanian prime minister Maurer met with the American president Johnson in the wake of a meeting of the UN General Assembly. American support had become particularly imperative since the Romanian minister of foreign affairs Corneliu Manescu was lobbying for the position of president of the General Assembly of the UN.¹⁵⁹ Such support was considerably facilitated by the fact that both Romania and the USA had sided with Israel after the Six-Day War. Maurer explained that Romania had a "special interest in settling the Vietnamese question," because "when there is a crisis or tension in the world (...) countries are told to get together, to renounce some of their sovereignty and some of their independence and to obey the command of another state", and that "it is this consideration which causes Romania to interfere in problems which really are beyond her and to try to settle them."¹⁶⁰ Romanian mediation thus primarily served to maintain Romania's scope for manoeuvre in the international arena, which also explains the Romanian attempt to mediate between China and the Soviet Union in 1964. A negotiated settlement in Vietnam would diminish Soviet pressure to close ranks within the WP. Negotiating between Hanoi and Washington was, however, not sufficient to decrease international tension. For that purpose, Romania needed to keep China on board.

The Romanian leadership therefore continued to play the Chinese card a little longer, and in July 1967 Maurer led a delegation to Beijing. The discussion between Maurer and Zhou Enlai began with the habitual condemnation of the Warsaw Pact, in which 'forms of relations had taken root, which do not correspond to the principles of equality among sovereign states'. Maurer even added that De Gaulle had said that he was 'convinced' that within the WP 'the same would happen [as within NATO]', namely that 'the example of Romania would be followed by other countries'.¹⁶¹ The rest of the conversation already ran somewhat less smoothly, because Maurer had to explain the motives for establishing diplomatic contacts with the FRG in January 1967, which could count on little sympathy with the radicalised Chinese leadership.

On the second day, the discussions took a more complicated turn, since Maurer proposed to participate in a conference of all communist countries to coordinate support for Vietnam and to prepare negotiations between the Vietnamese and the Americans for a peaceful resolution of the Vietnam War. This conference was an initiative from the Polish and Soviet leaders, who had asked their Romanian comrades

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁵⁹ Munteanu, 'Over the Hills', 76.

¹⁶⁰ Maurer quoted by Munteanu, 'Over the Hills', 75-76.

¹⁶¹ 'Minutes of the discussions on the occasion of the visit in China by the delegation led by Ion Gheorghe Maurer', 5 July 1967, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 49/1967, 41-42.

to sign a collective letter to the Chinese communist party, which contained the proposal for such a conference. Although Romania was the only WP member (other than Albania), which refused to sign, Maurer and his aide Niculescu-Mizil were extremely insistent on defending the convention of such a conference in their meeting with Zhou Enlai. Having just begun to pose as a mediator between North Vietnam and the USA, the Romanian leadership was compelled to grudgingly approve of the Polish-Soviet initiative to pave the way for a negotiated peace.

This course of events was particularly striking in a number of ways. On the one hand the Romanians had stressed their independence by refusing to sign the letter, and had sealed the division of 'six against one', which had dominated the Bucharest PCC meeting. On the other hand, they had abandoned their principled opposition to a conference of communist parties, which had previously resulted in their boycott of the consultative meeting on 1 March 1965, and in their anger about the Polish initiative for such a convention in January 1966. The Polish leadership had continued to strive after a position as a mediator in negotiations between the US and Vietnam with Soviet support, but the Romanians had made a U-turn in their opposition to a negotiated resolution of the Vietnam War. To the Chinese leadership the Romanian delegation nevertheless argued that both China and Romania should participate in such a conference, since its contributions could be decisive, as the Romanians had experienced within the WP:

Our experience has shown that when we have fought with clarity and firmness for our point of view in those meetings, we have achieved that a series of unjust points of view, which had been prepared, were neither accepted nor put into practice.¹⁶²

Maurer stressed that 'a single country' could achieve so much, to which Niculescu-Mizil added that it could achieve even more 'together with many more socialist countries'. Although the Romanian delegation attempted to depict 'the extraordinarily important role, which the active presence of the PRC would have at socialist conferences' in the most flattering terms, the real motive behind inviting China seemed less congenial:

Of the countries of the socialist system those countries who meet within the WP meet relatively frequently; the others very rarely. The Asian socialist countries do not come to combat the negative tendencies there where they manifest themselves most actively, nor do they come to contribute to the clarification of the problems of the relations between socialist countries. And this whole battle is waged only by Romania.¹⁶³

¹⁶² 'Minutes of the discussions on the occasion of the visit in China by the delegation led by Ion Gheorghe Maurer', ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 49/1967, 6 July 1967, 62.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 63, 71.

The Romanian delegation seemed, in short, fed up with the way in which it had been defending Chinese interests, without gaining anything for it in return. This meeting seemed a last attempt to offer the Chinese leadership a chance for a constructive contribution towards mending the Sino-Soviet split, and prevent both China and Romania from further isolation. The Romanians had, it seemed, found the Chinese too passive. The pay-off for their support was nil: the Chinese refused to participate in anything. The Romanians were, at least, actively engaged in the same questions as the Kremlin, though frequently disagreeing. Their campaign to involve the Asian countries in a coalition against Soviet hegemony had proved a great disappointment.

The Romanian U-turn on the Sino-Soviet split came too late. The Romanian meeting with the Chinese ironically coincided with a Polish proposal to organise an international conference of the 'six' WP countries to 'harmonise their opinions on China'.¹⁶⁴ The Soviet leaders had, already, given up on reaching a coordinated stance on the Sino-Soviet split together with Romania, and gladly endorsed the Polish proposal, which served to further isolate Romania. From 14-21 December 1967 delegations from the six communist parties met in Moscow, together with a delegation from Mongolia, in order to reach a common stance to 'confront the policy and ideology of the Mao Zedong Group (...) for the defence of Marxism-Leninism'.¹⁶⁵ This conference retrospectively represented the foundation of a new institution, the so-called 'China International' or 'Interkit' in Russian, to deal with the Chinese threat. Representing a kind of ideal Warsaw Pact – without Romanian dissent, but with Mongolian support – these countries would continue to meet until 1986.¹⁶⁶ Through the foundation of the Interkit the Romanian isolation within the WP had been institutionalised.¹⁶⁷

The Romanian mediation between Washington and Hanoi nevertheless paid off, when on 19 September 1967 the Romanian foreign minister Manescu was elected as the first communist president to the General Assembly of the United Nations.¹⁶⁸ Romania's turn Westward proved more beneficial than its orientation towards China. The Romanian leadership therefore turned again to the Soviet comrades. After a delegation led by Maurer had visited Vietnam in order to convince the Vietnamese leaders of the importance of negotiations with the Americans at the end of September 1967, the delegation stopped in Moscow on its way to Romania.¹⁶⁹ Maurer emphasised that the Chinese leadership still refused to join a preparatory meeting for a communist

¹⁶⁴ Document 4, 18 July 1967, in J.G. Hershberg et al. (eds.), *The Interkit Story: A Window into the Final Decades of the Sino-Soviet Relationship*, CWHIP Working Paper No. 63 (Washington, 2011), 48-49.

¹⁶⁵ Document no. 6, in Hershberg et al., *The Interkit Story*, 52-56.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. L. Watts, *A Romanian INTERKIT? Soviet Active Measures and the Warsaw Pact "Maverick", 1965-1989*, CWHIP Working Paper No. 65 (Washington, 2012), 1.

¹⁶⁸ Betea, L., 'Convorbiri neterminat cu Corneliu Mănescu', in Betea (ed.), *Partea lor de adevăr* (Bucharest, 2008), 559.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Q. Zhai, *Beijing and the Vietnam Peace Talks, 1965-1968: New Evidence from Chinese Sources*, CWHIP Working Paper No. 18 (Washington, 1997), for the Chinese and Vietnamese views on negotiations.

conference, but he agreed with his Soviet comrades on the necessity of such a conference, and Maurer even thanked them for ‘the powerful support’ they provided, which enabled the Vietnamese to maintain ‘great independence (...) in their position’.¹⁷⁰ Thus the Chinese rigidity in the Sino-Soviet split had ultimately driven the Romanians in the arms of their Soviet comrades.

Between November 1967 and February 1968 the Romanians embarked on a kind of shuttle diplomacy between Washington, Hanoi, Moscow and Beijing in an attempt to get all parties round the negotiating table. In line with their strategy to ‘fight while negotiating’, the North Vietnamese nevertheless launched their ‘Tet Offensive’ on 30 January 1968, which nipped the negotiations in the bud. The Romanian mediation was, however, duly rewarded, and in April 1968 the American Secretary of State Dean Rusk proposed to pass a West-East Trade bill, which would also facilitate a nuclear deal with the Romanians, at a National Security Council meeting.¹⁷¹ The Romanian mediation had once again primarily succeeded in serving Romanian interests.

CONSULTATIONS ON NON-PROLIFERATION

The Soviet leadership, meanwhile, proved amenable to Romanian interests in nuclear terms, too, and it showed increasing goodwill towards the Romanian stance on non-proliferation. As Maurer had already told Zhou Enlai in the abovementioned conversation, the Kremlin agreed with the Romanian objections to the non-proliferation treaty, but ‘had not been able to obtain much in the negotiations with the U.S.A.’. Romanian and Soviet foreign ministry officials had even collaborated for several weeks on Romanian proposals ‘for the improvement of the draft treaty’, although ‘concrete results were not obtained’.¹⁷² The Romanian leadership had, however, become so confident about its influence within the WP, that it had formally requested the convention of a PCC meeting on 17 May 1967. Thus the Romanian leadership had made a U-turn on the WP, too: after trying time and again to thwart the convention of such meetings, it had in fact taken the initiative in convening a PCC meeting itself. Despite its obstructive use of the WP, the Romanian leaders had begun to see that the alliance provided them, too, with an opportunity to make their voices heard.

The Kremlin had, in fact, trod its ground extremely carefully regarding the non-proliferation treaty. Throughout the negotiations with the US leadership, the Soviet leaders had asked their WP allies for input in the treaty. This was a stark contrast with

¹⁷⁰ Minutes of discussion between Gheorghe Maurer and the Soviet leadership, 2 October 1967, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 82/1967, 122.

¹⁷¹ Gheorghe, ‘Romania’s Nuclear Negotiations Postures’, 32.

¹⁷² Minutes of the discussions during Maurer’s visit in China, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 49/1967, 6 July 1967, 67.

the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which had been concluded between the Soviet and US leaders without any input from their respective allies in August 1963. The Kremlin had consulted with the socialist countries in October 1966. In February 1967, less than a month after the Romanian *Alleingang* on diplomatic relations with the FRG, the Soviet foreign policy official A. Soldatov even consulted Romanian foreign minister Manescu in Bucharest on the latest version of the non-proliferation treaty, while emphasising that 'he was "ready to respond to any question, to register any observation, now or later, and, if you consider it necessary, to explain to other comrades of the Romanian leadership the Soviet position in this problem"'.¹⁷³ He also underlined that the Soviet Union had already supported several proposals on nuclear disarmament, as the Romanians had wished.

The US government had proposed that the current draft of the non-proliferation treaty would be presented at the ENDC in Geneva, of which Romania was a member, but the Soviet leaders had responded that they would only do so "after consultations with the fraternal countries". Soldatov stressed that it "depended only on the Romanian reply", when it would be presented in Geneva.¹⁷⁴ After the Romanian leadership had kept its Soviet comrades in the dark for another ten days on its judgement, since the draft 'needed to be studied profoundly', Soldatov requested another meeting with Manescu in Bucharest, since the other five WP countries had 'already communicated their reply related to the text of the draft treaty on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons'.¹⁷⁵ The Soviet leadership thus went out of its way to include the Romanian comrades in the process, which was a stark contrast with the Chinese disinterest in any Romanian initiative.

Brezhnev also welcomed the Romanian proposal to convene a PCC meeting to discuss the non-proliferation treaty, as he told Ceausescu and Maurer during their bilateral summit meeting in Moscow in March 1967.¹⁷⁶ He emphasised the importance of socialist unity, especially considering the disunity in the West on non-proliferation, where France and the FRG still strongly disagreed with the treaty. In April 1967 Soviet and Romanian foreign ministry officials collaborated in Moscow on a draft treaty, and in May 1967 the Soviet and American leadership represented a new draft treaty at the ENDC disarmament conference in Geneva, which also contained several Romanian proposals. The other WP members were, however, less eager about the Romanian proposal to convene the PCC.¹⁷⁷ Although the Kremlin seemed relieved about the fact that Romania stayed firmly in the WP fold, Romania's allies apparently wanted to

¹⁷³ 'TOP SECRET. Information on discussions with A.A. Soldatov, deputy of the minister of foreign affairs of the USSR, on the problem of nonproliferation of nuclear arms', 27-28 February 1967, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 113/1967, 21. The ENDC had again resumed its work on 21 February 1967.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁷⁵ Meeting between Soldatov and Manescu, 6 March 1967, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 113/1967, 28-29.

¹⁷⁶ 'Minutes of the discussions at the highest level between the CPSU and the RCP, Moscow, 17-18 March 1967', ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 14/1967, 38.

¹⁷⁷ Note on Romanian intervention in the ENDC committee, 22 June 1967, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 104/1967, 66-69.

prevent another Romanian attempt to hijack the WP. Just as the Romanian leadership had prevented Ulbricht from convening PCC meetings three years earlier, so the other NSWP leaders were not enchanted about Romanian attempts to dominate the alliance either.

NON-PROLIFERATION UNDER PRESSURE

The Romanian leaders nevertheless maintained a very ambivalent attitude towards the Kremlin. Despite the Soviet efforts to accommodate Romanian wishes concerning the non-proliferation treaty, the Romanians continued to inform the Chinese about their stance on non-proliferation, while also requesting a summit meeting with the Chinese leadership.¹⁷⁸ At the same time Ceausescu explicitly proposed to convene the PCC to discuss the treaty in a letter on 31 January 1968, two weeks after the ENDC had begun to examine the treaty's new draft.¹⁷⁹ Ceausescu was particularly 'vexed that the question of non-proliferation had not been discussed between the states of the Warsaw Pact,' whereas 'the question had already been discussed several times in the NATO framework'.¹⁸⁰

The other WP members agreed with the East German leaders that they 'did not see its utility', since they 'agreed with the treaty as it is', but they ultimately supported the proposal.¹⁸¹ They probably acted on the same motive as the Hungarian leader Janos Kadar, who did not consider it 'expedient to reject the Romanian comrades' proposal, because it would make it harder to convene the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact on other occasions'.¹⁸² Matters were accordingly turned upside down, with the East German leadership attempting to thwart a PCC meeting proposed by their Romanian comrades. To further pressurise their allies, the

¹⁷⁸ 'Protocol Nr. 8 of the session of the Permanent Presidium of the R.C.P. C.C. of 19 February 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 24/1968, 1-3.

¹⁷⁹ 'Letter by the General Secretary of the PCR (Nicolae Ceauşescu) to the First Secretary of PZPR (Władysław Gomułka) Proposing to Summon the PCC', 31 January 1968, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=18012&navinfo=14465>, accessed 26 August 2013.

¹⁸⁰ 'East German Criticism of the Romanian Amendments to the Soviet Draft of a Non-proliferation Treaty', 4 March 1968, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17992&navinfo=14465>, 13, accessed 26 August 2013.

¹⁸¹ 'Minutes of the extraordinary plenary session of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party', 1 March 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, C 31/1968, 40.

¹⁸² 'Memorandum by the Hungarian Foreign Minister (János Péter) on the Romanian Proposal to Convene the PCC', 5 February 1968, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=18010&navinfo=14465>, 1, accessed 26 August 2013.

Romanians had already 'sharply attacked' the current draft treaty at the ENDC in Geneva on 6 February.¹⁸³

Ceausescu nevertheless had 'strictly necessary amendments' to the current draft of the non-proliferation treaty, which he wanted to discuss before it was presented for approval at the ENDC on 15 March. Apart from including 'a new article' on 'continuing efforts for nuclear disarmament', the Romanian leadership also proposed a conference after five years to analyse 'what has been done' and 'what must be done in future', and a guarantee of nuclear countries not to attack non-nuclear countries. Although Ceausescu was aware that the other WP members would argue that 'everything that has been proposed now is everything that can be obtained', since 'the Americans will not want any more', he insisted that 'we should fight and we should not sign a treaty at any price'. The price for a good treaty was so high that Ceausescu already informed his comrades before the PCC meeting took place that a communiqué would probably be adopted on 'the Vietnamese problem', with which he was planning to agree.¹⁸⁴ After the Romanian delegation had entrenched itself on the Vietnamese issue during the PCC meeting in July 1966, it was now prepared to sacrifice its principled position on Vietnam for the sake of maintaining its own nuclear scope for manoeuvre.

At a meeting of deputy foreign ministers in Berlin on 26-27 February 1968 it became clear that the Romanian delegation would have to fight a hard battle to get anywhere with its proposed amendments on the non-proliferation treaty. All other delegations strongly supported the draft treaty, in which a great number of Romanian amendments were already included, as the Soviet delegate, Kuznetsov, emphasised. The Romanian deputy foreign minister attempted to blackmail his allies into concurring by stating that it was the 'sovereign right of every country' to decide when to present its separate proposals to the ENDC in Geneva. Turning to Kuznetsov, 'as representative of the country, which is the co-president of the Geneva conference', he added that the Romanian leadership would only present its separate proposals to the ENDC on 10 March (after the PCC meeting) if 'the discussion in Geneva continued in a normal fashion', but that it might otherwise decide to do so at an earlier stage. He also suggested that the Bulgarian leadership, which would host the PCC meeting in Sofia, should prepare a declaration on Vietnam, while consulting the Vietnamese. Since the Bulgarians kept a low profile in the WP, and therefore had no enemies, no one objected to this proposal.¹⁸⁵ The meeting of deputy foreign ministers thus amounted to

¹⁸³ 'Memorandum about the conversation between comrade Walter Ulbricht and comrade diplomat Abrassimov', 13 February 1968, SAPMO BArch, DY 30/3390, 41-43.

¹⁸⁴ 'Minutes of the extraordinary plenary session of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party', 1 March 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, C 31/1968, 43, 45.

¹⁸⁵ 'East German Minutes of the Berlin Meeting of Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs Preparatory to the PCC Meeting', 26 February 1968, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=17996&navinfo=14465>, accessed 26 August 2013. Cf. PA AA, MfAA, G-A 552.

nothing more than an exchange of opinions, in which the division of six against one was sealed yet again.

At the same time, the Romanian U-turn on a communist conference had resulted in deteriorating relations with the Kremlin after all. Although the Romanian leadership was disappointed with the Chinese refusal to participate, it was eventually more disillusioned with the consultative meeting about the conference, which took place in Budapest in February-March 1968. Instead of 'an exchange of opinions' the consultative meeting confronted the Romanian leadership with 'a fait accompli', since it '[w]as immediately proposed that the conference would be convened in Moscow, in the autumn of this year', which seemed a pretext to establish the CPSU once again as 'leading centre of the communist movement'.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, the Polish delegation, 'which had been the most harsh', had already attacked the Chinese comrades on the first day, and so did the Soviet and other delegations.¹⁸⁷ The Romanian delegates themselves were particularly violently attacked by a delegate from Syria, who blamed them for being the only communist party to continue siding with Israel after the crisis in the Middle East.¹⁸⁸

The Romanian delegation decided to leave halfway through the conference in protest, which allegedly resulted in a proposal, *inter alia* supported by the Polish and East German delegations, to condemn Romania.¹⁸⁹ According to the Italian communists, who supported the Romanians, 'the Soviets were much more moderate than the East Germans and Poles', which anticipates the East German and Polish hard line in the Prague Spring, which will be discussed in the next chapter. The Italian party leader, Enrico Berlinguer, even contrasted the 'East German-Polish extreme point of view' with 'the Soviet position', which 'proves incapable of assuring mediation and hegemony'.¹⁹⁰ The East German and Polish proactive stance at the consultative conference on 1 March 1965 had thus turned into extremism, whereas Soviet hegemony had been undermined altogether. The consultative meeting, which could have served to conceal the differences between Romania and its WP allies, thus resulted in another split.

ROMANIA UNDER PRESSURE

This debacle hardly boded well for the PCC meeting, which was to take place in Sofia on 6-7 March 1968. The other WP delegations had drawn their conclusions from the

¹⁸⁶ 'Minutes of the extraordinary plenary session of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party', 1 March 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, C 31/1968, 6-7.

¹⁸⁷ 'Minutes of the session of the Permanent Presidium of the R.C.P. C.C. of 29 February 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 30/1968, 4.

¹⁸⁸ 'Meeting of the [PCI] leadership', 15 March 1968, FIG ACP, Leadership, 1968, mf 020, 0596-97.

¹⁸⁹ Letter from RCP CC to PCI [Partito Comunista Italiano] CC, 5 March 1968, FIG APC, mf 0552, 2296.

¹⁹⁰ 'Meeting of the [PCI] leadership', 15 March 1968, FIG APC, Leadership, 1968, mf 020, 0596-97.

PCC meeting in Bucharest in July 1966, and they had carefully studied the Romanian proposed amendments to the non-proliferation treaty in order to refute them with success. The East German leadership was particularly worried about the fact that the Romanian amendments could thwart the non-proliferation treaty altogether, since that would lead to 'a strengthened position of Bonn', which 'attempted to prevent the conclusion of such a treaty by all means'. The treaty was of particular importance to the GDR, because it would mean the final blow to MLF, and therefore weaken the position of the FRG. The Romanian proposal that nuclear powers should never attack a nonnuclear power would nevertheless undermine East German security, since 'this guarantee would also [apply] to those states, on whose territories nuclear weapons are stationed', such as West Germany.¹⁹¹ The other WP members agreed with this analysis, and Brezhnev even emphasised in a private conversation with Ceausescu that 'West Germany would thank us', if Ceausescu's proposals were accepted.¹⁹²

During the actual meeting the 'six' attempted to avoid antagonising the Romanian delegation by emphasising that their proposals 'correspond to the interests of the socialist countries', but are 'maximalist and unrealistic, because there is no way that the other side could be compelled to accept them'. Brezhnev even repeated time and again that a lot of Romanian proposals had already been included in the draft treaty. The atmosphere nevertheless soon turned sour, since Ceausescu declared that the Romanian leaders 'would present their proposals (...) in Geneva, (...) at the forthcoming session of the UN, in their whole foreign policy and in their public programme as well', whereas the 'six' feared that the amendments 'could lead to the postponement or even failure of the treaty'. The Romanian dissidence thus threatened to undermine a treaty, which the other WP members considered 'a victory for the socialist states, primarily for the Soviet Union, and a new phase in our offensive against imperialism's positions'.¹⁹³ Not only had the treaty been negotiated at length with all WP members, but the Soviet leadership had also succeeded in drafting a treaty that was acceptable to the US and most of its allies, even though it would definitively prevent any projects on nuclear sharing, such as MLF. The treaty thus represented a peaceful solution to an issue that had caused so much unrest in the WP in the first half of the sixties.

The reasons why 'the six' deemed the Romanian proposals 'unacceptable in essence and unrealistic in terms of the current international situation' were carefully

¹⁹¹ 'East German Evaluation of the Romanian Position on the Soviet Proposal of a Non-proliferation Treaty', 26 February 1968, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=17994&navinfo=14465>, 2, accessed 26 August 2013.

¹⁹² 'Discussion between comrades Nicolae Ceausescu and Ion Gheorghe Maurer, and comrades Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin, 6 March 1968', ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 38/1968, 115.

¹⁹³ 'Report to the Hungarian Party Politburo and Council of Ministers on the PCC Meeting', 9 March 1968, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=17967&navinfo=14465>, 4, accessed 26 August 2013.

analysed in a Bulgarian report.¹⁹⁴ It called the Romanian proposal on disarmament ‘unrealistic’, since it ‘goes beyond the scope and goals of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty’. Zhivkov shrewdly noted that many of the ‘Romanian’ proposals ‘were borrowed in full from the Soviet treaty on complete disarmament and other Soviet proposals’, which the Soviets had drafted twelve years ago.¹⁹⁵ As with the Romanian proposal to dissolve military blocks, the Romanian leadership had once again appropriated anachronistic Soviet proposals to defeat the Kremlin with its own weapons.

Moreover, the Romanian proposal ‘to limit the area of inspections to those states where a possibility exists of transferring nuclear energy from peaceful to military purposes’ would imply that ‘some states could avoid the controls of the International Atomic Energy Agency and begin nuclear-weapons production’.¹⁹⁶ The proposal to hold a conference every five years to review the treaty, including enabling countries to withdraw from the treaty by announcing ‘the extreme circumstances that threaten its interests’ to the UN ‘would bring considerable instability to the treaty’. Under the pretext of ‘sovereign equality’ and ‘non-interference in domestic affairs’, the Romanian proposals on inspections and on opting out of the treaty clearly served to keep all options open for developing a Romanian nuclear programme unhampered.¹⁹⁷ It was no coincidence that ‘the Romanian comrades’ approach lends support to the opponents of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty’.¹⁹⁸ As the Romanian leadership itself put it, they ‘should not sign a treaty at any price’.¹⁹⁹

This time ‘the six’ were resolved not to yield to Romanian pressure. The Romanian leaders might have concluded from the Bucharest meeting in July 1966 that they could force their allies into submission, but the other WP members had also become more self-conscious about dealing with Romanian dissidence. The Romanian ‘Alleingang’ on nuclear issues exhausted its allies’ patience. Gomulka and Zhivkov even suggested expelling Romania from the WP in order to ‘get rid of the factors impeding our organisation’s work’. ‘The six’ now decided to live up to their threats from July 1966 by signing a declaration *without* Romania, in which they strongly supported the

¹⁹⁴ ‘Draft Commentary on Romanian Position at the PCC Meeting to the CC of the Bulgarian Communist Party Plenary Meeting’, 6 March 1968, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17988&navinfo=14465>, 8, accessed 26 August 2013.

¹⁹⁵ ‘Minutes of the Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party - Report on the PCC Meeting by the First Secretary (Todor Zhivkov)’, 14 March 1968, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17966&navinfo=14465>, 7, accessed 26 August 2013.

¹⁹⁶ ‘Draft Commentary on Romanian Position’, 6 March 1968, PHP, 7.

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Gheorghe, ‘Atomic Maverick’, 390.

¹⁹⁸ ‘Draft commentary on Romanian position’, 6 March 1968, PHP, 8.

¹⁹⁹ ‘Minutes of the extraordinary plenary session of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party’, 1 March 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 31/1968, 45.

Soviet draft for a non-proliferation treaty.²⁰⁰ Although they did not sign the declaration in the name of the Warsaw Pact, but as six individual states, it clearly signalled to the West that the vast majority of the alliance did *not* support the Romanian amendments. Meanwhile, the non-proliferation discussion had eclipsed the other issues to such an extent that a declaration on Vietnam was discussed and signed during a break. The same applied to the communiqué, which only mentioned that non-proliferation had been discussed in an atmosphere that was ‘frank and comradely’.²⁰¹ Or, in the words of the Hungarian delegation, ‘the atmosphere at the meeting was not exactly like a wedding feast’.²⁰²

It was, of course, a blow to the WP that the disagreements between Romania and the rest were made public for the first time in the history of the alliance, but the declaration of ‘the six’ had also served to undermine the Romanian position. Although Ceausescu triumphantly stated upon his return that the PCC ‘must be satisfied with this role, and not the role up to now, to approve everything the Soviet Union does’, his allies were not at all pleased with the way Ceausescu intended to undermine everything the SU did.²⁰³ Without any Soviet pressure the other NSWP members rallied behind the Kremlin in supporting a treaty that they genuinely deemed to be in their interest. According to the Hungarian premier Jeno Fock the separate declaration might enable ‘the six’ to ‘have a greater impact on the Romanians (...) without causing a schism in the Warsaw Treaty’.²⁰⁴ In the eyes of the other WP members, it was not the Soviet leadership, but the Romanian leadership that threatened to undermine their interests. On a great number of issues the interests of the communist countries coincided, and the maverick position of Romania was perhaps a boon to the West, but a nuisance to the East.

The main gain of the PCC meeting ironically consisted in the fact that ‘the six’ had found a way to bypass Romanian dissidence. Ceausescu was, accordingly, not amused when Zhivkov told him about the separate declaration.²⁰⁵ The discussion in which the six had agreed on the declaration even went so smoothly that Kadar suggested that ‘at some point, under calmer circumstances, when daily matters are not overwhelming, the first secretaries and prime ministers of the six countries should get together for the sake of unfettered, comradely talks’.²⁰⁶ The Prague Spring was, at that

²⁰⁰ ‘Statement Supporting Soviet Draft Non-Proliferation Treaty’, 9 March 1968, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=17974&navinfo=14465>, accessed 26 August 2013.

²⁰¹ ‘Communiqué on Soviet Draft Non-Proliferation Treaty’, 9 March 1968, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=17970&navinfo=14465>, accessed 26 August 2013.

²⁰² ‘Minutes of the Hungarian Party Politburo Session’, 8 March 1968, PHP, 4.

²⁰³ ‘Protocol Nr. 10 of the session of the Executive Committee of the R.C.P. on 8 March 1968’, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 34/1968, 11.

²⁰⁴ ‘Minutes of the Hungarian Party Politburo Session’, 8 March 1968, PHP, 5.

²⁰⁵ ‘Note about a conversation between comrade N. Ceausescu and T. Zhivkov on the evening of 7.III.1968 (Sofia)’, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 38/1968, 91.

²⁰⁶ ‘Report to the Hungarian Party Politburo’, 9 March 1968, PHP, 8.

stage, no topic for discussion at all, and the new Czechoslovak party leader Alexander Dubcek was an undisputed part of 'the six'. Although Kadar suggested meeting no later than June, the next meeting would, in fact, take place much sooner and under very different circumstances. But by that stage, 'the six' would have turned into 'the five'.

Meanwhile, Ceausescu already sensed that Dubcek might be a potential ally, and reported to the Politburo that '[t]he discussions with the Czech were good'.²⁰⁷ In a private conversation during the conference Dubcek had expressed his regret that he had been unable to meet Ceausescu earlier, since he had been 'greatly occupied by our internal problems', which was the only reference to the Prague Spring. He added that the Romanian proposals were 'right, rational', but that he 'feared that we cannot obtain more from the Americans', and that he preferred 'such a treaty instead of nothing'. After Dubcek had confessed that he 'did not know those problems too well', Ceausescu inspired Dubcek with doubts by arguing that the American interest in concluding the treaty should be used to improve it still more.²⁰⁸ The Czechoslovak report nevertheless strongly condemned the Romanian 'stubborn and unrealistic attitude', which lacked any 'willingness, no matter how small, to find a common standpoint with the [other] socialist countries regarding the treaty'.²⁰⁹ At this stage 'the Czech' still intended to close ranks with the other five against Romania.

At the last moment the Romanian leadership decided to join 'the six'. After it had continued to argue that the treaty did not cater for the 'interests of non-nuclear states' during further negotiations at the UN, it radically changed its course in June 1968, when it became clear that an overwhelming majority of members supported the treaty.²¹⁰ The Romanian delegation suddenly contributed constructively to the negotiations, and attempted to pretend 'that Romania was never against the treaty, but had an active part in its perfection and improvement'.²¹¹ When the conclusion of the non-proliferation treaty had become irreversible, the Romanian leaders wanted to share in its success. Unlike their French soul-mates, the Romanian delegation ultimately decided to sign the non-proliferation treaty on 1 July 1968, together with sixty-two other states.²¹²

²⁰⁷ 'Protocol Nr. 10 of the session of the Executive Committee of the R.C.P. on 8 March 1968', ANIC, RCP CC, C, 34/1968, 11.

²⁰⁸ 'Note on a discussion between comrade N. Ceausescu and A. Dubcek in Sofia', 6-7 March 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 38/1968, 92.

²⁰⁹ 'Czechoslovak Report on the PCC Meeting', 26 March 1968, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17969&navinfo=14465>, 4-5, accessed 26 August 2013.

²¹⁰ Diplomatic report from Bucharest, SAPMO-BArch, 23 May 1968, DY 30/IVA2/20/374, 322.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 20 June 1968, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/374, 419.

²¹² Gavin, 'Nuclear Proliferation', 410.

CONCLUSION: ROMANIA RECONSIDERED

The Sino-Soviet split initially also provided the Romanian leadership with a useful instrument to increase its scope for manoeuvre in the second half of the sixties. Although the attempts to mediate between the Chinese and Soviet leaders in 1964 had failed, the period directly after Khrushchev's ouster offered the Romanian leadership a new window of opportunity to explore the Sino-Soviet split in its own interests: since Brezhnev and Kosygin hoped to repair Sino-Soviet relations, they had to tolerate the fact that Sino-Romanian relations could be cultivated at Soviet expense. Meanwhile the Romanian leadership could defend its own interests under the guise of defending those of the Chinese: thus the Chinese stance on non-proliferation conveniently served the Romanian purpose of keeping all options open in terms of its nuclear policy. Hiding behind the Chinese back, the Romanian leaders succeeded in preventing a declaration on a non-proliferation treaty during the PCC meeting in 1965, which would also undermine *their* interests. With the Sino-Soviet split as leverage Ceausescu had, accordingly, still more cards to play in the WP than his colleague De Gaulle had in NATO.

By expanding their own room for manoeuvre the Romanian leaders nevertheless decreased the manoeuvrability of their allies, who had their own reasons for supporting the non-proliferation treaty that Romania blocked. Gomulka was particularly active to prevent Romanian independence from turning into everyone else's dependence, and refused to yield to Romanian pressure. He also took the lead in the meeting about the editorial meeting for the international communist conference on 1 March one day after the PCC meeting, and successfully isolated Romania. This meeting was a precedent for further moves in which 'the six' would side with their Polish allies against Romania.²¹³ The Kremlin seemed to have little control over this tendency, although the Polish initiatives generally suited Soviet interests, too.

The Romanian attempt to use the WP as a Chinese transmission belt coincided with their drive to expand the WP to include Asian countries as observers, so that the Romanian leadership could build a grander coalition. Although the Romanian leaders had decided to cultivate relations with Asia since their 'Declaration of Independence' in April 1964, the Asian countries proved not quite so responsive: the Chinese leadership, for one, was not interested in participating in WP sessions, and in that respect the Romanian courting of Asia was to no avail. The same applied to the Romanian attempt to restore Albania to its original status within the alliance. When the Albanian leadership made its participation in the WP conditional upon absurd requests, the Romanian leaders were forced to distance themselves from their Albanian allies.

²¹³ See for the opposing interests of the Romanian and Polish leaders in the ensuing period (1968-1977): A. Burakowski, *Poland and Romania. The Loyal Republic and the Maverick*, CWIHP E-Dossier No. 39 (Washington, 2013), <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/e-dossier-no-39poland-and-romania-the-loyal-republic-and-the-maverick>, accessed 24 September 2013.

Again the Polish allies were the first to push Romania to support a united stance on the Albanian question.

The Vietnam War, too, complicated Romania's 'neutral' stance within the Sino-Soviet split. The option of mediating in the Vietnam War was initially appropriated by the Polish comrades, who did not have to worry about antagonising China. Meanwhile, China's refusal to coordinate assistance to Vietnam frustrated even its Asian allies, and the Romanian leadership was, in fact, closer to the Soviet position than it dared to admit. This enabled Ceausescu to collaborate with the Kremlin on a Vietnam Declaration in preparation of the PCC meeting in July 1966. Since the meeting took place just after Zhou Enlai had visited Romania in June 1966, the Soviet leadership was eager to accommodate Romania's wishes, and to ensure that it would remain firmly in the Warsaw Pact fold.

Gomulka was, however, determined not to allow his Romanian comrades to dominate another PCC meeting, and managed to create a situation in which all other WP members finally supported the Polish declaration. He had accordingly thwarted the Romanian-Soviet collaboration by isolating Romania instead, and he had regained the initiative on Vietnam. Although the Romanian leadership considered the meeting a great success, since it had ultimately forced Gomulka to omit a Polish amendment, the other WP comrades began to muse on effective ways to neutralise Romanian dissent. The PCC meeting had witnessed a sharp divide in which 'one' maverick attempted to pressurise its 'six' allies into submission. The Romanian leaders tried to paralyse the WP in the way China attempted to stultify the Communist Movement, by undermining its allies' interests under the pretext of their own sovereignty and independence.

Once the Sino-Soviet Split was beyond repair, it could, however, no longer be used as leverage over the Soviet comrades. With the advent of the Cultural Revolution in August 1966 Romanian foreign policy made another U-turn. Ceausescu and his cronies suddenly backed an initiative on convening a conference on Vietnam, and blamed their Chinese and other Asian allies for leaving the Romanians alone to do all the hard work. It now seemed to dawn on the Romanian leadership that its Eastern European allies were in fact more reliable than the Asian ones. The *flexible* foreign policy, of which the Romanian leaders were so proud, thus easily turned into an *inconsistent* one, and the scope for manoeuvre, which they so relished, robbed them of a rudder to steady their course: manoeuvrability turned into vulnerability.

The Romanians even decided to again adopt the posture of mediator, both in order to maintain its scope for manoeuvre vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in the shadow of the Sino-Soviet split, and so as to raise their status in the eyes of the American administration, with whom they were eager to strike a nuclear deal. The Romanian balancing act between the Soviet Union, China and the USA seemed to become increasingly difficult to sustain. The Soviet Union and Romania had opposing interests: whereas the Kremlin wanted a united front at times of crisis, Romania strove to break free. Although Romania succeeded to do so both in terms of diplomatic relations with

the FRG, and the relations with Israel in the wake of the Six-Day War, it increasingly ran the risk of isolation. The foundation of the Interkit in December 1967 even institutionalised Romanian isolation.

The Romanian reorientation towards Eastern Europe culminated in the Romanian initiative to convene a PCC meeting on non-proliferation in 1967. Although De Gaulle had withdrawn France from the integrated structures of NATO, Ceausescu seemed to follow the opposite course. After the Romanian leadership had followed the Chinese example in blocking as many meetings as it possibly could, it had obviously begun to see the benefits of an alliance in which it could assert its independence so successfully that it had become a boon for its foreign policy. This time the other WP members were, however, not so eager to endow the Romanian leadership with a platform for its maverick role, and it took the Romanian leaders almost a year to gain their allies' consent.

The Romanian strategy to block the convention of meetings had thus turned against them, and 'the six' were determined not to allow the Romanians to hijack the meeting as they had done in July 1966. The PCC finally convened in March 1968, and ended in a defeat for Romania. This time 'the six' closed ranks and decided to declare their support for non-proliferation without Romania. This was a bold move, in which 'the six' unprecedentedly took a public stance against Romania. The Romanian leadership was, accordingly, already excluded from decision-making before the Prague Spring began to play a role in the Soviet bloc. Although Romania could be independent with impunity, it could no longer do so within the WP.

The Romanian signature on the non-proliferation treaty in July 1968 therefore does not testify to any Soviet pressure, but to a genuine desire to avoid further isolation. Moreover, the evolution of the non-proliferation treaty illustrated a new Course in Soviet foreign policy: whereas the NSWP allies had not been involved at all in the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty that was concluded in August 1963, they had been elaborately consulted on non-proliferation. Since the actual treaty contained a great number of Romanian proposals, Romania would undermine its own interests if it refused to sign it at the last moment. The Romanian signature should therefore be regarded as an acknowledgement of its input, rather than a confirmation of Soviet hegemony.

Contrary to conventional wisdom Romanian pressure was considered a much greater threat to the NSWP members than Soviet hegemony. Although the Kremlin is usually depicted as the autocratic hegemon, one should bear in mind that on many issues Soviet and Eastern European interests coincided, whereas the Romanian position was a genuine anomaly. No other Eastern European country apart from Albania prioritised contacts with Asia over Eastern European contacts, nor did any other NSWP country share an interest in preventing non-proliferation. Democratic centralism turned upside down resulted in a tendency that was also far from democratic, and according to which the minority attempted to dictate the majority.

Romanian interests were often diametrically opposed to NSWP interests; where most NSWP members relished cooperation within the WP as a safe bulwark in the Cold War inside and outside the communist world, the Romanian leadership cultivated its position as free rider by using its 'independence' within the WP to court unlikely allies in Asia and the West, while siding with its WP allies when it feared isolation.

The Romanian quest for independence should accordingly not be examined by merely analysing Romanian-Soviet relations, since they do not constitute the whole story. In fact, the Soviet leadership was often more amenable to Romanian wishes than its WP allies. Although the Kremlin was keen not to lose an ally, the other allies feared to be stifled by Romania's quest for independence. The real freedom fighter in this respect was Gomulka, not Ceausescu, since he did his allies the favour of withstanding Romanian pressure. The Romanian 'Alleingang' was a much greater threat to the NSWP members' interests than the Kremlin's authority, which was time and again undermined by the Romanian comrades. The Romanian leaders only did their allies an inadvertent favour: they compelled them to define their own stance in the WP more clearly in order to withstand Romanian dissent. Thus they ultimately emancipated their allies at their own expense: by 1968 they had to choose between isolation or integration.

Dissent again proved more dynamic than is often assumed. While paralysing the WP on the surface, the Romanian dissent in fact spurred the other WP leaders into action so as to prevent it from eclipsing *their* foreign policy goals. Whereas the Romanian leaders played chess on too many boards simultaneously, the Romanian dissent compelled the other WP members to play chess with increasing skill. Although Ulbricht was checkmated on the German Question in the previous chapter, Gomulka occasionally succeeded in calling the Romanians' bluff in terms of the Sino-Soviet split. Romania's position as maverick should therefore be studied within the context of the Warsaw Pact, since that sheds an altogether different and far more realistic light on its *modus operandi*. Romanian independence left little scope for the independence of others, and therefore had to be isolated. One should, therefore, avoid the trap of regarding Romanian foreign policy up to March 1968 through the lens of the Prague Spring: Ceausescu was by no means a hero before he got the unique opportunity to defy the other WP allies by siding with 'the Czech'. The Prague Spring may have come as a godsend for the Romanian leadership, since it enabled it to turn its isolation once again into independence.

III

CRISIS AND CONSOLIDATION



Nicolae Ceausescu (right) on his visit to Alexander Dubcek (left) from 16-17 August 1968.

ANIC, fototeca online a comunismului românesc, photo #G539, 202/1968

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cd/IICCR_G539_Ceausescu_Dubcek_Svoboda.jpg

6

**THE LIMITS OF EMANCIPATION:
THE PRAGUE SPRING**

We consider it necessary to put an end to the interference in the affairs of other states, of other parties, once and for all, in order to establish relations among socialist countries, among communist parties, on a truly Marxist-Leninist footing.¹

Ceausescu's speech after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, 21 August 1968

In the second half of the 1960s the Warsaw Pact threatened to be paralysed by the division between the 'one' (Romania) and 'the six' (the rest). The dynamics between the 'six' on the one hand and Romania on the other took an altogether different turn in the course of 1968. Although Romania was clearly isolated during the PCC meeting in Sofia in March 1968, since it was the only country at that meeting, which did not support the non-proliferation treaty, there was another country that tended to develop into an anomaly within the WP: Czechoslovakia. However emphatically the new Czechoslovak leader, Alexander Dubcek, still stuck to the position of the other five at the beginning of March 1968, the Czechoslovak leadership had begun to develop its own idiosyncratic kind of communism from its plenum in January 1968 onwards, which culminated in a process of internal reforms, which is usually known as 'the Prague Spring'.

In this chapter the Prague Spring will be analysed from the perspective of the multilateral decision-making of the five WP countries that eventually agreed to invade Czechoslovakia to put an end to the reforms on 21 August 1968. This chapter will accordingly distinguish itself from the previous ones, since it deals with most of the protagonists from the Warsaw Pact, but not explicitly with the institution in itself. An understanding of the multilateral decision-making during the Prague Spring is, however, essential in gauging the evolution of the WP in the period afterwards, and a detailed examination of the decision-making might also serve to debunk conventional wisdoms on the alleged role of the alliance in this critical period.

¹ Ceausescu's speech, 21 August 1968, FIG APC, Czechoslovakia 1968, mf 0552, 2378.

In the historiography to date the international ramifications of the Prague Spring are usually viewed from the perspective of Czechoslovak-Soviet relations. Thus the American historian William Shawcross emphasises in his biography of Dubcek the 'wrath of the Kremlin' in order to explain the motives for the invasion on 21 August 1968, and Kieran Williams refers in his iconic monograph on the Prague Spring to 'the Soviet decision' to intervene.² The same applies to the frequently cited monograph by Philip Windsor and Adam Roberts on *Czechoslovakia 1968*, written directly after the intervention, which persistently refers to the 'Soviet invasion'.³ Meanwhile, the role of the other four socialist countries (the GDR, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria) in the decision-making is conspicuous in its absence, even though archival evidence suggests that these allies played an important role in the final decision to intervene.

A tendency has, however, developed quite recently to view the decision-making in a somewhat broader perspective, particularly in some excellent articles by the Harvard historian Mark Kramer.⁴ Although Kramer views the Prague Spring from an Eastern European perspective, he still concentrates on the Soviet view. The same applies to the monograph, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine*, from the American foreign policy analyst Matthew Ouimet, who traces the loss of Soviet control from the Prague Spring to the Gorbachev era.⁵ Recently, more emphasis has been placed on the role of the Soviet allies, most notably in the thought-provoking volume, *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion in Czechoslovakia*.⁶ Most articles nevertheless concentrate on the invasion from the perspective of one particular country, such as the GDR or Hungary.⁷ The Polish perspective is omitted, but can be found in Antony Kemp-Welch's monograph, *The History of Poland*.⁸ The *multilateral* angle on the invasion is, accordingly, not addressed in the abovementioned volume, since the role of each country is treated separately. This perhaps explains why its title contains a questionable assumption: it remains to be seen whether the invasion in Czechoslovakia was in fact a

² W. Shawcross, *Dubcek: Dubcek and Czechoslovakia, 1968-1990* (London, 1990), and K. Williams, *The Prague Spring and its Aftermath* (Cambridge 1997).

³ P. Windsor and A. Roberts, *Czechoslovakia 1968. Reform, Repression and Resistance* (London, 1969).

⁴ M. Kramer, 'The Kremlin, the Prague Spring, and the Brezhnev Doctrine', in V. Tismaneanu, *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, and Utopia* (Budapest and New York, 2010), 276-362; and 'Die Sowjetunion, der Warschauer Pakt und blockinterne Krisen während der Breznev-Ära', in T. Diedrich et al. (eds.), *Der Warschauer Pakt: Von der Gründung bis zum Zusammenbruch 1955 bis 1991* (Berlin, 2009), 274-336; and 'The Prague Spring and the Soviet Invasion in Historical Perspective', in G. Bischof et al. (eds.), *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968* (New York and Plymouth, 2010), 35-58; and 'New Sources on the 1968 Invasion in Czechoslovakia', in J. G. Hershberg (ed.), *Inside the Warsaw Pact*, CWIHP Bulletin No. 2 (Washington, 1992), 1, 4-13; and 'The Prague Spring and the Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia: New Interpretations', in J. G. Hershberg, (ed.), *From the Russian Archives*, CWIHP Bulletin No. 3 (Washington, 1993), 2-13, 54-55.

⁵ M. J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill, 2003).

⁶ Bischof et al. (eds.), *The Prague Spring*.

⁷ M. Wilke, 'Ulbricht, East Germany and the Prague Spring', and C. Békés, 'Hungary and the Prague Spring', in Bischof et al. (eds.), *The Prague Spring*.

⁸ A. Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism. A Cold War History* (Cambridge, 2008).

'Warsaw Pact invasion', as the title suggests and as is often thought.⁹ Although recent historiography has somewhat nuanced the Soviet perspective, it has failed to distinguish between multilateral decision-making by several WP countries, and Warsaw Pact decision-making.¹⁰

This distinction is, however, crucial. The Warsaw Pact owes much of its reputation as a Soviet instrument to its alleged involvement in the invasion in Czechoslovakia. This does not only apply to historiography, but also to politics at the time. Immediately after the invasion in Czechoslovakia, American president Lyndon Johnson and his top aides assumed in a National Security Council meeting that the invasion was conducted by the Warsaw Pact, and concluded that '[t]here is a great difference between the Warsaw Pact and NATO with respect to internal affairs of members', since 'NATO is operative only in the event of international aggression and grants no rights to a member to intervene in the affairs of another'.¹¹ An analysis of the hypothetical role of the WP in the Prague Spring is therefore crucial in order to examine whether the invasion in Czechoslovakia verily revealed a fundamental distinction between NATO and the WP or not.

The recent volume of primary sources edited by the Czech historian Jaromír Navrátil has contributed a great deal to increasing the knowledge of the decision-making concerning the invasion in Czechoslovakia, by making crucial sources available from all countries involved in the intervention. Navrátil's explanatory chapters also focus on the decision-making from a multilateral perspective, and the blurb of the book even promises the reader an insight into the 'multilateral sessions of the Warsaw Pact'.¹² It is again assumed that the decision-making is conducted within the framework of the WP, even though the sources in the book itself contradict such an assumption. Moreover, the volume fails to fulfil all its promises, since none of the sources stem from the Romanian archives, even though the book claims a perspective from *all* Warsaw Pact countries. The Romanian angle is, however, covered by the Romanian historian Mihai Retegan, but his monograph focuses almost exclusively on the Romanian perspective on the Prague Spring, and fails to address the interplay of the Romanian attitude with the multilateral decision-making.¹³

This chapter will therefore shed a new light on the decision-making concerning the invasion in Czechoslovakia, by assessing it from a multilateral perspective, while

⁹ Cf. for this term *inter alia*: J. Suri, 'The Promise and Failure of 'Developed Socialism': The Soviet 'Thaw' and the Crucible of the Prague Spring', *Contemporary European History* 15:2 (2006), 150, and A. Kemp-Welch, 'Eastern Europe: Stalinism to Solidarity', in M. Leffler and O.A. Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume II: Crisis and Détente* (Cambridge, 2010), 228.

¹⁰ Even Mark Kramer regularly refers to the 'series of conclaves of the Warsaw Pact leaders'. See e.g.: 'The Kremlin, the Prague Spring, and the Brezhnev Doctrine', 314.

¹¹ 'Summary Notes of the 590th Meeting of the National Security Council', 4 September 1968, in J. Navrátil et al. (eds.), *The Prague Spring '68* (Budapest and New York, 2006), 494.

¹² J. Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*.

¹³ M. Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring: Romanian Foreign Policy and the Crisis of Czechoslovakia, 1968* (Oxford, 2000, 2008).

also examining what role the Warsaw Pact actually played in the decision-making. The multilateral decision-making of the five countries that ultimately invaded will be compared and contrasted with the usual procedures for decision-making *within* the Warsaw Pact, to conclude whether the alliance was actually used as an instrument to decide on and justify the invasion. This chapter will also assess to what extent Czechoslovakia's attitude to the WP was a criterion in the decision-making, while questioning why the Czechoslovak reforms were considered a greater threat than the Romanian process of 'emancipation'. By specifically analysing the Romanian reaction to the Prague Spring, its attitude during this period will for the first time be explicitly contrasted to that of its allies. In order to do so, the sources from the Romanian and East German archives will be complemented with those of all other WP members from Navrátil's volume. The emphatically multilateral perspective on the Prague Spring thus serves to address a glaring gap in historiography, whereas the treatment of this period within the context of this book prevents it from discussing it in a vacuum, as is often done. While analysing the attitude of all WP members, including Romania, to the Prague Spring, this chapter serves to defy conventional wisdoms on the alleged role of the WP in the decision-making.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The year 1968 is often considered the year 'that rocked the world'.¹⁴ Students revolted in West Germany, Italy, and France, the American civil rights activist Martin Luther King was murdered, and American prestige was under pressure after the broadly televised North Vietnamese Tet Offensive in the Vietnam War.¹⁵ Revolutionary tendencies spread beyond the Iron Curtain,¹⁶ where both students and the society at large 'began to challenge Cold War certainties.'¹⁷ This process erupted in Czechoslovakia, where the Stalinist leader Antonin Novotny had led the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCz) since Stalin's death in 1953, while resisting the tendencies in Eastern Europe towards de-Stalinisation. His regime had, as such, turned into an anachronism, and criticism on Novotny and his autocratic way of leading the party rose within the CPCz, and within Czechoslovak society at large. Like in Western Europe, students were particularly critical of the establishment, and the Slovak first secretary Alexander Dubcek echoed their concerns within the CPCz.

The more reform-minded CPCz members therefore centred around Dubcek, who clashed severely with Novotny during a CPCz CC plenum from 30-31 October

¹⁴ M. Kurlansky, *1968: The Year that Rocked the World* (New York, 2004). Cf. C. Fink et al. (eds.), *1968: The World Transformed* (Cambridge, 1998), 193-216.

¹⁵ See J. Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Massachusetts, 2003) for a lucid analysis of the 1960s on a global scale (162-212).

¹⁶ R. Gildea et al. (eds.), *Europe's 1968. Voices of Revolt* (Oxford, 2013).

¹⁷ Kemp-Welch, *Poland*, 146.

1967, where Dubcek promoted equal rights for Czechs and Slovaks, a more democratic right of political leadership, and a division of the posts of first secretary and president, which Novotny held simultaneously.¹⁸ In a desperate attempt to remain in power, Novotny invited Brezhnev over to Prague in early December, but Brezhnev's exclamation 'this is your affair' did little to consolidate Novotny's power.¹⁹ After Novotny also lost support within the CPCz, he was asked to step down as first secretary during a CPCz CC meeting from 19-21 December 1967.

During the meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which lasted from 3-5 January 1968, Dubcek was elected first secretary of the CPCz.²⁰ At the January plenum, where Dubcek succeeded Novotny as first secretary, an Action Programme was nevertheless launched, which would pave the way for democratisation within the party and within society. This heralded the beginning of a period of liberalisation: the 'Prague Spring'. United in their criticism of Novotny, Dubcek's supporters nevertheless held conflicting interests, supported reforms in different degrees, and hardly formed a stable faction.²¹ The political foundation for the reforms was, accordingly, thin.

Czechoslovakia was, however, not the only country in Eastern Europe that was subject to reforms in 1968. Hungary had also embarked on a programme of reforms at the beginning of 1968, when Kadar's 'New Economic Mechanism' was approved, which heralded a process of economic decentralisation to remedy the inefficient system of central planning, and unprecedentedly introduced a degree of free market economy.²² It was, therefore, in Kadar's interest that the reforms within Czechoslovakia would not spin out of control, since he did not want his own reforms to arouse suspicion within Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, the Romanian leader Ceausescu greatly valued the Czechoslovak process of reforms exactly because they *could* spin out of control: he considered this a way to break through Romanian isolation, because it could lead to a cleavage between Czechoslovakia and the rest of the WP.²³

Gomulka, Ulbricht, and Zhivkov had indeed no sympathy for reforms at all, and watched the developments in Czechoslovakia with great apprehension, out of fear lest the reform-minded spirit might infect the people in their countries. The Polish leader, Gomulka, already warned Dubcek on 7 February that the Czechoslovak

¹⁸ See 'Speeches by Alexander Dubcek and Antonín Novotný at the CPCz CC Plenum', 30-31 October 1967, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 13-17.

¹⁹ Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 7.

²⁰ See 'Resolution of the CPCz CC Plenum, January 5, 1968, Electing Alexander Dubcek as First Secretary', in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 34-36.

²¹ Shawcross, *Dubcek*, 121.

²² See Békés, 'Hungary and the Prague Spring', 371.

²³ See for the link between "full solidarity with the fraternal Czechoslovak people" and the Romanian desire to dissolve the WP e.g. L. Betea, 'Primăvara de la Praga, vara de la București', in L. Betea et al. (eds.), *21 august 1968. Apoteoză lui Ceaușescu* (Bucharest, 2009), 40.

reforms could be ‘a catalyst for further protests in Poland.’²⁴ When student protests erupted in Warsaw in March 1968, while the Polish leadership was at the PCC meeting in Sofia, Polish students did, indeed, chant ‘Poland awaits her own Dubcek’.²⁵ This was particularly painful to Gomulka, who was genuinely popular when he came to power in October 1956. Despite Gomulka’s initial reputation as a reformer within Eastern Europe, the Polish protests were quenched with force. Gomulka thus sacrificed a potential reform process for the consolidation of his power, which was a choice that Dubcek would refuse to make.

Dubcek was, however, confronted with a larger challenge than Gomulka. In the course of March the CPCz Presidium had begun to abolish censorship, freedom of speech had radicalised the mass media, and Novotny had been forced to resign as president by public protests from the citizens. Through the liberalisation of the media, Dubcek was, accordingly, not only under pressure from thousands of university students, as in Poland, but from the Czechoslovak society at large. According to the British historian William Shawcross, Czechoslovakia ‘underwent, in 1968, the emotional breakdown that Hungary and Poland had endured twelve years before’, with the difference that ‘[i]n those twelve years enormous frustration had built up’, which would have confronted any leader of the reform movement with an almost impossible task.²⁶

When Dubcek subsequently failed to stem the demands of ‘an ever more excited and extremist public’,²⁷ the leaders of the SU, the GDR, Poland, Bulgaria and Hungary decided to offer ‘fraternal assistance’ in the form of a military intervention on 21 August 1968. This invasion was retrospectively justified with the so-called ‘Brezhnev doctrine’, according to which a socialist country was only sovereign to the extent that it was socialist. Foreign intervention was, as such, legitimate, if socialism was under threat. As Mastny puts it, this doctrine ‘merely expressed verbally what the Kremlin had practised before – but would never again practise in the region’,²⁸ and explains inter alia the Soviet invasion in Hungary in 1956. Although WP troops had already been stationed in the GDR, Poland, and Hungary, they had so far been absent from Czechoslovakia. Novotny had, however, agreed to the placement of Soviet nuclear warheads on Czechoslovak soil ‘under strict Soviet control’ in 1965, but due to delays the Czechoslovak storage sites had not been completed yet.²⁹ This also put Czechoslovakia geopolitically in a vulnerable position: it was the only WP country whose border with the FRG was fully exposed.

²⁴ Kemp-Welch, *Poland*, 152.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Shawcross, *Dubcek*, 121.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 131.

²⁸ V. Mastny, ‘Was 1968 a Strategic Watershed of the Cold War?’, in *Diplomatic History* 29:1 (2005), 176.

²⁹ Kramer, ‘The Kremlin’, 309. See also Chapter 4 of this book, 156-157.

THE SIX IN DRESDEN

Dubcek understood the importance of support from his socialist allies from the outset. Already two weeks after his election to power he arranged a secret meeting with the Hungarian leader Janos Kadar, whose reformist outlook and successful de-Stalinisation made him into a natural ally. Dubcek immediately ‘stressed that the change in no way implied a modification of the party’s line in either domestic or foreign policy’, to which Kadar replied that Dubcek had to ‘show great patience’, since his election was not received everywhere ‘on the international scene (...) with wild enthusiasm’.³⁰ Kadar nevertheless had great faith in Dubcek, and reported to the Hungarian Politburo that ‘Cde. Dubcek is a communist on every major issue without exception’.³¹ Kadar even hoped that Dubcek might side with him on the German Question, and might help him to reverse the Warsaw Pact’s ‘rigid position’ on establishing diplomatic relations with the FRG.³² This position was enshrined in the ‘Warsaw Package’ that ensued from the WP foreign ministers meeting in February 1967, which the Hungarian leadership had already criticised at the time.³³

At the beginning of March events in Czechoslovakia were still sufficiently under control for non-proliferation to take priority over internal Czechoslovak developments during the PCC meeting in Sofia, but by the end of March Brezhnev decided to convene a meeting of ‘the six’ in Dresden in order to discuss the situation in Czechoslovakia. Consulting all WP members apart from Romania on the convention of the meeting, Romanian isolation had now become irreversible: Romania was not even invited. Kadar’s suggestion at the PCC meeting that ‘the first secretaries and prime ministers of the six countries should get together for the sake of unfettered, comradely talks’, thus materialised earlier than anticipated.³⁴ The meeting took place outside the institutional confines of the Warsaw Pact, which made it possible to bypass Romania. ‘The six’ had turned into a parallel reality.

The convention of the Dresden meeting on 23 March differed significantly from usual procedures within the WP. The Soviet leadership had unilaterally convened the meeting, albeit with explicit approval from the East German, Polish, Hungarian and Bulgarian leaders, and one member was excluded altogether. Unlike the increasingly transparent preparation of the meetings within a WP framework, the meeting in Dresden was convened under a false pretext: the Czechoslovak leadership was invited for a meeting on economic cooperation within Eastern Europe, even

³⁰ See ‘János Kádár’s Report to the HSWP Politburo on His Meetings with Alexander Dubcek’, 20 January 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 37–41.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

³² Békés, ‘Hungary and the Prague Spring’, 379.

³³ Cf. Chapter 4 of this book, 192.

³⁴ Cf. ‘Report to the Hungarian Party Politburo and Council of Ministers on the PCC Meeting’, 9 March 1968, Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=17967&navinfo=14465>, 8, accessed 28 August 2013.

though all the other leaders knew perfectly well that the meeting was intended to discuss the political developments within Czechoslovakia. Unlike at WP meetings, the participants thus started on unequal footing. But the inequality also pertained to the Czechoslovak leadership itself: *pace* most claims in historiography, Dubcek himself was the only member of the Czechoslovak delegation who was informed of the actual topic of the meeting, and had in fact explicitly agreed to the smokescreen, since he was afraid that his comrades would otherwise accuse him of bowing to Soviet wishes.³⁵ Already at the early stage of the Prague Spring Dubcek had to find a balance between not seeming too anti-Soviet in Soviet eyes, and not seeming too pro-Soviet in Czechoslovak eyes.

The only aspect in which the Dresden meeting did resemble a WP meeting was in the position of its participants. In the absence of Romania Gomulka put the biggest stamp on the meeting, by eloquently legitimising interference in internal affairs in 'situations when so-called domestic affairs naturally become external affairs, thus affairs of the entire socialist camp.' Gomulka thus neatly formulated the Brezhnev doctrine *avant la lettre* by legitimising interference in domestic affairs when they have external repercussions. Both Brezhnev and Gomulka characterised the situation as a counterrevolution, although Gomulka was more explicit about the need for immediate measures and external interference than Brezhnev.³⁶

This also reflects the different situation of Poland and the SU: Gomulka already had to deal with significant unrest in Poland, where the people had been infected with the Czechoslovak zeal for reforms, but Brezhnev did not face the same danger.³⁷ He was, therefore, worried about the repercussions of the Czechoslovak process for the Soviet bloc at large, and stressed that 'we still cannot remain indifferent to the developments in Czechoslovakia', if 'the security of the socialist countries' was at stake.³⁸ Since the threat of contagion in Poland was much more immediate than the potential collapse of the Soviet bloc, Gomulka had more reason to call for immediate measures and foreign interference than Brezhnev. Brezhnev nevertheless emphasised that the salvation of socialism in Czechoslovakia was not optional. The Czechoslovak leaders were thus under increasing pressure to agree to a change of course in Dresden. Through the convention of the Dresden meeting the formula that domestic affairs could become external affairs had already become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Ulbricht was as extreme as usual, and added the threat of West German imperialism to the interpretation of a counterrevolution in Czechoslovakia. For him, too, the situation was critical: whereas Czechoslovakia, Poland and the GDR had used

³⁵ Cf. Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 64, for the conventional reading, which is confirmed by Dubcek himself (Sugar, 42) and Békés, 'Hungary and the Prague Spring', 382, for the archival evidence, which proves that Dubcek was complicit in the smokescreen.

³⁶ See 'Stenographic Account of the Dresden Meeting', 23 March 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 64-72.

³⁷ Kemp-Welch, *Poland*, 148-157.

³⁸ 'Stenographic Account of the Dresden Meeting', 66.

to be united in their strong denouncement of the FRG, the Czechoslovak rapprochement to the FRG seemed to threaten the legitimacy of the GDR. Since Czechoslovakia shared a border with West Germany, it could prove to be the weakest link within the WP. By appealing to the need for unanimity within the WP, Ulbricht was directly defending the survival of his country. Meanwhile, the Bulgarian delegate agreed with the hardliners, and concentrated on the leading role of the party, which also reflected the conventional Bulgarian position: the Bulgarian leadership tended to side with the Kremlin,³⁹ since it cherished the maintenance of the status quo and the importance of the communist monopoly on power above all else.⁴⁰

The only discordant note was expressed by the Hungarian leader Kadar, who did not agree with the assessment of the reforms in Czechoslovakia as a 'counterrevolution', and denounced the interference in internal affairs. This was an essential distinction: Kadar trusted the Czechoslovak leaders to control the situation themselves. Apart from his moderate approach, which enabled him to establish a mild kind of popular rule after the Hungarian revolution in 1956, Kadar, too, defended his party's interests. He strove to avoid the equation of reforms with counterrevolution, since that would also endanger the reform process within Hungary. The same applied to legitimising interference in internal affairs: if that was allowed in Czechoslovakia, Hungary might well be next.⁴¹ Kadar had to defend the Czechoslovak scope for manoeuvre, in order to safeguard his own.

The Czechoslovak party leaders themselves nevertheless categorically rejected the existence of a counterrevolution in their country, and emphasised that 'the party is capable today of mastering the situation with principle and flexibility'. Expressing their indignation at the fact that they had been invited 'for a meeting on economic questions', and therefore had 'not had the opportunity to consult', the Czechoslovak comrades indicated their displeasure at the course of events in Dresden. By taking their allies seriously on the one hand, while marking their own responsibility on the other, the Czechoslovak participants attempted to maintain the scope for manoeuvre to manage their internal events themselves. The mere convention of the meeting nevertheless indicated that the internal scope for manoeuvre of a communist country was at stake.⁴²

In that respect the meeting differed significantly from those that were convened within the WP framework: although we have witnessed many situations in which various WP members attempted to expand their scope for manoeuvre, this always concerned *external* affairs that dealt with foreign policy, such as the Romanian strategy

³⁹ Cf. for this trend throughout the 1960s e.g. Information about the development of international relations of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, October 1966, PA AA, MfAA, C 838/77, 106.

⁴⁰ Information about the positions of the communist parties vis-à-vis Czechoslovakia, Berlin, 26 July 1968, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/13, 12.

⁴¹ Cf. Békés, 'Hungary and the Prague Spring', 371-395, for Hungary's position during the Prague Spring.

⁴² See 'Stenographic Account of the Dresden Meeting', 64-72.

to establish diplomatic relations with the FRG. Purely domestic issues had never been at stake at all within the confines of the alliance. During the PCC meeting in Sofia from 6-7 March 1968 – only two weeks before Dresden – Czechoslovak affairs were not discussed at any official session. It was, accordingly, not only the attempt to bypass Romania that prevented the Dresden meeting from being convened within an official WP context, but also the fact that the alliance simply did not cater for hypothetical interference in *domestic* affairs. It was officially an outward-looking institution, founded to deal with the *external* threat from NATO, and not an instrument for the control of its members' *internal* developments, which explains why Dubcek thought that allegiance to the WP was sufficient to safeguard the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia.⁴³

Moreover, the meeting could not have proceeded as it did within a WP framework. Not all allies had been consulted on its convention, nor on its agenda, and the Czechoslovak participants had not been able to prepare the meeting. In addition, the party leaders were not accompanied by the ministers of foreign affairs and of defence. Since there were no sessions at any other level of representation as at a PCC meeting, there was no chance to block several decisions. The Dresden meeting did not even serve to make decisions, but merely to pressurise the Czechoslovak leaders into adopting a different course. It was exactly because the WP had evolved into a multilateral alliance that could not be used as a transmission belt, that this meeting needed to be convened outside a WP framework: the alliance would ironically have provided the Czechoslovak participants with much more leverage over their allies than this improvised setting.

Reflecting the ambivalent nature of the meeting, the Dresden meeting was accordingly concluded with a communiqué that bore no relation to the meeting itself. Whereas the WP communiqués had become increasingly truthful and contested reflections of the preceding meetings, the one in Dresden only served to maintain the smokescreen in the eyes of public opinion. The choice not to use the institutional procedures of the alliance facilitated the disguise. Only mentioning economic problems, which had not been central to the meeting, the communiqué concealed the fact that several of its allies had begun to attempt to interfere in internal Czechoslovak affairs. It was, ironically, the East German secret recording of the meeting that proved how much reality differed from appearance. Romania had been isolated in the WP before; 'the six' had already convened separately during the PCC meeting in Sofia. This meeting nevertheless served a further purpose, which the alliance could not legitimise.

⁴³ S. Dubcek and A. Sugar, *Dubcek Speaks* (London, 1990), 58.

ECHOES FROM DRESDEN

The smokescreen used in Dresden backfired. Since the communiqué stated that economic cooperation within COMECON and several WP-issues had been discussed by 'the six', Ceausescu was furious at being excluded, as he explained to the RCP CC:

We think that the discussions about the problems of the military command centre of the Warsaw Pact and about the CMEA [= COMECON] that took place in Dresden contradict the spirit of relations between Socialist states of the Warsaw Pact and the CMEA. Our opinion is that a group of countries, members of an international organisation, do not have the right to meet separately and discuss the activity of international organisations of which other countries are members as well.⁴⁴

The meeting of 'the six' to discuss the developments in Czechoslovakia thus inadvertently emphasised the existing differences within the WP, and sealed the Romanian isolation. What Ceausescu nevertheless did not know, is the extent to which 'the six' had already turned into 'the five', since the meeting solely served to judge the situation in Czechoslovakia. The Warsaw Pact's provisions would have prevented Romania from being excluded from a meeting, which discussed WP matters. Ceausescu gradually realised from diplomatic reports from Prague that the meeting at Dresden had specifically been used to discuss the situation in Czechoslovakia, and strongly condemned the participating countries, since they had 'no right to meet, especially when their aim is to exert pressure upon the Czechoslovaks regarding their internal situation'.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, Dubcek chose to keep his allies in the dark about the real nature of the Dresden meeting in order to prevent Czechoslovak-Soviet antagonism. In his report to the presidium he therefore pretended that the meeting in Dresden was a logical sequel to the meeting of 'the six' during the PCC meeting in Sofia.⁴⁶ Perpetuating the myth of discussing economic cooperation during the meeting, Dubcek only stated *en passant* that his comrades voiced their 'specific concerns and advice' about the situation in Czechoslovakia. The Dresden meeting was shrouded in a kind of secrecy that had no parallel within the WP. The intention of the Dresden meeting did, however, not elude 134 Czechoslovak writers and cultural figures, who sent an open letter to the CPCz CC, in which they emphasised that 'the Dresden communiqué (...) has made it clear to us that the CPCz CC must stand up to pressure motivated by doubts about the nature and objectives of our internal measures'. Having clearly gauged the real issues behind the communiqué, the authors added that 'the need

⁴⁴ Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring*, 85-86.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁴⁶ See 'Alexander Dubcek's Presidium Report on the Dresden Meeting', 25 March 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 73-75.

to maintain international solidarity among socialist states should not cause you to forget that your responsibility for this country is above all to its own people.⁴⁷ Prioritising internal affairs over external duties, the authors thus turned the incipient Brezhnev doctrine on its head.

Shortly after the letter the CPCz Central Committee convened from 1-5 April to adopt an 'Action Programme', which would serve as a blueprint for a more democratic and liberal kind of socialism, also known as 'socialism with a human face'. One day later the government resigned in order to form a new government, led by Oldrich Cernik. The action programme aimed on the one hand to 'justify [the party's] leading role in society', while denying the communist monopoly on power, and called on the other hand for reforming 'the whole political system', including 'freedom of speech'. Stating that 'the basic orientation of Czechoslovak foreign policy (...) revolves around alliance and cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other socialist states', it simultaneously claimed that 'the CSSR [Czechoslovak Socialist Republic] will formulate its own position toward the fundamental problems of world politics'.⁴⁸ This dual policy of relaxing the grip on the Czechoslovak people, and professing allegiance to the WP illustrates that Dubcek was well aware of the dilemma that confronted him. While he was 'under increasing pressure from his Warsaw Pact partners to slow down the process of reform and to muzzle the press', both the press and the 'ever more excited and extremist public' urged him 'to ignore the threats of the Russians and quicken the pace of change'.⁴⁹ His scope for manoeuvre was very limited.

The reference to 'alliance and cooperation' was clearly meant to assuage any Eastern European fears about a Czechoslovak *Alleingang*, but the statement that '[o]ur geographical position (...) compel[s] us to pursue a more active European policy aimed at the promotion of mutually advantageous relations with all states and with international organisations' had quite the opposite effect: the reference to the 'geographical position' and the 'relations with all states' clearly indicated an intended rapprochement with the FRG, which was as close to Czechoslovakia as the Soviet Union.⁵⁰ The Action Programme thus indicated that the Czechoslovak leadership would sail a course that was similar to Romania's in terms of foreign policy; but whereas the Romanian leaders had always unambiguously reinforced the party's monopoly on power and exercised strong censorship, their Czechoslovak comrades embarked on a far more dangerous trajectory. The socialist's party monopoly of power had never been at stake in Romania, but in Czechoslovakia that, too, seemed under threat.

Meanwhile, the views of the hawks and doves within the five socialist countries gradually began to converge. The Hungarian politburo, too, began to fear that 'the

⁴⁷ 'Open Letter from 134 Czechoslovak Writers and Cultural Figures to the CPCz Central Committee', 25 March 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 76.

⁴⁸ 'The CPCz CC Action Program', April 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 92-95.

⁴⁹ Shawcross, *Dubcek*, 131.

⁵⁰ The CPCz CC Action Program', April 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 92-95.

communist party in the CSSR had lost control of events', and that Czechoslovakia would turn into a 'bourgeois democracy'. The role of the media was criticised and the Hungarian leaders feared 'a situation analogous to that in Hungary in 1956'. The Bulgarian leadership also began to formulate a solution that was analogous to the one in 1956: 'If there were a breach in the socialist camp, the socialist countries would not hesitate to use military force against the CSSR as a last resort'.⁵¹ At the same time the CPSU CC was hastily convened in Moscow to deal with the situation. At this session it was decided 'to prevent the loss of socialist achievements in Czechoslovakia and its withdrawal from the "socialist camp"' by providing 'assistance to the healthy forces'.⁵² Still considering Dubcek one of them, Brezhnev wrote him a letter in which he begged Dubcek to secure 'the leading role of the party', and added that the 'loyalty to the Warsaw Pact is the guarantee of national independence and the security of the Czechoslovak Republic and the entire socialist community'.⁵³ Brezhnev called him the same day to propose bilateral consultations.

Both within the 'five', and within the CPSU Politburo, there remained, however, a division between "hawks" and "doves", whereas Brezhnev 'himself was still undecided'.⁵⁴ One of the Soviet hawks was politburo member Alexander Shelepin, who was also Brezhnev's most serious rival. The general consensus within the Kremlin during the month of April was still that the Czechoslovak leadership could control the situation itself.⁵⁵ At the same time both Ulbricht and Gomulka repeatedly called Brezhnev, and urged him to send in troops to the CSSR, since they 'were worried about the security of their own countries if Czechoslovakia broke away from the alliance'.⁵⁶ Although Brezhnev remained 'extremely cautious' for a long time, he exclaimed during one session: 'If we lose Czechoslovakia, I will step down from the post of general secretary!'⁵⁷ Since his own fate was linked to the fate of Czechoslovakia, Brezhnev's scope for manoeuvre was limited still further, which was already severely constrained by the pressure from hardliners inside and outside the Kremlin. Although Brezhnev had been bypassed or outwitted in several WP meetings, he had suddenly become the central figure in solving the Czechoslovak crisis. The developments in Czechoslovakia had inadvertently reinforced Soviet hegemony, after the WP's multilateralisation had limited Soviet power. A military solution was, after all, inconceivable without Soviet participation.

⁵¹ 'Dispatch from Budapest Outlining Hungarian Concerns about Events in Czechoslovakia after the Dresden Meeting', 6 April 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 81-82.

⁵² Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 84.

⁵³ 'Letter from Leonid Brezhnev to Alexander Dubcek Expressing Concern about Events in Czechoslovakia', 11 April 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 99-100.

⁵⁴ 'Memoir of Andrei Aleksandrov-Agentov on Internal Soviet Deliberations about Czechoslovakia', in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 102.

⁵⁵ 'Information report 12/1968', GDR embassy in Moscow, 9 April 1968, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/162, 261.

⁵⁶ 'Memoir of Andrei Aleksandrov-Agentov', 102.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

The positions of Ulbricht and Gomulka had become increasingly vulnerable, too. The popular spirit in Czechoslovakia proved particularly contagious in Poland, where protesters chanted 'Long Live Czechoslovakia'.⁵⁸ Gomulka explained to the Soviet ambassador Averki Aristov that 'the events developing there [have] an increasingly negative effect on Poland', and added that Czechoslovakia was on the verge of being 'transformed into a bourgeois republic'. Gomulka 'expressed the need for us to intervene immediately'.⁵⁹ His political fate, too, seemed linked to that of Czechoslovakia.⁶⁰

At the same time Ulbricht faced an equally great problem. A report of secret discussions between the CPCz CC international department and the West German SPD (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*) politician Egon Bahr proved that the Czechoslovak leadership was negotiating about diplomatic relations with the FRG.⁶¹ This was a flagrant denial of the protocol signed at the WP foreign ministers meeting in February 1967, the so called 'Warsaw Package', in which it was agreed to refrain from following Romania's example in establishing diplomatic relations with the FRG unless the West German leaders fulfilled several criteria, such as recognising the GDR. The Czechoslovak commitment to the Warsaw Package had, however, been lukewarm from the start.⁶² Apart from renegeing on WP agreements, the talks with Egon Bahr also stimulated a different attitude within the WP, since 'the SPD believes that the CSSR has a real chance of pursuing a more active policy vis-à-vis its partners in the Warsaw Pact'. The West German *neue Ostpolitik* ('new eastern policy') of intensifying its relations with countries in Eastern Europe thus posed a particular threat to the East German leadership. In its courting of Czechoslovakia the West German government ignored the existence of East Germany all the more emphatically. Ulbricht felt his grip on the German Question weakening. It was, however, not so much Ulbricht's fate that was linked to Dubcek's, but the fate of the GDR itself. It was caught in a 'political pincer', with the reforms in Czechoslovakia on one side and the West German courting of Eastern Europe on the other.⁶³

The Czechoslovak leadership, meanwhile, was particularly concerned about its relations with the Kremlin and the foreign minister Jiri Hajek devised a proposal "to Facilitate the Process of Mutual Understanding in Relations with the USSR". Ignoring the real concerns of his allies, Hajek concluded that 'the Soviet comrades do not understand the situation in our country', and explained the fact that 'any development

⁵⁸ Kemp-Welch, *Poland*, 163.

⁵⁹ 'Cable to Moscow from Soviet Ambassador to Warsaw Averki Aristov Regarding Wladislaw Gomulka's Views on the Situation in Czechoslovakia', 16 April 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 103.

⁶⁰ Cf. Kemp-Welch, *Poland*, 163-171, for the impact of the Prague Spring on Poland.

⁶¹ See 'Report on Secret Discussions between the CPCz CC International Department and Egon Bahr of the West German Social Democratic Party', 17-19 April 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 108-111.

⁶² See Chapter 4 of this book, 192.

⁶³ Wilke, 'Ulbricht', 354.

in the socialist countries arouses immediate concern about the USSR's allies' by referring to 'the rifts with Albania, the People's Republic of China, and Romania'. The relations with other Eastern European allies did not seem at the forefront of the Czechoslovak agenda, and Hajek proposed to ease the tensions by sending a Czechoslovak delegation to the SU as Brezhnev had requested. The delegation's mission would be to clarify issues such as 'the internal situation in the party, (...) the leading role of the party', and only mentioned in the seventh place, 'Czechoslovak foreign policy', including 'future policy toward the FRG'.⁶⁴ Although the Czechoslovak leadership had rightly sensed that it needed to tilt the balance in its favour, it seemed to ignore the significance of its other Eastern European allies, which, unlike Czechoslovakia under Novotny, had already emancipated themselves considerably from the Soviet grip over the years.

The situation had thus become increasingly delicate on several fronts by the end of April. The Czechoslovak leadership felt misunderstood, but its rapprochement with the FRG did little to reassure its Eastern European allies about its foreign policy orientation. Meanwhile, Ulbricht and Gomulka both had their own compelling reasons to pressurise Brezhnev to come into action, whereas Brezhnev himself had to deal with CPSU and WP comrades who were more hawkish than him. However eager to safeguard Hungarian reforms, even the Hungarian leadership feared that the survival of socialism was at stake within Czechoslovakia. Eager to explain their position to the Kremlin, the Czechoslovak leaders agreed to send a delegation to Moscow in early May. If they could succeed in convincing their Soviet comrades that the loss of Czechoslovakia was not imminent, they hoped to prevent the sword of Damocles from falling.

MOSCOW IN MAY

The Moscow summit, which took place from 4-5 May, did little to resolve the situation. Although the Czechoslovak delegation, led by Dubcek, attempted to convince its Soviet allies that 'after the April plenum the people's trust in the communist party increased', the Soviet leadership was sceptical about Dubcek's control over the media, and Brezhnev was particularly concerned about the 'lack of (...) unity' in the presidium. Claiming that 'counterrevolutionary forces exist in your country and are becoming more active', Brezhnev forced his Czechoslovak comrades on the defensive. Their reaction already demonstrated a lack of unity: whereas the Slovak first secretary Bilak shared Soviet concerns, Dubcek emphasised the undiminished 'cooperation with the Soviet Union' instead, and argued that the rapprochement with

⁶⁴ "Proposal for a Number of Major Political Measures to Facilitate the Process of Mutual Understanding in Relations with the USSR," by Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Jiri Hájek, 17 April 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 106-107.

West Germany only concerned 'the expansion of economic ties'. Brezhnev nevertheless accused him of a 'casual assessment of events', and even argued that the removal of the defence minister and the foreign minister in March and April facilitated a fully-fledged counterrevolution.⁶⁵

Dubcek indeed seemed to have downplayed the rapprochement with the FRG. Czechoslovak border guards had removed barbed wire and electric fences along the border with the FRG, and 40,000 Western tourists a day were travelling to Czechoslovakia. Arguing that the Czechoslovak 'border with the FRG is open', Brezhnev added that '[i]f such matters do not upset you, they do upset the GDR, Poland and the Soviet Union'. This was the crux of the conversation: in spite of 'the CPSU's principled position based on full respect for the independence of all fraternal parties and countries (...) not every question is a purely internal matter', as Brezhnev put it. Adding that 'Cdes. Gomulka, Ulbricht, Zhivkov, and the others (...) are prepared for [the defence of socialism in Czechoslovakia] as well', Brezhnev clearly indicated that the Czechoslovak question had become a question of the socialist camp.⁶⁶ It was not Czechoslovak loyalty to the WP as such that was at stake, but rather the repercussions of internal decisions on external developments.

Brezhnev's next step was to invite Gomulka, Ulbricht, Zhivkov, and Kadar to Moscow on 8 May for a secret assessment of events in Czechoslovakia. Although Brezhnev repeated the need for 'joint measures' to defend socialism in Czechoslovakia, he was optimistic about the meeting with the Czechoslovak leadership. He also agreed with Kadar, who still denied that there was a counterrevolution in Czechoslovakia, and infuriated Gomulka by remarking that 'the Action Programme (...) is a big zero, it is nothing'.⁶⁷ Kadar strongly condemned the tunnel vision of some of his comrades in turn:

If we keep thinking that Mao Zedong and his comrades are not normal people, that Fidel Castro is a little bourgeois, that Ceausescu is a nationalist, and that the Czechoslovaks have all gone crazy, we cannot find any solution.⁶⁸

All participants did, however, agree on the endeavour 'to get [Czechoslovak] consent to host joint military manoeuvres on [their] territory as soon as possible' so as to 'stabilise the situation in the country'. Even Kadar approved, although he added that the 'interference of the Soviet troops [in Hungary in 1956] provided a good pretext for the counter-revolution to break out', and thus pre-emptively condemned any calls for

⁶⁵ 'Stenographic Account of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Summit Meeting in Moscow', 4-5 May 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 114-125.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁶⁷ 'Minutes of the Secret Meeting of the "Five" in Moscow', 8 May 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 132-143.

⁶⁸ Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring*, 134.

military intervention.⁶⁹ Brezhnev took no offence at Kadar's retrospective denunciation of the Soviet invasion in Hungary, and even agreed with Kadar to support the 'healthy forces in the Czechoslovak party'. Brezhnev therefore concluded that 'we can agree, and I hope that Cdes. Ulbricht and Gomulka also agree, that at the given moment we will not mount an attack on the new CPCz leadership as a whole'. The Polish and East German hard line seemed to be eclipsed by the Soviet-Hungarian tandem.

Brezhnev was clearly under pressure from his East German and Polish comrades to take more decisive measures, but he stood his ground. Ulbricht and Gomulka seemed to have less scope for manoeuvre within this informal multilateral setting than within the checks and balances of the WP framework. Meanwhile, the new dynamics of the situation enabled Kadar to increase his influence by assuming a moderate position in between both extremes. Where Kadar used to side with Gomulka against Ceausescu, he now opposed Polish and East German extremism in the Czechoslovak case. Ceausescu's absence seemed to create more scope for manoeuvre for Kadar, whose moderation enabled Brezhnev to withstand the pressure from the hardliners within the CPSU and the WP. Brezhnev set such store by Kadar's mediating role that he called him at least once a week during the Prague Spring, and sometimes even twice a day.⁷⁰ Although Brezhnev could now call the shots, his shots were still significantly less far-reaching than some of its Eastern European allies might have wished.

THE ROMANIAN REACTION

Meanwhile, Romania's forced exclusion from the decision-making stood it in good stead in its relations with the West. Since rumours were increasing about a potential Soviet invasion in Czechoslovakia, the American ambassador Goldberg asked Romanian foreign minister Manescu for information during a UN session in New York on 9 May. Manescu commiserated about the potential interference in Czechoslovak affairs, and proudly exclaimed that 'there is no division in our country or government, and [we] firmly oppose any intervention to the last man'. Romania's foreign policy during the Czechoslovak crisis was praised in Washington, London and Paris, and the Romanian ambassador in Washington successfully purchased equipment and advanced technology from the US, as well as resuming 'negotiations with representatives of General Electric in Canada to start a Romanian nuclear programme'.⁷¹ Thus Romania's denunciation of its allies' decision-making during the

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Békés, 'Hungary and the Prague Spring', 380.

⁷¹ Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring*, 135 and 109.

Prague Spring enabled its leadership to once more reap the benefits from its position as a maverick.

At the same time, the Romanian leaders were increasingly interested in intensifying the ties with the Czechoslovak comrades so as to break through Romania's isolation within the WP, and they seized the renewal of a bilateral friendship treaty on mutual assistance and cooperation as an opportunity to do so. Both sides negotiated on the treaty from 16-21 May in Bucharest. With the old treaty as a starting-point several aspects were discussed and elaborated. The Romanian delegates hoped to win the Czechoslovaks over to their position on the WP, and wanted to mention their desire for 'the simultaneous elimination of the two military blocks'. The Czechoslovak delegates remained, however, loyal to the WP, and ultimately agreed to the stipulation that both countries were 'firmly determined to act in conformity with the Warsaw Pact as long as it is functional'.⁷² Meanwhile, the other NSWP members were so sceptical about Romania's position within the WP that they decided 'to attempt to involve Romania' in the WP's development, but to continue, 'when that does not work, also without Romania'.⁷³

On other aspects, too, the Romanians were still more extreme. The Czechoslovak leadership intended to include a reference to 'West German militarism', and reluctantly dropped the word 'West German' at Romanian request. With another epithet the Czechoslovak negotiators stood their ground: despite Romanian insistence on including 'the principle of national sovereignty' in the paragraph on relations between the socialist states, the Czechoslovak side categorically rejected the epithet 'national', which the Romanian side wanted to use as a boost to its independent course.⁷⁴

It is striking that the Czechoslovak delegates were not at all keen to model their foreign policy after the Romanian one. Despite reorienting its foreign policy towards the rest of Europe, including the FRG, they remained adamant about their loyalty to the WP, and were loath to downplay the West German threat. Although the Czechoslovak foreign policy reorientation seemed a threat to its five other WP allies, the Czechoslovak delegation preferred the attitude of 'the five' to the alliance to the Romanian one. The Romanian leadership therefore hoped 'for a change in Czechoslovak foreign policy and an approach to the Romanian point of view, since this would signal the end of Romania's isolation', but Ceausescu's hope remained empty, and Dubcek turned down the RCP's invitation to visit Bucharest.⁷⁵ At this stage Dubcek still prioritised his relations with the SU over Romania, however extreme his foreign policy might have seemed to the 'five'.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 101.

⁷³ Information about conversations between *inter alia* Gomulka, Kadar, Axen and Winzer, 28 May 1968, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/429, 267.

⁷⁴ Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring*, 102.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

THE DECLINE IN RELATIONS

Czechoslovak relations with the Soviet Union became increasingly problematic, and the Soviet interpretation of events drew closer to the East German one.⁷⁶ During the CPCz CC plenum from 29 May to 1 June a schism arose between hardliners who copied Moscow's position and agreed with Bilak that the internal matters were 'not purely our own, Czechoslovak affair', and reform-minded members, who supported Dubcek.⁷⁷ Since the party was confronted with fundamental changes, it was decided to bring the Extraordinary 14th CPCz Congress forward by two years, and to convene it on 9 September 1968. This move greatly worried Brezhnev, who feared the congress would be used to implement irreversible reforms and personnel changes. He immediately wrote Dubcek to invite him to a bilateral meeting after Dubcek's scheduled visit to Hungary on a location of his choice.⁷⁸ Dubcek announced that he was 'at the present time (...) too busy', and was planning to return straight to Prague after visiting Kadar. Thus the Czechoslovak attempts to relish their relation with the Kremlin were undermined: Dubcek's refusal to meet Brezhnev was a severe blow to the latter's faith in Dubcek.

Meanwhile, Kadar's relations with Dubcek were closely watched by the Romanian ministry of foreign affairs, which somewhat enviously commented on 'Kadar's role as a mediator, with the Soviets on one side, and the Czechoslovaks on the other'.⁷⁹ Wont to mediate between great powers, Romania was pushed to the margins during the Prague Spring, and had so far even failed to win Dubcek over, who was much more interested in the reform-minded Kadar.⁸⁰ Having declined invitations to both Bucharest and Moscow, Dubcek eagerly travelled to Hungary from 13-14 June in the hope to exchange information about the meeting in Moscow and the developments in Czechoslovakia. Dubcek underscored the adverse effect of the Moscow meeting, which had led both Czechoslovak and Western newspapers to conclude that '[a]nother country has distanced itself from the camp', whereas Kadar downplayed the contents of the meeting by pretending that the five had spontaneously convened to discuss general issues.⁸¹ In order to prevent Czechoslovakia from 'distancing itself from the camp', too, Kadar nevertheless explicitly warned Dubcek against succumbing to Romanian advances:

⁷⁶ 'Information report 17/1968', GDR embassy in Moscow, 28 May 1968, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/162, 331.

⁷⁷ See 'Alexander Dubcek's Speech to the CPCz CC Plenary Session, May 29-June 1, 1968, with Discussion by Vasil Bilak', in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 152-155. This schism had been incipient from the beginning, cf. Shawcross, *Dubcek*, 121.

⁷⁸ See 'Letter from Leonid Brezhnev to Alexander Dubcek Proposing Another Bilateral Meeting', 11 June 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 158-159.

⁷⁹ Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring*, 124.

⁸⁰ Dubcek and Sugar, *Dubcek Speaks*, 57: 'I thought it would be Kádár who would say no.'

⁸¹ Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring*, 140.

As far as we know, it seems to us that democracy is not the main concern of the Romanian leaders. Still, they welcome the events happening in Czechoslovakia, since they suppose that they might find allies against the Soviet Union, against CMEA, and against the Warsaw Pact there.⁸²

Kadar hit the nail on its head, since the reforms in Czechoslovakia were quite the opposite from Romania's internal development. If there was one party within the WP with an extremely firm grip on its people, without allowing any freedom of expression, it was the RCP, whose united leadership had managed to elevate the party's monopoly of power beyond limits. It was exactly because the Czechoslovak leadership lacked unity, lost its grip on the people, allowed freedom of speech, and seemed to lose its leading position that 'the five' feared the demise of socialism altogether. Socialism in Romania was not at stake, and despite its independent foreign policy, it was clear that for *internal* reasons Romania would remain a strong link in the WP. Its independent foreign policy even consolidated the RCP's dictatorial rule domestically, which indirectly strengthened the socialist camp. If the Prague Spring illustrates that internal matters can become external, it also explains why Romania was never threatened with invasion: its domestic developments would never be 'the first domino' in the collapse of the Soviet bloc.⁸³

Two weeks after the meeting between Dubcek and Kadar Czechoslovak freedom had spun so much out of control that the Czechoslovak author Ludvik Vaculik published a manifest of "Two Thousand Words" in four major newspapers, which was signed by nearly seventy prominent intellectuals. The manifest strongly endorsed the 'regenerative process of democratisation' since the beginning of 1968, and praised the 'Action Programme', but asked for a better Central Committee to be elected at the Czechoslovak communist congress in September. It also 'demand[ed] the departure of people who abused their power', and the establishment of new committees and platforms, e.g. for the defence of free speech, which would enable the people to participate in politics, and, in short, create a civil society out of control by the CPCz. Clearly encouraging Dubcek and the reform-minded communists within the party to liberalise society still further, and warning against 'the possibility that foreign forces will intervene in our development', the possibility of foreign intervention almost turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy. The remark that 'we can assure our allies that we will observe our treaties of alliance, friendship, and trade' did little to assuage its allies' apprehension.⁸⁴ The 'Two Thousand Words' proclaimed everything that 'the five' denounced, and did Dubcek an inadvertent disservice: it pre-empted any attempts to

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ See for this term: J. Granville, *The First Domino. International Decision-making during the Hungarian Crisis of 1956* (Texas, 2004).

⁸⁴ "The "Two Thousand Words" Manifesto", 27 June 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 179-181.

convince 'the five' that the situation was under control, and thus made Dubcek's situation still more untenable.⁸⁵

The reaction from the 'five' was predictable. Dubcek received a series of letters, which expressed great concern about the situation and put him under increasing pressure to gain control. Any fears about counterrevolution now seemed vindicated, as Brezhnev stressed in his letter. He was 'doubly and triply alarm[ed]' by the fact 'that all this is going on two months before the party's Extraordinary Congress begins its work.' Even Czechoslovak officials had joined the attacks on 'the positions of the socialist countries on vital issues', and had 'emphasise[d] the notion that the place of Czechoslovakia in foreign policy should be based on its geographical location, that is, on its being "between the USSR and Germany."' Dubcek's claims about allegiance to the WP and the defence of socialism thus seemed increasingly hollow to 'the five'. Adding that the CPSU was 'ready to provide all necessary help to socialist Czechoslovakia', Brezhnev clearly indicated that he no longer expected Dubcek to control the situation on his own.⁸⁶

At the same time, there were clear indications that 'all necessary help' might not be only political. As agreed at the Moscow meeting, the Kremlin had organised 'strategic-operational command-staff exercises' on Czechoslovak territory, in which 30-40,000 troops of 'the five' would participate. Although these military manoeuvres, called the 'Šumava Exercises', had already been planned in 1967, they had initially been scheduled for late 1968 or early 1969, but the Czechoslovak leadership had agreed to bring the date forward to mid-June. The Czechoslovak defence minister Marin Dzur became, however, increasingly apprehensive, and informed Dubcek that additional Polish and East German troops would participate, and that 'the size of the exercise, especially the number of combat units taking part, is unusually high for an exercise of this nature'.⁸⁷

Another briefing to Dubcek noted that 'certain irregularities had arisen in connection with the exercises', which lacked a detailed plan and were arranged *ad hoc* 'on the basis of [unilateral] decisions by [Soviet] Marshal Yakubovskii', the WP's supreme commander. Meanwhile, 'for unknown reasons Marshal Yakubovskii has sought to prolong the exercises', which exacerbated 'the political situation in our country' still further. The Czechoslovak leadership accordingly asked Brezhnev in a letter 'to terminate the exercises, carry out the final analysis, and withdraw all allied troops from CSSR territory'.⁸⁸ Dubcek summoned Yakubovskii in order to explain the situation, and Yakubovskii replied that the exercises had officially terminated on 30

⁸⁵ Cf. Shawcross, *Dubcek*, 134-135.

⁸⁶ 'Letter of the CPSU CC Politburo to the CPCz CC Presidium', 4 July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 194-198.

⁸⁷ "Status of the Šumava Allied Exercise," Report to Alexander Dubcek by CSSR Defense Minister Martin Džúr, 17 June 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 161.

⁸⁸ 'Briefing on the Šumava Exercises for Alexander Dubcek and Oldrich Cerník by Commanders of the Czechoslovak People's Army, July 1, 1968, with Follow-up Talks between Dubcek and Marshal Yakubovskii', in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 191-192.

June as scheduled, but that the troops would only withdraw after the exercises had been analysed. At this stage the Kremlin still wanted to keep all options open, by involving the Warsaw Pact on a military level, while ignoring it politically.

Meanwhile, a top secret Hungarian report about the Šumava Exercises vindicates the Czechoslovak concerns. According to the report ‘the exercise was organised essentially for political reasons and with political objectives’, as a ‘kind of camouflage’ to demonstrate ‘the strength and unity of the Warsaw Pact, (...) influence the Czechoslovak events, (...) and shore up the authority of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact’. This strategy proved, however, counterproductive: since the Soviet and Czechoslovak officials differed in their assessment of the internal situation and in their perspective on the exercise, ‘a tense, nervous, and antagonistic atmosphere arose’. The Hungarian officials concluded from their experience that ‘there is no counterrevolutionary situation in the country’, but ‘the experience of the entire exercise unfortunately confirmed that there are unacceptable shortcomings, irregularities, and inadequate provisions in the Warsaw Pact, [which] will erode the dignity of the Soviet Union and undermine the pact’. The Soviet side in turn regarded ‘[t]he repeated insistence (...) that the exercise be terminated’ as a blemish to Soviet-Czechoslovak friendship,⁸⁹ and was surprised at the lack of ‘the fraternal warmth and friendliness that had previously distinguished the Czechoslovak friends’.⁹⁰

In the month of June trust was accordingly eroded on both sides: whereas Brezhnev suspected Dubcek’s decision to reject another bilateral meeting, the Šumava exercises exacerbated the apprehension of a Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, the ‘Two Thousand Words’ seemed a clear indication that the counterrevolutionary situation in Czechoslovakia threatened to become irreversible, whereas ‘the five’ regarded the weak denunciation of the ‘Two Thousand Words’ by the CPCz as another indication that Dubcek had lost control. At the same time, the use of WP exercises as a camouflage had weakened its position.

WARSAW: THE POINT OF NO RETURN?

During the month of July the relations between Czechoslovakia and its allies took a new turn. The mutual erosion of trust necessitated further consultations, and Brezhnev decided to invite Dubcek to Warsaw for a meeting with ‘the five’.⁹¹ A majority of the CPCz presidium nevertheless supported Dubcek’s proposal to arrange bilateral

⁸⁹ ‘Report on the Šumava Exercises by Generals I. Oláh and F. Szücs of the Hungarian People’s Army to the HSWP Politburo’, 5 July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 199–201.

⁹⁰ ‘General Semyon Zolotov’s Retrospective Account of the Šumava Military Exercises’, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 203.

⁹¹ See ‘Letter from Leonid Brezhnev to Alexander Dubcek Inviting a CPCz Delegation to the Warsaw Meeting’, 6 July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 206.

meetings instead, and Dubcek declined the invitation out of fear 'to be pilloried'.⁹² In a conversation with Soviet ambassador Chervonenko Dubcek proposed 'bilateral negotiations (...) with representatives of the fraternal parties' including 'representatives of the Communist Party of Romania and the League of Communists of Yugoslavia' instead, while stressing the respect for 'the sovereignty of every party on questions of its internal policy'.⁹³

Thus Dubcek attempted to broaden the scope of negotiations to two more countries, for whom concepts of sovereignty and non-interference were paramount, and who were prone to sympathise with Czechoslovak interests. Echoing the rhetoric of national communists, Dubcek clearly undermined the five's prerogative to determine the Czechoslovak course of events, while also suggesting to include a non-WP member, which had officially broken with Moscow in 1948, in the negotiations. Whereas 'the five' had represented a reduced WP, Dubcek proposed to transcend the limits of the WP altogether, while also pre-empting the dynamics of multilateralism. Although he had previously withstood Romanian advances, Dubcek began to realise that he might need Ceausescu's support. Adding that 'joint consultations with delegations from these parties might occur during the upcoming session of the CPCz 14th Extraordinary Congress', Dubcek even suggested inviting the Yugoslav leader Tito to multilateral consultations on Czechoslovak terms, thus going beyond the confines of the WP.⁹⁴ This was, however, exactly what 'the five' wanted to avoid: the whole rationale behind the Warsaw meeting was to steer the Czechoslovak leadership in a different direction *before* irreversible reforms and personnel changes would be implemented at the congress.

Chervonenko's reaction was accordingly far from enthusiastic, and emphasised that 'with this step the CPCz leadership, and above all Cde. Dubcek, are bringing their relations with the CPSU into a new phase.' Chervonenko showed little understanding for Dubcek's reference to sovereignty on internal matters, but explained instead that 'the problem was not only the internal situation in Czechoslovakia, but also whether the CPCz under his leadership would remain an internationalist component of the socialist camp'.⁹⁵ The problem with Czechoslovakia extended again further than the Romanian and Yugoslav insistence on national sovereignty, since communism itself was at stake. Dubcek's arguments were therefore bound to fall on deaf ears.

The Romanian leadership was far more susceptible to Dubcek's reasoning. Since the Kremlin witnessed the incipient rapprochement between Czechoslovakia and Romania with apprehension, the Soviet ambassador to Romania, Vladimir Basov, visited Ceausescu on 12 July to inform him about the situation in Czechoslovakia.

⁹² Dubcek and Sugar, *Dubcek Speaks*, 50.

⁹³ 'Top-Secret Telegram from Ambassador Stepan Chervonenko to Moscow Regarding the CPCz CC Presidium's Decision Not to Attend the Warsaw Meeting', 9 July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 207.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Anticipating criticism on Soviet interference, Basov emphasised that the fraternal parties had explicitly asked the CPSU for assistance, since the ‘situation in Czechoslovakia was becoming still more alarming’, with anti-socialist forces intensifying the counterrevolution, the ‘Two Thousand Words’ undermining the CPCz, and the party itself reorienting its foreign policy in such a way that it would be ‘determined by its geographical situation (...) “in between the SU and Germany”’.⁹⁶ The fear that the Prague Spring would exacerbate ‘the German problem’ was widely shared by communist parties. Even the Italian Communist Party, which was critical of the Soviet stance since the Warsaw meeting, feared that the Prague Spring combined with Czechoslovakia’s location ‘in the heart of Europe’ could result in ‘allowing the return of capitalism in Czechoslovakia’, which in turn would enable West Germany to infiltrate in Eastern Europe, and jeopardise its security.⁹⁷

Underscoring that the ‘Czechoslovak comrades have agreed with all our considerations’, Basov attempted to convince Ceausescu of the ‘international duty of all fraternal parties to provide the C.P. of Czechoslovakia with all support that is necessary in this difficult moment.’ Ceausescu nevertheless argued that ‘the Czechoslovak party has the situation under control’, and that he was ‘greatly worried about possible actions of interference in internal affairs’, which would have ‘grave consequences in the world and the communist movement’. Echoing Dubcek’s argument, he emphasised that it concerned ‘an internal problem’, and argued that interference, rather than the internal situation, would have external repercussions. He strongly condemned ‘the convention of a meeting of a group of parties from socialist countries, excluding other parties from socialist countries’, and urged the Soviets ‘to find other ways’.⁹⁸ The Romanian emphasis on non-interference clearly went beyond mere rhetoric.⁹⁹

Dubcek’s refusal to attend the meeting in Warsaw proved a *faux pas*. He had further antagonised the hardliners, while also greatly disappointing Kadar, who still believed in a multilateral solution. In another attempt to mediate, Kadar proposed a bilateral Soviet-Czechoslovak meeting before the multilateral one in Warsaw. When the CPCz presidium rejected this proposal, too, Kadar’s support for Dubcek began to evaporate. In a vain quest for sympathy, Dubcek asked Kadar to secretly meet him. The meeting took place on Hungarian territory on 13 July, one day before the one in Warsaw. It was, however, a cold shower for Dubcek and Cernik, since Kadar and the Hungarian prime minister Jeno Fock severely rebuked them for turning down the invitation to Warsaw, and emphasised that their relations, too, entered a new phase, in

⁹⁶ Information from the CPSU CC, transmitted by Soviet ambassador Basov in a meeting with Ceausescu, 12 July 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 100/1968, 6, 9.

⁹⁷ ‘Meeting of the leadership on 17 July 1968 (13)’, FIG APC, Leadership, 1968, mf 020, 0804.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Cf. Dubcek and Sugar, *Dubcek Speaks*, 57: ‘Ceausescu held very strongly to one thing, not just in the talks, but in political practice, too.’

which they would be ‘fighting on opposing sides’.¹⁰⁰ The other Eastern European leaders had emancipated themselves enough to expect problems to be solved in a multilateral setting, in which all of them could participate. Dubcek’s refusal to re-enter this setting severely undermined his own stance and offended his allies. Bilateralism had already become an anachronism.

Despite Kadar’s severe criticism the Hungarian politburo still denied the existence of a counterrevolution in Czechoslovakia. Kadar thus went to Warsaw with a resolution that a political solution should be sought instead of a military one.¹⁰¹ During the meeting in Warsaw from 14-15 July Kadar nevertheless emphasised that Dubcek’s ‘refusal to take part in our meeting was the greatest mistake they had made since the January plenum,’ and that ‘this decision has created an entirely new situation’. Although he continued to question the term ‘counterrevolution’, he emphasised that it was ‘both the right and the duty of the socialist countries to decide collectively’ about Czechoslovakia.¹⁰² He thus showed his willingness to close ranks with the other four socialist countries.

Kadar’s change of course failed to carry conviction. Possibly irritated by the fact that Kadar had met Dubcek just before the meeting, both Ulbricht and Zhivkov strongly criticised Kadar for downplaying the situation, and Ulbricht even added that Hungary’s internal problems might be the next to be remedied. Ulbricht predicted the abolition of the communist party in Czechoslovakia, and therefore suggested sending ‘a joint open letter to the CPCz CC’, which ‘should draw a connection between the internal developments in Czechoslovakia and the general developments in the international arena’. Zhivkov went a step further, and argued that ‘[t]here is only one appropriate way out – through resolute assistance to Czechoslovakia from our parties and the countries of the Warsaw Pact (...) by relying on the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact.’¹⁰³ The arguments, too, had accordingly entered a new phase: the call to arms had now been voiced.

Brezhnev nevertheless remained far more moderate. He refrained from attacking Kadar, and dwelt on the most problematic aspects of the situation in Czechoslovakia, such as the ‘counterrevolutionary process’, the fact that ‘the leading role of the communist party is being undermined’, ‘the demands (...) for a radical reassessment of foreign policy’, and ‘[t]he party’s relinquishment of control over the mass media’. Although he agreed to Ulbricht’s proposal of a letter to the CPCz, he still preferred a political solution, while promising ‘Czechoslovakia all necessary assistance’.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Békés, ‘Hungary and the Prague Spring’, 388.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 389.

¹⁰² ‘Transcript of the Warsaw Meeting’, 14-15 July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 212-233.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

If the threat that the political content of the CPCz will be transformed into some sort of new organisation is real (...) then this, I repeat, affects the interests not only of communists in Czechoslovakia and not only the people of Czechoslovakia, but the interests of the entire socialist system and of the whole world communist movement. Any attempt to thwart such a process cannot be considered interference in internal affairs.¹⁰⁵

Thus Brezhnev eloquently legitimised *any* interference in Czechoslovak affairs, if it served the salvation of the socialist system. After Brezhnev had concluded the meeting, Kadar unexpectedly took the floor and referred to his comrades' criticism. He stressed his agreement with all his comrades, and praised Brezhnev's speech in particular, while emphasising his readiness 'to take part in all joint actions.'¹⁰⁶ Kadar's U-turn on the Czechoslovak crisis was complete. Ulbricht's remark on Hungary's internal situation may have prompted Kadar to tread his ground more carefully. Moreover, the fact that Brezhnev had not decided yet on a military solution, despite pressure from the hardliners, enabled Kadar to continue backing Brezhnev. His support for Dubcek had fully evaporated, and the balance thus began to tilt in favour of stronger measures.

The 'five' therefore decided to prepare a joint letter, in which they legitimised interference in Czechoslovak affairs along Brezhnev's lines. The letter primarily aimed at an internal, political solution of the situation by demanding that the CPCz leadership would take 'decisive' measures against 'anti-socialist forces', would end the activities of anti-socialist political organisations, would reassert 'control over the mass media', and would close ranks.¹⁰⁷ The letter was, as such, an ultimatum to the Czechoslovak leadership.

Meanwhile, the Polish delegation was entrusted with the draft of a communiqué, which explicitly omitted any 'references to the Warsaw Pact', since Romania had not participated in the meeting.¹⁰⁸ The Warsaw Pact was, accordingly, not used as an instrument to either justify or organise any actions against Czechoslovakia, but on the contrary: Brezhnev in particular was very careful to refrain from referring to the alliance. Although the WP had provided a useful training in multilateralism, it was not the WP framework that facilitated the decision-making. Had the Warsaw meeting taken place within the confines of a PCC meeting, then the letter could never have been sent to Czechoslovakia, since the Romanian and Czechoslovak participants would not have agreed. The WP had turned into a too mature alliance to lend itself to the somewhat obfuscated decision-making during the Prague Spring.

The Warsaw Letter, meanwhile, did not go down well with either the Czechoslovak leadership or the Czechoslovak people. Its publication provoked huge condemnation of the Warsaw meeting, and the popular support for Dubcek and his

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 229

¹⁰⁷ 'The Warsaw Letter', 14-15 July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 234-238.

¹⁰⁸ 'Transcript of the Warsaw Meeting', 230.

comrades was greater than ever.¹⁰⁹ The Warsaw meeting had proved counterproductive. After Dubcek and Cernik had already written a letter to Brezhnev in which they expressed their anger at the convention of the Warsaw meeting despite Czechoslovakia's refusal to attend, the CPCz presidium wrote another letter in which they stressed their disagreement with the assessment of the internal situation by 'the five'.¹¹⁰ The letter categorically denied 'the assertion that our current situation is counterrevolutionary or the allegation of an imminent threat to the foundations of the socialist system', and emphasised that '[t]he overriding orientation of Czechoslovakia's foreign policy (...) is alliance and cooperation with the Soviet Union and the other socialist states', including active participation in the WP.¹¹¹ This last claim seemed somewhat hollow, considering Dubcek's refusal to attend the Warsaw meeting, which at the very least indicated that he was under internal pressure to prioritise the reform process to socialist cooperation.

Claiming that 'the political situation is consolidating and that the influence of the party (...) is growing stronger', the presidium members emphasised the 'respect for (...) non-interference in (...) internal affairs', as 'enshrined in the Declaration of the Government of the USSR of 30 October 1956'. The letter ended with another proposal 'to arrange bilateral negotiations', which could serve to 'consider' a possible multilateral meeting on Czechoslovak terms.¹¹² The Czechoslovak leadership clearly wanted to regain control over its relations with its allies, while avoiding another Dresden.¹¹³ To some extent, the Czechoslovak leaders had a point: meetings within the WP had increasingly been prepared in a bilateral or multilateral setting, and the tendency to present the participants with a *fait accompli* had become out-dated. The multilateralisation during the Prague Spring was, however, not institutionalised, and therefore hard to control. With the proposal for bilateral meetings the situation was, therefore, almost back to square one. Since the Czechoslovak leadership emphatically failed to accept the distinction between internal affairs *with* or *without* external repercussions, the allies were still arguing at cross purposes.

THE ROMANIAN INTERPRETATION

The deterioration in relations between Czechoslovakia and 'the five' was greatly welcomed by the Romanian leadership, which publicly condemned the Warsaw

¹⁰⁹ Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 186-187.

¹¹⁰ See 'Message from Alexander Dubcek and Oldrich Cernik to Leonid Brezhnev', 14 July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 210-211.

¹¹¹ 'Response by the CPCz CC Presidium to the Warsaw Letter', 16-17 July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 243-249.

¹¹² Ibid. Cf. 'Declaration by the Government of the USSR on the Principles of Development and Further Strengthening of Friendship and Cooperation between the Soviet Union and Other Socialist States', 30 October 1956, in Békés et al. (eds.), *Hungarian Revolution*, 301.

¹¹³ Dubcek and Sugar, *Dubcek Speaks*, 50.

meeting, and began to develop an altogether new interpretation of the developments in Czechoslovakia. Although the Czechoslovak leadership still strove to prove its loyalty to the Soviet Union, the Romanian leadership was convinced that the Czechoslovak reforms were inspired by Czechoslovak ‘discontent (...) with the prolonged situation of dependence (...) on the SU.’¹¹⁴ Projecting Romanian interests on the CPCz, the Romanian leadership began to construe a new narrative of the situation in Czechoslovakia to escape from its own isolation.

The Romanian leadership even turned again to its Chinese comrades, which it had largely ignored since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in August 1966. Thus the Romanian leadership again turned to the Chinese, when it feared further isolation within the Soviet bloc by its exclusion from socialist decision-making. The Romanian politburo member Bodnaras summoned the Chinese diplomat in Bucharest, Ma Siu Sen, in order to discuss the Warsaw letter and other letters by the ‘five’, and share his interpretation of the Czechoslovak situation. Making a virtue of necessity, Bodnaras argued that Romania ‘had encouraged other countries (...) to adopt a course towards affirming their own political personality, independent from the Soviet Union’, and that ‘the Czechoslovak comrades, too, were influenced in that way’. According to Bodnaras the Czechoslovak leadership no longer wanted to be ‘an instrument of Soviet politics in Czechoslovakia’, and he therefore concluded that ‘socialism [was] not in danger in Czechoslovakia’, but the ‘dominance of the SU’. He even added that ‘[t]hey fear the emancipation of the Czechoslovak people, because this will encourage a process of general emancipation from the control of the CPSU in Hungary, in Poland, in the GDR, in Bulgaria.’¹¹⁵

With this remark Bodnaras had partly identified the crux of the issue. What the Kremlin, and indeed many of its Eastern European allies, feared, was indeed the domino effect of the Czechoslovak calls for reforms. Although the Romanian people might have secretly cherished similar hopes, Ceausescu’s control was such that he did not have to fear Czechoslovak contagion. On the other hand, it was not so much ‘emancipation from the control of the CPSU’ that was at stake; the reason that Ulbricht, Gomulka, and Zhivkov cherished more extreme views than Brezhnev was that they feared the Czechoslovak *people* would emancipate from the control of the Czechoslovak *party*, and that the people in the other WP countries would follow. That seemed to happen in Czechoslovakia, which explains why ‘the five’ were far more concerned about Czechoslovak developments than about the position of Romania. The Romanian leadership obviously had ‘emancipated’ itself far more from the Soviet grip than the Czechoslovak leadership. It could condemn the Warsaw meeting and other Soviet measures with impunity. But the Romanian people had not been able to

¹¹⁴ Meeting between Bodnaras and Chinese diplomat Ma Siu-sen, 24 July 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 103/1968, 4.

¹¹⁵ Meeting between Bodnaras and Chinese diplomat Ma Siu-sen, 24 July 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 103/1968, 6-14.

emancipate themselves from the party at all. Ceausescu's scope for manoeuvre within the WP was, as such, related to his control over the Romanian people. A Bucharest Spring was unthinkable; Ceausescu succeeded in ensuring that it would remain winter.

It did, however, serve Romanian public relations to equate Czechoslovak and Romanian developments; support of the Prague Spring became instrumental to the Romanian image. It made Ceausescu's regime seem all the more sympathetic, and confirmed Romania's role as maverick within the WP. Bodnaras rightly concluded that both Czechoslovakia and Romania witnessed a process of emancipation, but in the case of the former the people emancipated themselves from the party, and in the latter the party from the SU. Although Czechoslovak events were spinning out of Soviet control, they spun out of Czechoslovak control, too. Bodnaras' reference to 'emancipation' is, however, very interesting, since this is a rare instance of its use in formal documents. It indicates again a mature kind of self-reflection and proves that Romania's role in the WP and its attitude within the Prague Spring - albeit partly forced by its exclusion - were part of a consciously developed strategy. According to Bodnaras the Romanians owed their emancipation to the Chinese, which fully fits with earlier findings in this book:

The Romanians, who have enjoyed the privilege of having more contacts with the Chinese CP, including personal contacts, such as those by comrades Ceausescu, Maurer, Chivu, Bodnaras and Gheorghiu-Dej, have felt support and have had many things to learn from the very inspiring and useful exchanges with the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, headed by Cde. Mao Zedong. This has contributed to the strengthening of our position, to our political orientation, to the defence of the principles of independence, to equality in rights, sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, to the leading role of the communist party, of the working class, of the construction of socialism.¹¹⁶

This assessment seemed much closer to the truth: the Chinese and Romanian autonomy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, combined with a strict regime at home, shared indeed many features. In 1968, during the height of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, it was, however, more advantageous to the Romanian leadership to stress its support for Czechoslovakia. The Warsaw meeting gave the Romanian leaders ample opportunity to denounce the meeting as a 'tribunal', while emphasising 'the pressures' and 'threats' from 'the five', and expressing its 'support' of Czechoslovak policies. Drawing Ma Siu Sen's attention to the military preparations around Czechoslovakia, Bodnaras even asked China 'to contribute to preventing the creation of an adventure by the CPSU'.¹¹⁷ He thus used the Soviet predicament in the Prague Spring to forge a new Sino-Romanian bond at Soviet expense.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7, 8, 14.

Moreover, Bodnaras stressed that the Romanian leaders had already arranged with their Czechoslovak comrades to meet them immediately after their meeting with the Soviets. Romania's public support of the Czechoslovak cause stood it in good stead in many European capitals: 'the emancipation of its foreign policy' was, in the very same words, praised in Paris, where a telegram by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs added that the Romanian leaders 'acted very wisely', since 'Romania's policy of independence is irreversible now, hence accepted by the Soviet Union and its other allies in the East'.¹¹⁸ It is remarkable to note that both the Romanian leadership, and its admirers in other European capitals, began to use the rhetoric of 'emancipation' at exactly the same time. Although Czechoslovak foreign policy was still shrouded in ambiguities, the Prague Spring had enabled Romanian emancipation to be sealed.

SOVIET-CZECHOSLOVAK ESTRANGEMENT

The Romanian interest in the Czechoslovak cause coincided with a further estrangement between the Czechoslovak leadership and the Kremlin. On the last day of the Warsaw meeting the Czechoslovak General Václav Prchlik had held a press conference in which he strongly condemned the Warsaw meeting, while denouncing 'the five' for the 'violations of the fundamental clauses of the Warsaw Treaty', which enshrined the principles of sovereignty and non-interference.¹¹⁹ The Soviet government was furious about this indictment, and sent a letter to Prchlik in which it accused him of 'undermining the Warsaw Pact', and expressed its increasing concern about the security situation in Czechoslovakia.¹²⁰ At the same time the 'Five' decided to start preparing "Operation Danube", which was the code name for a military intervention in Czechoslovakia.¹²¹ Ulbricht and Zhivkov were particularly proactive, and already offered concrete military assistance on 21 July. On 23 July Kadar finally decided that Hungary would participate, too, which earned him profound gratitude from the Kremlin.¹²² Kadar could have opted out from participating in "Operation Danube", as he himself acknowledged.¹²³

Unlike the Sumava Exercises, "Operation Danube" was not an official WP exercise. It concerned military manoeuvres on Czechoslovak soil in which the

¹¹⁸ Retegan, *In the Shadow of the Prague Spring*, 110.

¹¹⁹ 'Press Conference with Lt. General Václav Prchlik', 15 July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 240. See for more information on General Prchlik: Chapter 7 of this book, 313-315.

¹²⁰ 'Soviet Government Diplomatic Note to the Czechoslovak Government', 20 July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 265-267.

¹²¹ Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 187.

¹²² Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 277.

¹²³ As Kadar himself puts it: 'Theoretically, it would have been entirely possible to avoid getting involved'. (János Kádár's Speech at a Hungarian CC Plenum, August 7, 1968, Regarding Events since the Warsaw Meeting', in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 331. The WP is not mentioned in this speech.

participants constituted a kind of ‘coalition of the willing’. The decision to participate did not yet mean that military intervention had become irreversible. As a Hungarian report notes, ‘[the Soviet generals] declared that although we will prepare for the exercises and be ready to carry them out, it would be good if we did not actually have to go ahead with them. The political objective of the manoeuvres is to help the Czechoslovak people defeat the counterrevolution.’¹²⁴ The Rubicon had not yet been crossed.

Despite the preparations for a military intervention, Brezhnev still tried to find a political solution for the situation in Czechoslovakia. He therefore agreed to the request the CPCz presidium had made in its letter of 17 July, namely to meet bilaterally on Czechoslovak soil. On 29 July Brezhnev and Kosygin met Dubcek and Cernik in Cierna nad Tisou, a small railroad crossing town in Slovakia, to find a way out of the impasse. Brezhnev named all the usual arguments, while emphasising yet again that the salvation of socialism in Czechoslovakia was ‘not purely an internal affair’, but, instead, ‘our international duty’. Adding that ‘*the threat of a counterrevolutionary coup in your country has become a reality*’, he blamed Dubcek for refusing the ‘fraternal offer’ to discuss the situation with ‘the leaders of the fraternal parties’ in Warsaw.¹²⁵ Dubcek’s refusal to come to Warsaw thus turned into negligence of *his* ‘international duty’: he had, as such, turned down fraternal assistance for nothing less than the salvation of socialism.

Dubcek nevertheless condemned ‘the Warsaw meeting (...) as a means of external pressure on our party’, and emphasised instead ‘that it will be useful to approach matters in such a way so that our people do not feel that Czechoslovakia’s alliance with the Soviet Union limits the opportunities to solve our internal matters’. Expressing, once again, Czechoslovakia’s ‘firm’ and ‘loyal’ allegiance to the WP, he continued that ‘[t]he aim of the Warsaw Pact concerns defence preparations and foreign policy activity. The Pact would betray its aims and be seriously weakened if it were actually being used to try to influence internal developments in our state.’ Dubcek’s remark was explicitly targeted at a letter from Walter Ulbricht, which ‘proposes to assist us via the Warsaw Pact – in other words by military action.’ Dubcek accordingly attempted to convince Brezhnev that such a mobilisation of the alliance would lack legal grounds, and even added that the Political Consultative Committee ‘would seem to be the most suitable platform for judging all serious problems of common interest’.¹²⁶ Dubcek had rightly realised that the ‘Warsaw Pact (...) cannot launch a campaign against a socialist country without that country’s approval’, but he

¹²⁴ ‘Meeting Notes Taken by Chief of the Hungarian People’s Army General Staff Károly Csémi on Talks with Soviet Generals in Budapest to Discuss Preparations for “Operation Danube”’, 24 July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 277.

¹²⁵ ‘Speeches by Leonid Brezhnev, Alexander Dubcek, and Aleksei Kosygin at the Cierna nad Tisou Negotiations’, 29 July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 284–297.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

had wrongly concluded that there would be *no* invasion: there could be an invasion, but there simply could not be a *Warsaw Pact* invasion.¹²⁷

Dubcek's reference to the PCC was no coincidence: the convention of an official PCC meeting would indeed provide him with more scope for manoeuvre than the *ad hoc* meetings of 'the five', which lacked any institutional basis. The Warsaw Pact did not pose a threat to Dubcek's leadership, but the fact that the decision-making took place *outside* its institutional confines did. In order to defend his control over the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia, Dubcek was compelled to define his scope for manoeuvre within the alliance very carefully. Although it was not his priority to emphasise Czechoslovakia's independence from the SU, the external interference in internal affairs forced him to use rhetoric that had hitherto been associated with Romania. Dubcek's 'emancipation' from Soviet control accordingly became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Soviet premier Kosygin was, however, not at all convinced by Dubcek's arguments and used the allegedly weak defence of the border with West Germany and Austria as a pretext to justify Warsaw Pact manoeuvres on Czechoslovak soil, since it weakened the security of the entire alliance. The Czechoslovak leadership still rejected the demand of more troop deployments on its territory, and thus the negotiations in Cierna nad Tisou, too, ended in a stalemate. The Soviet side nevertheless agreed to convene another multilateral meeting on Czechoslovak conditions: it would take place on Czechoslovak territory, and neither the Warsaw meeting, nor the Warsaw letter, or the situation in Czechoslovakia would be mentioned in the meeting. The Kremlin had agreed to these demands under the condition that the Czechoslovak leadership would regain control over the situation by removing certain officials as well as taking '[r]adical measures vis-à-vis the mass media'.¹²⁸ For the time being, Dubcek and his comrades seemed to have gained the upper-hand in the negotiations.

A MULTILATERAL SOLUTION?

A multilateral conference was scheduled in the Slovak capital Bratislava on 3 August. Brezhnev was still eager to find a political solution, but most of his allies were impatient to undertake military measures. Gomulka 'voiced a certain discontent that the Soviet comrades had agreed to the Bratislava meeting' in a conversation with the Czechoslovak ambassador in Warsaw.¹²⁹ The East German leadership could not wait 'to deal a collective blow, using all available means, against the reactionary and

¹²⁷ Dubcek and Sugar, *Dubcek Speaks*, 57-8.

¹²⁸ 'Vasil Bil'ak's Recollections of the Bratislava Conference', in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 323.

¹²⁹ See 'Polish Views of the Situation in Czechoslovakia on the Eve of the Bratislava Conference', 2 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 319.

counterrevolutionary forces in Czechoslovakia',¹³⁰ and the Bulgarian leader Zhivkov also referred to 'all possible and necessary means, including the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact if the situation so demands'.¹³¹ Mentioning the break with China and Albania, and the delicate relations with Cuba, Romania, and Yugoslavia, Zhivkov argued that 'if (...) Czechoslovakia leaves the Warsaw Pact or remains in it and behaves like Romania or some other revisionist state, the forces of the Warsaw Pact will be severely weakened and this will pose a great threat to the GDR, Hungary, and Poland.'¹³² The concerns about Czechoslovakia's internal situation thus became exacerbated by worries about its actual loyalty to the Warsaw Pact. Czechoslovakia's incipient 'emancipation' from Soviet control was not at all welcomed by most of the NSWP members.

Thus the Kremlin had convened a multilateral meeting against the wishes of most participants. This, too, would not have been possible if it concerned an official PCC meeting. Although the hardliners were loath to attend, all Czechoslovak conditions were fulfilled: Czechoslovakia was not specifically mentioned, and a declaration was prepared, which concerned 'the current international situation' in general.¹³³ Brezhnev was obviously keen to keep Dubcek on board. The actual composition of the document was, however, truly multilateral, and CPCz presidium member Bilak mentioned in his memoirs that '[t]his was the only meeting in my life (...) where literally every word of the document, from A to Z, was written by the first/general secretaries of the parties and by the prime ministers.'¹³⁴ The crux of the declaration was the clause that 'defending these [socialist] gains (...) is the common international duty of all the socialist countries'. Although the Czechoslovak participants succeeded in including the 'principles of equality, respect for sovereignty and national independence, territorial integrity, fraternal mutual assistance, and solidarity', despite vehement objections from the East German participants, they failed to convince their comrades to include the principle of 'non-interference in internal affairs', too.¹³⁵ This left the option of 'fraternal assistance' for the salvation of socialism open.

Meanwhile, a minority of five pro-Moscow hardliners within the CPCz, headed by Vasil Bilak, used the Bratislava conference to give the Soviet leadership a secret letter, which Bilak secretly gave to CPSU politburo member Pyotr Shelest at the men's lavatory. Echoing Soviet rhetoric, the letter underlined that '[t]he very existence of socialism is under threat', and that the 'Czechoslovak Socialist Republic' can only be saved from 'counterrevolution' with Soviet 'support and assistance with all the means

¹³⁰ 'Report by Soviet Ambassador to the GDR Pyotr Abrasimov on East Germany's Position vis-à-vis Czechoslovakia', 28 July and 1 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 316.

¹³¹ 'Report by Soviet Ambassador to Bulgaria A. M. Puzanov on Bulgaria's Position vis-à-vis Czechoslovakia', 1 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 317.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 318.

¹³³ See 'The Bratislava Declaration', 3 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 326-329.

¹³⁴ 'Vasil Bil'ak's Recollections', 321.

¹³⁵ Cf. for the East German reaction 'Alexander Dubcek's Recollections of the Crisis: Events Surrounding the Xierna nad Tisou Negotiations', in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 303.

at your disposal.' In order to avoid any misunderstandings, the letter concluded that 'our statement should be regarded as an urgent request and plea for your intervention and all-round assistance'.¹³⁶ The Bratislava conference had thus proved a Trojan horse: it had not only given five CPCz presidium members the opportunity to invite the Soviets to intervene, but its declaration, too, could be used to justify intervention.

The Czechoslovak presidium was, however, optimistic about its outcome, and considered it 'a fresh impetus for the promotion of mutually beneficial relations among the fraternal parties'.¹³⁷ Kadar fully agreed, and was particularly relieved that a political solution still seemed possible.¹³⁸ The Bratislava meeting seemed to have erased the negative consequences of the Warsaw meeting. Czechoslovak isolation appeared to have been overcome in Bratislava, and the unity of 'the five' restored. All this would, however, prove merely cosmetic, if the internal situation in Czechoslovakia, where Dubcek was still under a lot of pressure to continue the reforms, did not change. The five socialist countries still had their 'internationalist duty' to consider.

CASTING THE DIE

The Kremlin was not so optimistic about the situation, since Dubcek still failed to gain control over the party and the press after Bratislava. Four days after the meeting, Chervonenko reported to Moscow that Dubcek 'is not yet ready to embark on a consistent and decisive struggle against the rightist forces both within and outside the CPCz'.¹³⁹ Brezhnev subsequently embarked on a campaign of telephone conversations, messages from the CPSU, and letters in order to urge Dubcek to fulfil 'the agreements reached at Cierna nad Tisou'.¹⁴⁰ The telephone calls symptomized the increasingly untenable situation. While Brezhnev concluded that the Czechoslovak 'presidium in general has lost all its power', and referred to 'new, independent measures', Dubcek emphasised that he was 'running out of steam', and 'thinking of giving up this work', and pleaded for 'more time (...) to fulfil the agreement we reached in Cierna nad Tisou'.¹⁴¹ Although Brezhnev's phone calls were reinforced by a personal letter and by another conversation with Chervonenko, the internal situation did not seem to

¹³⁶ 'The "Letter of Invitation" from the Anti-Reformist Faction of the CPCz Leadership', August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 324-325.

¹³⁷ 'Statement by the CPCz CC Presidium after the Talks at Cierna and Bratislava', 6 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 330.

¹³⁸ See János Kádár's Speech', 331-332.

¹³⁹ 'Report by Soviet Ambassador Stepan Chervonenko to the Kremlin on His Meeting with Alexander Dubcek', 7 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 335.

¹⁴⁰ 'CPSU CC Politburo Message to Alexander Dubcek', 13 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 344.

¹⁴¹ 'Transcript of Leonid Brezhnev's Telephone Conversation with Alexander Dubcek', 13 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 345-356.

change.¹⁴² As the British historian William Shawcross aptly puts it, ‘Dubcek was forced to play the part of flustered referee in a savage game between an excited chauvinistic Czechoslovak public and angry frightened Warsaw Pact allies.’¹⁴³ ‘Internationalist duty’ became all the more important to ensure that Czechoslovakia and the WP continued playing the same game.

Despite Dubcek’s failure to act, Brezhnev still hoped to avoid an intervention, and asked for his allies’ support in finding a political solution. Ulbricht arranged to meet Dubcek in Karlovy Vary on 10-11 August of his own accord, but told Brezhnev that ‘he had no illusions about the likely results of the forthcoming meeting’.¹⁴⁴ Brezhnev accordingly decided to meet with a more kindred spirit, and invited Kadar to a meeting in Yalta from 12-15 August. Kadar’s optimism after Bratislava had evaporated, and although he emphasised that ‘political problems require political solutions’, he also added that ‘we have seen and recognised that military assistance may prove necessary on our part.’ Stressing the ‘totally identical (...) positions of our two countries’, Kadar and Brezhnev agreed that a political solution was still preferable, but that a military one might be inevitable. In order to prevent the latter, Brezhnev asked Kadar ‘to have one more talk with Dubcek’, since ‘apart from the Soviet Union, the HSWP is the only party that can make some impression on them.’¹⁴⁵

Brezhnev’s initiative to discuss the situation with Kadar, and his request that Kadar mediate again, clearly indicate his lack of enthusiasm for military intervention. Brezhnev was nevertheless under mounting pressure to invade by the hardliners within the CPSU, such as the minister of defence Andrei Grechko and politburo member Alexander Shelepin, who vied after Brezhnev’s position within the politburo. The Czechoslovak ambassador to the UN told his Romanian colleague a month *after* the invasion that Brezhnev and Kosygin ‘had been against a military invasion in Czechoslovakia and had militated for political solutions’.¹⁴⁶ Although Ulbricht, Gomulka, and Zhivkov also pressed Brezhnev to give the green light for intervention, Brezhnev preferred to discuss the matter once more with the more moderate Kadar. He thus attempted to withstand the pressures from the hardliners both domestically and internationally.

Dubcek, meanwhile, chose to discuss the situation with Ceausescu instead, who had arrived in Prague with a delegation at the highest level of representation from 15-

¹⁴² See ‘The CPSU Politburo’s Instructions to Ambassador Chervonenko for Meetings with Czechoslovak Leaders’, 13 August 1968, and ‘Dubcek’s Notes, Regarding the CPCz’s Purported Failure to Carry Out Pledges Made at Cierna and Bratislava’, 16 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 357-359, and 366-369.

¹⁴³ Shawcross, *Dubcek*, 137.

¹⁴⁴ ‘Cables between Moscow and East Berlin Regarding the Approaching Czechoslovak-East German Meeting in Karlovy Vary’, 10-11 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 342.

¹⁴⁵ ‘János Kádár’s Report on Soviet-Hungarian Talks at Yalta’, 12-15 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 360-362.

¹⁴⁶ Conversation between Nicolae Ceausescu and the Czechoslovak ambassador in the UN, Geneva, 13 September 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 131/1968, 2-3.

16 August. Romanian support had become increasingly welcome as the pressure from 'the five' grew. Dubcek accordingly used this meeting to emphasise that the Czechoslovak contacts with 'the five' had radically changed for the worse, even though Czechoslovak foreign policy had not changed significantly and Czechoslovakia would remain loyal to the WP. He explained that he had decided not to attend the Warsaw meeting since he thought it would be a sequel to the Dresden meeting, where the Czechoslovak leadership had no scope for manoeuvre either, and emphasised his attempt to involve Romania and Yugoslavia in the multilateral meetings. The Czechoslovak prime minister Cernik stressed the contradictions between the Czechoslovak leadership and 'the five', while adding that the situation in Czechoslovakia was not 'counterrevolutionary' anyhow, and that 'every communist party should be responsible for its own fate'.¹⁴⁷ The Czechoslovak optimism after Bratislava also seemed to have evaporated.

Dubcek's and Cernik's arguments must have sounded as music to Ceausescu's ears. With their defiance of the 'five' and their emphasis on the right to conduct affairs as they saw fit, the Czechoslovak leaders began to draw increasingly near to the Romanian position. Ceausescu therefore emphasised his fundamental disagreement with 'the five' and strengthened the Czechoslovak resolve to act independently, while praising the Czechoslovak course since the January plenum. He explained that the Romanian leadership 'has perhaps understood the problems [in Czechoslovakia] better than the other parties, given the fact that (...) our party has seriously dealt with the perfecting of the entire social activity of our country in the last years'.¹⁴⁸

He also stressed that he was against 'any kind of interference in internal problems', and that he had warned the Kremlin against armed intervention, too. The escalation of tensions between Dubcek and 'the five' thus enabled Ceausescu to present himself as a staunch supporter of the Czechoslovak right to independence, while defying the pressure of 'the five'. Dubcek had lost five allies, but Ceausescu had now gained an ally for whom the Romanian insistence on 'non-interference in internal affairs' had come as a godsend.¹⁴⁹ Dubcek underscored the unity of views and his 'profound sympathy (...) for Ceausescu personally' during the toasts after the meeting. His faith in Ceausescu nevertheless definitively sealed the deterioration of relations with 'the five'.¹⁵⁰

Dubcek's meeting with Ceausescu therefore stood in sharp contrast to the one with Kadar, which took place one day later, on 17 August. Instead of praising Dubcek's course, Kadar seemed to have lost faith in his ability to act. Despite his

¹⁴⁷ Meeting between the Romanian and the Czechoslovak leadership, Prague, 15 August 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 107/1968, 44-45.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁵⁰ Toasts offered by the Czechoslovak party, 16 August 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 107/1968, 76. Cf. Dubcek and Sugar, *Dubcek Speaks*, 57, on the Czechoslovak 'understanding with Ceausescu', who practised what he preached.

willingness to discuss the situation once again with Dubcek, the meeting was to no avail. Kadar and Dubcek strongly disagreed in their assessment of the Warsaw meeting, although both considered the Bratislava declaration constructive. Dubcek nevertheless explained 'that Czechoslovakia's internal political situation is more complicated than it was before the Warsaw meeting'.¹⁵¹ Instead of promising to undertake action, Dubcek was justifying his failure to act. Kadar's arguments fell on deaf ears, since Dubcek had switched allegiance to Ceausescu.

THE INTERVENTION

Meanwhile, the necessity to act had been unanimously agreed at a lengthy politburo meeting in Moscow, which had convened from 15-17 August. Considering the fact 'that all political means (...) have already been exhausted', the Soviet politburo had 'unanimously decided to provide help and support to the Communist Party and people of Czechoslovakia with military force'.¹⁵² The politburo had also drafted a letter to the CPCz presidium, with an ultimate warning to 'adopt the necessary, urgent measures', in order to fulfil 'the commitments undertaken by you' at Cierna nad Tisou.¹⁵³ Emphasising that '[a]ny delay in this matter would be extremely dangerous', the Kremlin clearly implied military intervention, although the letter was not interpreted as such in Prague.¹⁵⁴ Since the Kremlin had definitively lost faith in Dubcek, Chervonenko immediately arranged a secret meeting with the Czechoslovak President Ludvik Svoboda on 17 August, and warned him 'that the CPSU CC Politburo will do what is required by the circumstances, but will never permit the socialist gains in fraternal Czechoslovakia to be damaged'.¹⁵⁵ Although Svoboda begged him not to 'resort to military means', Chervonenko concluded 'that at the most trying and critical moment, Svoboda will stand with the CPSU and the Soviet Union'.¹⁵⁶

At the same time, in Moscow, General Ivan Pavloskii, the Soviet deputy minister of defence, was appointed supreme commander of the invasion.¹⁵⁷ Thus the control over the invasion was at the last moment transferred from the Warsaw Pact Supreme Commander, Yakubovskii, who had coordinated the Sumava Exercises, to the deputy defence minister. It is important to note that the intervention in

¹⁵¹ 'Summary of Alexander Dubcek's Meeting with János Kádár at Komárno', 17 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 372.

¹⁵² 'The Soviet Politburo's Resolution on the Final Decision to Intervene in Czechoslovakia', 17 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 377.

¹⁵³ 'Draft "Letter of Warning" from the CPSU CC Politburo to the CPCz Presidium', 17 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 387.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ 'Ambassador Stepan Chervonenko's Report on His Meeting with Czechoslovak President Ludvik Svoboda', 17 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 391.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 392-394.

¹⁵⁷ See 'The Invasion in Retrospect: The Recollections of General Ivan Pavloskii', in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 431-432.

Czechoslovakia was *not* carried out under WP command, but under Soviet command, while the decision of the other four socialist countries to employ *their* armies was made within the framework of the respective governments, and *not* the Warsaw Pact. The alliance accordingly did not even enter the equation on an operative level.

On 18 August Brezhnev convened his four allies to inform them about the politburo's decision. Emphasising the failure of the Czechoslovak leadership to fulfil its commitments, Brezhnev explained that 'we had no other choice in handling things'. He also referred to negotiations between Chervonenko and 'the healthy forces' within the CPCz presidium, which mainly consisted of Bilak and the four other presidium members who had signed the 'letter of invitation' in Bratislava.¹⁵⁸ The Soviet leader counted on his ability to control the situation after the troops had entered Czechoslovakia on the night from 20-21 August. On the same day the Kremlin sent a letter to the CPSU CC members to explain the need for 'active measures in defence of socialism in the CSSR.' Referring again to the 'internationalist duty' of 'the five', the letter stated that 'the governments of the five countries have ordered their military units to take all necessary measures on 21 August'. Thus the Warsaw Pact was explicitly not used in order to legitimise the intervention: the emphasis was on the consent of the *governments*, turning the invasion into an intergovernmental venture instead. The letter concluded that '[t]he troops of our countries will not interfere in the internal affairs of fraternal Czechoslovakia. They will be withdrawn from its territory as soon as the danger to the independence and security of Czechoslovakia and to the socialist future of the Czechoslovak people is eliminated.'¹⁵⁹ Again the salvation of socialism was paramount.

However hollow the phrase 'the salvation of socialism' may seem, it was of course not at all the armies' intention to wage a war on Czechoslovak soil, and measures were therefore taken to avoid any bloodshed. Soviet soldiers were ordered to 'exercise maximum restraint', and to concentrate on the defence of socialism instead.¹⁶⁰ Meanwhile, Chervonenko arranged a meeting with president Svoboda on the eve of the invasion to explain the reasons for intervening and to 'appeal to the army and people of Czechoslovakia not to resist the troops of the fraternal countries'. Although Svoboda objected to the intervention of troops, he agreed with Chervonenko's request in order to avoid bloodshed, and added he 'would never cut his ties with the USSR'.¹⁶¹ The defence minister General Martin Dzur made the same decision, and ordered all

¹⁵⁸ Leonid Brezhnev's Speech at a Meeting of the "Warsaw Five" in Moscow, 18 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 399.

¹⁵⁹ Message from the CPSU CC Politburo to Members of the CPSU CC and Other Top Party Officials Regarding the Decision to Intervene in Czechoslovakia, 19 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 402.

¹⁶⁰ General Semyon Zolotov's Account of the Final Military Preparations for the Invasion, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 375.

¹⁶¹ Cable to Ambassador Stepan Chervonenko from Moscow with a Message for President Svoboda, August 19, 1968, and Chervonenko's Response, August 21, 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 406, 408.

troops 'to remain in their barracks', to refrain from using weapons, and to give 'maximum all-round assistance' to the Soviet troops.¹⁶² In the night from 20-21 August approximately 170,000 Soviet troops entered Czechoslovak territory, supported by Polish, Bulgarian, and Hungarian combat units, and an East German liaison unit.¹⁶³ The Czechoslovak people and soldiers offered, indeed, no armed resistance. From a military point of view, the salvation of socialism seemed to go according to plan.

From a political point of view, however, the 'salvation of socialism' was not quite so easy. Although the 'five' had counted on the 'healthy forces' within the CPCz presidium to take care of the political side of affairs, the 'healthy forces' turned out to be in the minority within the presidium. Shortly after the foreign troops had entered Czechoslovak territory, the presidium voted with a majority of seven to four to adopt a statement in which it emphasised that 'the border crossing not only contravenes all principles governing relations between socialist states, but also violates the fundamental provisions of international law.' The CPCz presidium nevertheless also asked the citizens to 'remain calm and to refrain from putting up any resistance against the advancing troops, since it would now be impossible to defend our state borders'.¹⁶⁴ Although the troops of 'the five' accordingly entered Czechoslovak soil with hardly any resistance, the invasion turned into a Pyrrhic victory: however successful militarily, political legitimisation was conspicuous in its absence.

PAVING THE WAY FOR 'NORMALISATION'

The 'five' went to great lengths to legitimise their course of action in international terms. They sent the Romanian politburo a letter in which 'the immediate help in the struggle against forces of the right' and against 'counterrevolution' was justified as follows:

The defence of socialism in Czechoslovakia is not only an internal affair of the people of that country, but it is, as you understand, the problem of preserving the security of our countries, the problem of defending the positions of global socialism.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² 'Report by Defense Minister Džúr, June 9, 1970, Regarding His Activities on the Night of August 20-21, 1968', in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 412.

¹⁶³ M. Kramer, 'The Prague Spring and the Soviet Invasion', 48. Brezhnev had thwarted Ulbricht's desire to also offer combat troops: the appearance of German troops on Czechoslovak territory was considered too painful after the German invasion in Czechoslovakia in 1939.

¹⁶⁴ 'Statement by the CPCz CC Presidium Condemning the Warsaw Pact Invasion', 21 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 415.

¹⁶⁵ Letter from the five socialist countries to RCP CC, 21 August 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 133/1968, 34.

Thus clearly formulating a theory that would later be known as ‘the Brezhnev doctrine’, the ‘five’ continued to stress that ‘interference in internal affairs’ was out of the question, since the allied armies would withdraw as soon as socialism was consolidated.¹⁶⁶

The Romanian politburo, which Ceausescu had convened at 6.30 in the morning, as soon as he had been informed about the intervention, was, however, not so easily convinced. Its members unanimously decided to send a letter to ‘the five’, in which their action was defined as ‘the occupation of Czechoslovakia’, and in which the Romanian leadership emphasised their ‘disapproval’ of the ‘flagrant transgression of the national sovereignty’ and the ‘interference in internal affairs’. It provided the Romanian leaders with a very dramatic opportunity to put their rhetoric on independence and sovereignty into practice. The politburo members categorically rejected the assessment of the situation in Czechoslovakia as ‘counterrevolutionary’, and demanded ‘a speedy withdrawal of the troops of those five countries’.¹⁶⁷ They thus carefully distinguished between the course of action by ‘the five’ and the Warsaw Pact. Only one junior politburo member used the invasion to question Romania’s membership of the alliance, and although most participants agreed that the intervention defied the alliance’s provisions, no one else linked the criticism of the invasion to the WP.

The Romanian politburo nevertheless decided to mobilise the Romanian people to defend ‘the national independence and sovereignty’ of Romania, since ‘[w]e have no guarantee that that what happened in Czechoslovakia tonight cannot happen in Romania in another night’. The presence of ‘allied’ troops near the Romanian border was further cause for anxiety.¹⁶⁸ The Romanian emphasis on independence thus gained a very dramatic dimension. With intervention as a sword of Damocles, the Romanian defiance of the Kremlin seemed fully justified. Far from being isolated, thirteen other European communist parties joined the Romanian politburo in condemning the invasion and sympathising with Czechoslovakia. Thus the intervention of ‘the five’ in Czechoslovakia enabled the Romanian leaders to occupy the moral high ground. Instead of being excluded by ‘the six’, the Romanian leaders rose above ‘the five’ in unequivocally calling ‘the military intervention a grave mistake’.¹⁶⁹

The invasion in Czechoslovakia also allowed Ceausescu and his comrades to provide their independent course with extra pathos, since they could now *claim* that sovereignty was really under threat, even though ‘they did not feel directly threatened’.¹⁷⁰ The Romanian leaders were so successful in using the possibility of an

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

¹⁶⁷ ‘Protocol Nr. 32 of the session of the RCP CC politburo’, 21 August, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 133/1968, 2-3.

¹⁶⁸ ‘Minutes of the session of the RCP CC politburo’, 21 August, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 133/1968, 18.

¹⁶⁹ Discussion between Bodnars and Aristov, the Soviet ambassador in Poland, Southern Mongolia, 21 August 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 122/1968, 1, 3.

¹⁷⁰ ‘Meeting of the leadership on 23 August 1968 (16)’, FIG APC, Leadership, 1968, mf 020, 0911.

invasion in Romania as an instrument to stir national sentiments that there were great manifestations on Bucharest's Palace Square on 21 August, where Ceausescu held a speech in which he openly condemned the invasion and professed his support for the legal Czechoslovak government.¹⁷¹ Ceausescu was, for once, the hero of the liberty of the people, while supporting reforms, which he would never have allowed in Romania. He managed, however, to gain a considerable degree of genuine popularity, since he could now show that the Romanian 'Declaration of Independence' was not mere rhetoric, but that the politburo had indeed defied the Kremlin at the risk of being its next victim. Ceausescu's condemnation of the invasion in Czechoslovakia thus served his 'personality cult', by capitalising on the people's nationalist feelings.¹⁷² Meanwhile, the Romanian leaders were assured via various channels that they had no reason to fear the Czechoslovak fate.¹⁷³ The initial fears within the Romanian politburo proved unfounded: however detrimental Brezhnev's doctrine was to Czechoslovakia, it also implied that Romania was safe, since socialism was by no means under threat in Romania.¹⁷⁴

The fate of Czechoslovakia was still undecided. Soviet commanders reported from Prague that 'the "healthy forces" have gone to pieces', and that there was no alternative government left to govern Czechoslovakia, since Dubcek and Cernik had been arrested and transferred to Moscow immediately after the invasion.¹⁷⁵ The situation was so different from anticipated that the Kremlin immediately started an inquiry into 'the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs', because the 'Soviet leadership had not been well informed'.¹⁷⁶ Chervonenko was forced to establish an alternative course of action with the remaining members of the CPCz presidium, including president Svoboda, at the Soviet embassy in Prague, where the CPCz members insisted on Dubcek's release from Moscow.¹⁷⁷ Brezhnev, in turn, attempted to involve Dubcek in a solution for 'normalising' the situation in Czechoslovakia, while underscoring time and again that 'we don't intend to keep it under "occupation"', but that the Kremlin merely wanted the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia' to 'act normally and independently in accord with the principles contained in the Bratislava

¹⁷¹ Cf. C. L. Petrescu, 'Performing Disapproval toward the Soviets: Nicolae Ceausescu's Speech on 21 August 1968 in the Romanian Media', in M. Klimke, et al. (eds.), *Between Prague Spring and French May. Opposition and Revolt in Europe, 1960-1980* (New York and Oxford, 2011), 199-210.

¹⁷² 'Information report, 29.8-11.9.1968', Bucharest, 11 September, 1968, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/375, 147.

¹⁷³ Cf. Discussion between Bodnaras and Aristov, the Soviet ambassador in Poland, Southern Mongolia, 21 August 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 122/1968, 10.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. the analysis of the Italian Communist Party: 'Meeting of the leadership on 23 August 1968 (16)', FIG APC, Leadership, 1968, mf 020, 0921.

¹⁷⁵ 'Initial On-Site Report by Kirill Mazurov to the CPSU CC Politburo', 21 August, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 452.

¹⁷⁶ Conversation between Nicolae Ceausescu and the Czechoslovak ambassador in the UN, Geneva, 13 September 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 131/1968, 6.

¹⁷⁷ See 'Discussions Involving Certain Members of the CPCz CC Presidium and Secretariat, at the Soviet Embassy in Prague and the CSSR President's Office', 22 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 460-464.

Declaration'. Although Brezhnev held Dubcek's 'failure to fulfil [his] commitments' responsible for the 'extreme, but unavoidable measures', Dubcek nevertheless inadvertently echoed the Romanian rhetoric by calling 'the use of troops (...) the greatest political mistake'.¹⁷⁸

Dubcek also stuck to this line when president Svoboda arrived in Moscow with a delegation to ask for the return of Dubcek and Cernik to Czechoslovakia. The Kremlin entered into several days of negotiations with all Czechoslovak officials in Moscow, during which Brezhnev stressed the need for 'a political solution'. Conceding that 'the troops will leave' and that Dubcek and Cernik could return home if they guaranteed to 'fulfil the pledges made at Cierna nad Tisou', Brezhnev and Kosygin distributed a draft protocol in which the Cierna nad Tisou agreements were committed to paper, so as 'to solve [the Czechoslovak] problems together with our army'.¹⁷⁹ This draft protocol thus constituted a kind of Cierna nad Tisou at gunpoint. Dubcek did, however, succeed in removing any reference to 'counterrevolution' or the Warsaw letter in the protocol, and five days after the invasion he signed a protocol, which enshrined the 'principles (...) of the talks in Cierna nad Tisou and the conference in Bratislava'.¹⁸⁰

A CRUMBLING COALITION

The 'Moscow Protocol', as it was subsequently called, thus constituted a blueprint for the process of 'normalisation' in Czechoslovakia, according to which the CPCz leadership would finally establish 'control of the mass media' and would carry out the 'personnel changes', which the Kremlin had so long requested. The foreign troops would remain until 'the threat to the gains of socialism in Czechoslovakia and the threat to the security of the countries of the socialist commonwealth have been eliminated', and '[a]ll outstanding [military] problems will be decided at the level of the ministers of national defence and foreign affairs'. The process of 'normalisation' would thus be organised through intergovernmental channels, and the WP was nowhere mentioned to either justify or regulate the current state of affairs. The Moscow Protocol was necessary exactly because the Warsaw Treaty did not cater for such a situation. Although 'the genuine strengthening and improvement of the effectiveness of the defensive Warsaw Pact' was mentioned in the protocol, it was done in relation to 'the subversive acts of imperialism'.¹⁸¹ Brezhnev and his comrades thus seemed very

¹⁷⁸ 'Stenographic Account of Alexander Dubcek's Talks with Leonid Brezhnev and Other Members of the CPSU CC Politburo', 23 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 465-468.

¹⁷⁹ 'Minutes of Soviet-Czechoslovak Talks in the Kremlin', 23 and 26 August, 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 469-473

¹⁸⁰ 'The Moscow Protocol', 26 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 477.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 478-480.

well aware of the fact that the WP could not be used to legitimise an intervention in a socialist country.

The 'five' did not play a role in establishing the ground rules for post-invasion Czechoslovakia either. Although the other four leaders were invited to Moscow in the middle of the negotiations about the Moscow protocol on 24 August, the arguments of Ulbricht, Gomulka, and Zhivkov to establish a 'military dictatorship in Czechoslovakia' did not carry conviction. The hardliners regarded the Soviet plea for 'normalisation' under Dubcek's lead as a 'compromise' with 'the counterrevolution', and were not at all enchanted with Brezhnev's course.¹⁸² Brezhnev, meanwhile, paved the way for normalisation bilaterally with his Czechoslovak comrades. He thus seemed to have sacrificed multilateralism to moderation. The coalition of the 'five' began to crumble.

Brezhnev's moderate course was, however, welcomed in Romania, where Soviet ambassador Basov discussed the situation with Ceausescu one day after Brezhnev's consultations with the five. Basov delivered a letter from the Kremlin, in which it urged its Romanian comrades to 'draw conclusions, which correspond in a realistic manner to the arisen situation', in order to 'prevent a deterioration of Romanian-Soviet relations'.¹⁸³ After Ceausescu had greatly boosted his popularity with his public condemnation of the invasion on 21 August, he now trod his ground more carefully. Ceausescu still questioned why Romania, as a WP member, was not included in the decision-making concerning the situation in Czechoslovakia, and criticised the fact that it was not resolved by peaceful means, but emphasised that 'these differences of opinion are temporary and we want them to be liquidated as soon as possible'. Praising the fact that the Kremlin had begun negotiating with the Czechoslovak comrades, he stressed the importance 'that the situation in Czechoslovakia normalises as soon as possible'.¹⁸⁴ Ceausescu's plea for 'normalisation' was, paradoxically, much more in line with Brezhnev's thinking than the plea of the hardliners for military dictatorship. It might even have tilted the balance in favour of normalisation: Ceausescu's conversation with Basov took place, after all, one day *before* the Moscow protocol was concluded.

Moscow's moderation was a genuine relief to the Romanian leadership, which also implied that their own fears for measures within Romania were unfounded. Whereas the first Romanian politburo meeting since the intervention in Czechoslovakia had been devoted to its condemnation, the second one, which took place straight after Ceausescu's meeting with Basov, focused on the 'normalisation' in Czechoslovakia and the friendship with the SU. Ceausescu repeated the temporary nature of the differences of opinion with the Soviet leadership, and stressed that the

¹⁸² 'Minutes of the First Post-Invasion Meeting of the "Warsaw Five" in Moscow', 24 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 474-476.

¹⁸³ Letter from the politburo of the CPSU CC to the politburo of the RCP CC, 25 August 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 49/1959-1970, 47.

¹⁸⁴ Minutes of the discussions between Soviet ambassador Basov and Ceausescu, 25 August 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 111/1968, 4-5.

presence of troops around the Romanian border was, in fact, not unusual. Maurer, too, emphasised that further 'polemics (...) do not serve any purpose', and suggested meeting the Soviet leadership at the highest level of representation. The Romanian politburo members also suggested bilateral meetings with the Bulgarians and the Hungarians. They clearly wanted to forestall further actions by the coalition of the five, and were confident that Ceausescu's plea for normalisation would reach the Kremlin via Basov.¹⁸⁵ Considering the nature of the Moscow Protocol, which far from satisfied the hardliners of the 'five', the Romanian leaders seemed to have succeeded on both counts. The dynamics of relations between the WP members had thus shifted significantly *after* the invasion on 21 August. The Soviet-Romanian agreement that normalisation was the way forward stood in stark contrast to the division of the 'five' on the future of post-invasion Czechoslovakia.

NORMALISATION UNDER PRESSURE

The Romanians were a little too optimistic about the Soviet enthusiasm for bilateral consultations: the request for a bilateral meeting was categorically rejected by the Kremlin, which stated that such a meeting 'required another atmosphere'.¹⁸⁶ The Soviet leaders had not forgotten Romania's stern condemnation of the intervention, and were particularly vexed by the Romanian use of the term 'occupation', which totally undermined their attempts to legitimise their course of action.¹⁸⁷ Meanwhile, the Romanian leaders continued to tone down their criticism, and were so pleased with the Soviet negotiations with the Czechoslovak leaders in Moscow and their return to Prague that they began to use the term 'penetration' instead.¹⁸⁸ Although NATO circles alluded to a break between Romania and the WP, the Romanian side openly emphasised 'the willingness to cooperate with the Warsaw Pact countries and the loyalty to the treaty'.¹⁸⁹ The Albanian reaction to the invasion in Czechoslovakia was quite the opposite: the Albanian leadership decided to withdraw formally from the WP on 13 September 1968 in protest.¹⁹⁰ Meanwhile, Romanian diplomats in various countries began to court their Soviet colleagues, while stressing the 'necessity of

¹⁸⁵ Minutes of the politburo of the RCP CC, 25 August 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 135/1968, 25-28.

¹⁸⁶ Communication from CPSU CC to RCP CC, 4 September 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 49/1959-1970, 50.

¹⁸⁷ Soviet deputy foreign minister Ilichev to the Romanian ambassador in Moscow, 21 August 1968, *ibid.*, 46.

¹⁸⁸ 'Situation Report by the U.S. State Department', 29 August 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 491.

¹⁸⁹ 'Information Report, 29/8-11/9/1968', 11 September 1968, GDR embassy in Bucharest, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/375, 145.

¹⁹⁰ 'Moscow's strategy and Albanian withdrawal', *Il Tempo*, 15 October 1968, FIG APC, Czechoslovakia, mf 0552, 1001.

friendship and cooperation' time and again.¹⁹¹ The Romanians, as usual, knew exactly what the limits of emancipation were.

However loath to meet the Romanian leadership, the Kremlin was nevertheless keen to underline that it never intended to invade Romania. The Soviet ambassador to Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin, even assured the US Secretary of State Dean Rusk that 'reports of an invasion of Romania were without foundation.'¹⁹² American President Lyndon Johnson and his top aides rightly concluded in the ensuing National Security Council meeting that '[t]he Soviets are unlikely to invade Romania', because '[t]here is no current threat to the communist system in Romania'.¹⁹³ The WP, however, granted no right to intervene in the affairs of one of its members anyhow, which is exactly why the invasion in Czechoslovakia was not executed under the aegis of the WP, and why Brezhnev had to conceive another doctrine to legitimise the invasion.

The doctrine in question had been in the making since the Dresden meeting in March 1968, where Gomulka had explicitly legitimised interference in internal affairs if they had external ramifications. It had already been enshrined in the Bratislava declaration, which emphasised the 'internationalist duty' to defend socialism. And it was elaborated in the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* five weeks after the invasion, where it was explicitly stated that '[e]ach communist party is free to apply the principles of Marxism-Leninism and socialism in its own country', but any of its decisions 'must not be harmful either to socialism in [its] own country or to the fundamental interests of other socialist countries.' Since 'the national independence' of one socialist country depended on 'the power of the socialist commonwealth', the 'actions taken in Czechoslovakia by the five socialist countries' were not only 'aimed at safeguarding the vital interests of the socialist commonwealth', but 'especially at defending the independence and sovereignty of Czechoslovakia as a socialist state'.¹⁹⁴

Instead of trampling on Czechoslovak sovereignty as the Romanians claimed, the invasion of Czechoslovakia had, according to this doctrine, salvaged the sovereignty of Czechoslovakia *as a socialist state*. The WP nevertheless did not cater for defending this 'sovereignty' by force, and the justification in *Pravda* legitimised the invasion instead. This doctrine, later known as the 'Brezhnev doctrine', thus justified interference in WP members' internal affairs in a way that the Warsaw Treaty never could. It also based its justification on criteria that were extraneous to the WP: not the loyalty to the WP, but the application of Marxist-Leninist principles was the central tenet. The Brezhnev doctrine thus explained retrospectively why Romania was never

¹⁹¹ 'Information Report', 12 Nov. 1968, GDR embassy in Moscow, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/163, 139.

¹⁹² 'Summary Notes of the 590th Meeting of the National Security Council', 4 September 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 494.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 496.

¹⁹⁴ 'Unofficial Enunciation of the "Brezhnev Doctrine"', 26 September 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 502-203.

under threat from an invasion. It did, however, contain a warning for the Romanian leadership, too, since “[i]t must be emphasized that even if a socialist country tries to adopt a position “outside the blocs,” it in fact retains its national independence only because of the power of the socialist commonwealth’.¹⁹⁵

The Brezhnev doctrine was published one day *before* Brezhnev convened the leaders of the other four socialist countries for another meeting in Moscow. Although the Brezhnev doctrine was a synthesis of all the arguments previously used in multilateral meetings of the ‘five’, its publication was a unilateral Soviet move unhampered by the checks and balances of the WP. The publication was, however, particularly timely, since Dubcek had allegedly failed to carry out the provisions of the Moscow Protocol, such as the personnel changes. It was not Dubcek, but the Slovak deputy prime minister Gustav Husak, who held ‘the most principled and direct [pronouncements]’ according to Brezhnev, who needed to convince his allies that he had not grown soft after he had refused to implement the military dictatorship that most of them demanded.¹⁹⁶

Brezhnev used the multilateral framework for once again discussing Dubcek, and emphasised the necessity ‘of the conclusion of a treaty providing for the deployment of units of our troops on Czechoslovak territory.’ Suggesting linking the deployment of Soviet forces to ‘various elements of the internal and international situation’, Brezhnev hoped that the conditional troop withdrawal would have ‘a certain positive influence on the entire political situation in Czechoslovakia’, and would motivate Dubcek to abide by the Moscow Protocol. Gomulka suggested participating in the ensuing negotiations with Dubcek, but Brezhnev replied that the Czechs might prefer bilateral consultations. He had, however, involved the other four in commenting on the draft treaty, and promised to mention this to the Czechoslovak leadership.¹⁹⁷ He seemed to covet Czechoslovak goodwill by negotiating with the Czechoslovak leaders on their terms.

The Soviet-Czechoslovak negotiations on the deployment of troops went smoothly. Since the troops were already stationed in Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak leadership had little choice. Brezhnev still promised to ‘withdraw troops in stages as normalisation progresses’. Arguing that ‘it is essential for the security and defence of the borders’, and that ‘corresponding treaties were concluded with Poland and Hungary’, the Soviet leaders convinced their Czechoslovak comrades to keep 70,000 to 80,000 Soviet troops on Czechoslovak territory for a ‘temporary stay, without any fixed time limits’. Hungary, the GDR, and Poland already had Soviet troops on their soil, so the presence of Soviet troops in a WP country was not an anomaly. Moreover, the presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia did, indeed, serve to remedy a remarkable

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 502.

¹⁹⁶ ‘Stenographic Account of the Meeting of the “Warsaw Five”’, 27 September 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 505.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 504-512.

lacuna in safe-guarding the security of the Eastern European border with Western Europe. Both the Soviet and the Czechoslovak side therefore agreed to stipulate the number of remaining troops 'to ensure the safety of the whole socialist community' within 'the framework of the Warsaw Pact'.¹⁹⁸ The WP could now be used to legitimise the deployment of troops, since the remaining troops served the '*protection against foreign enemies*', as a Czechoslovak assessment emphasised, and 'they protect not only our country, but also the territory of other Warsaw Pact states'.¹⁹⁹ The actual treaty was, however, concluded *bilaterally*, between the Soviet and Czechoslovak governments, while explicitly mentioning the 'consent' of the Bulgarian, Hungarian, East German and Polish governments.²⁰⁰ Although the unity of 'the six' seemed to be restored, 'normalisation' was not cast in a WP-mould.

This time Romania was, however, no longer isolated. The Czechoslovak leadership was still keen to express its appreciation of the Romanian stance, as the Czechoslovak ambassador in Bucharest, Karel Kurka, emphasised in a conversation with the Romanian leadership in November 1968. He strongly denounced Ulbricht's interpretation of the situation in Czechoslovakia, which he considered 'in flagrant contradiction with the existing reality', and he stressed that 'the diplomats of those five countries (...) are in total isolation within the diplomatic corps of Bucharest.' He nevertheless added that he also appreciated the Hungarian position, since "the Hungarians have been the most serious, if one can say such a thing about invaders". He understood that 'Kadar had attempted to avoid the military occupation of Czechoslovakia', and sympathised with 'the difficult situation' of the Hungarian leadership after the intervention, which was 'also due to some internal motives'. At the same time '[t]he ambassador underlined that the actual situation (...) is very complicated', since there were 'inevitable, serious clashes' between those members of the Central Committee, who were elected during Novotny's reign, and the "comrades from the Dubcek era", who were under 'powerful pressure' from the CPSU 'to conduct self-criticism' and to 'recognise [their] mistakes' during the Prague Spring. Normalisation was, accordingly, under threat.²⁰¹

Dubcek almost echoed his ambassador's words in a meeting with the Soviet leadership in Kiev from 7-8 December. He stressed the fact that he needed 'the support of the whole party' to 'ensure fulfilment of the Moscow protocol', which was

¹⁹⁸ 'Stenographic Account of Soviet-Czechoslovak Negotiations in Moscow, 2-4 October, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 526-529.

¹⁹⁹ 'The CPCz Leadership's Assessment of the Treaty on Soviet Troop Deployments', October 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 544.

²⁰⁰ See 'Bilateral Treaty on the "Temporary Presence of Soviet Forces on Czechoslovak Territory', 16 October 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 533-536.

²⁰¹ Meeting with Karel Kurka, the Czechoslovak ambassador in Bucharest, 8 November 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 185/1968, 49-53. See for the rapid normalisation of relations between Czechoslovakia and Hungary, because the 'HSWP (...) had correctly judged the situation in Czechoslovakia', letter from Dr. Plaschke to Oskar Fischer, Budapest, 3 January 1969, PA AA, MfAA, C 1106/72, 2-3. The Hungarians were also the first to argue for troop withdrawals.

'a long and complicated process'.²⁰² Since Dubcek still failed to solve the personnel issues and gain complete control over the media, his power over some parts of the CPCz also began to erode. The pressure from Moscow on the one hand and the more conservative members of the CPCz on the other hand became too hard to bear. A significant group of CPCz members, headed by the Slovak politician Bilak, and backed by president Svoboda, decided to put the Slovak deputy prime minister Gustav Husak forward as the new party leader instead.²⁰³ He seemed the ideal candidate to 'normalise' Czechoslovakia, since he had been imprisoned during the Stalin era, denounced by Novotny, and a moderate supporter of the Prague Spring, while he was also trusted by the Kremlin. Bilak and his comrades were scheming to execute this intra-party coup during the Central Committee session, which would take place in April 1969. On 17 March 1969 Dubcek nevertheless still represented Czechoslovakia at the WP's PCC meeting in Budapest, where he nervously chaired the meeting.²⁰⁴

Soviet-Czechoslovak relations took an unexpected turn. After the Czechoslovak ice hockey team had defeated the Soviets twice over during the World Ice Hockey Championship in Sweden from 21-28 March 1969, Czechoslovak discontent with the presence of Soviet troops spiralled out of control.²⁰⁵ In a spirit of victory and provoked by agents of the Czechoslovak State Security, hundred thousands of citizens thronged the streets of the major towns in Czechoslovakia immediately after the final match, and severely insulted the Soviet army and its leaders with slogans 'such as "occupiers", "fascists", "Brezhnev is a hooligan" and so on'.²⁰⁶ The CPSU Politburo met in an emergency session on 30 March, during which the events were characterised 'as an open attack by Czechoslovak counterrevolutionary forces', while 'the passivity of the Dubcek leadership' was severely criticised.²⁰⁷ On 1 April Soviet defence minister Andrei Grechko arrived in Prague unannounced in order to discuss the situation with his Czechoslovak colleague Martin Dzur and some of his aides. Grechko was particularly disgruntled that the political leadership did not seem to have 'issued instructions' to restore order, and considered the 'situation (...) worse than on August 21, 1968'.²⁰⁸ Grechko ordered the Soviet army to be on combat alert in order to avoid more provocations, which further undermined Dubcek's leadership. The so-called 'healthy forces' within the CPCz had finally gathered the clout they had lacked on 21 August 1968. During the CC session on 17 April 1969 Dubcek was removed and Czechoslovakia began to be 'normalised'.

²⁰² 'Minutes of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Negotiations in Kiev', 7-8 December 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 555.

²⁰³ 'Vasil Bilak's Recollections of Preparations for the April 1969 CPCz CC Plenum, and the Removal of Alexander Dubcek', in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 562.

²⁰⁴ See Chapter 7, 326.

²⁰⁵ Cf. Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 441.

²⁰⁶ 'Talks between CSSR Defense Minister Dzur and Soviet Defense Minister Grechko', 1 April 1969, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 565.

²⁰⁷ Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 441.

²⁰⁸ 'Talks between Dzur and Grechko', 569.

CONCLUSION: IRREVERSIBLE MULTILATERALISATION

By 1968 the WP had matured into such a multilateralised alliance that it could not be used as an instrument for the decision-making to invade Czechoslovakia. However, the WP's multilateralisation did facilitate consultation. In stark contrast to 1956 the Soviet leaders consulted the other four socialist countries in a *multilateral* setting. In fact, Brezhnev was pressurised by the East German, Polish and Bulgarian allies to invade. The conventional wisdom according to which the Kremlin was the main perpetrator is, accordingly, defied, too. The multilateral dynamics that were developed within the WP enabled the multilateral decision-making during the Prague Spring, but it was not the WP *as institution*, which facilitated the invasion – on the contrary, the intervention would have been blocked within a WP framework, which is why Dubcek asked at the most critical moment whether it would be possible to convene a PCC meeting.

None of the meetings concerning the Prague Spring took place within the framework of the alliance, nor was the PCC used as an instrument to discuss how to proceed, since the Warsaw Pact – like NATO – did *not* cater for a discussion of its allies' internal affairs, and the absence of Romania would make any WP meeting on this matter both illegal and impossible. The alliance was, therefore, *not* an actor, but a factor in the Prague Spring. Its existence mattered, and so did the Czechoslovak attitude towards the WP, but the decision-making evolved outside its confines, and it was, therefore, *not* the WP that facilitated the invasion.

The multilateralisation within the WP had, however, developed such a dynamics of its own by 1968 that Brezhnev was not able to exclude his allies from the decision-making. It was exactly because the WP had heightened the self-consciousness of *all* its members during the 1960s that Brezhnev had to consult his allies extensively. Although he could afford to bypass Romania by *not* using the WP-framework, he could ill afford to lose the support of his other Eastern European allies, too. By 1968 the WP had integrated to such an extent that a unilateral Soviet move was unthinkable. The roles had even been reversed: Brezhnev was under more pressure from some of his junior allies to invade than vice versa. The multilateral decision-making nevertheless enabled Brezhnev and his more moderate ally, the Hungarian leader Janos Kadar, to slow down the process, and withstand the pressure from hardliners within the Kremlin. In stark contrast to the Soviet invasion in Hungary in the autumn of 1956, which was decided by the Kremlin within a matter of days, the decision-making process in 1968 lasted six months. Although Brezhnev ultimately faced such internal and external pressure that there was no alternative, the multilateral consultations had cushioned the decision-making and had enabled an intervention without bloodshed.

Brezhnev had also used the multilateral decision-making to gain time in searching for a political solution. His eagerness to avoid a military intervention is reflected by the faith he put in Kadar, whose position as mediator between the Czechoslovak leadership and the other five socialist leaders he greatly encouraged.

Kadar's stance during the Prague Spring thus became an increasingly important one. Whereas Kadar had kept a low profile within the WP, when it was dominated by the disputes between the Romanian leaders on one side, and the East German and Polish ones on the other side, the multilateral decision-making during the Prague Spring inadvertently enabled him to gain more scope for manoeuvre and increased his influence within the multilateral dynamics. It was no longer Ceausescu or Gomulka, who was mediating, but it was Kadar who rose above both sides during the Prague Spring. Suddenly it was his opinion that served to tilt the balance.

The positions of the other WP members nevertheless corresponded to their customary positions within the alliance. Gomulka and Ulbricht still shared the same views, although Gomulka was again the leader whose arguments carried more weight. It was Gomulka, after all, who had formulated a Brezhnev Doctrine *avant la lettre* in Dresden in March 1968 by emphasising the external ramifications of internal affairs. Ulbricht was, as ever, a hardliner, but one whose extremism failed to carry conviction. Although he was the most zealous to unmask Dubcek during the Dresden meeting, he immediately lost Dubcek's faith and could therefore do little to influence the Czechoslovak leadership. Zhivkov was as usual a strong defender of the status quo, who agreed with the hardliners, without contributing substantially to the actual arguments.

Within the actual process of the multilateral decision-making no member was isolated, despite some differences of opinion, apart from the Czechoslovak leaders themselves. The antagonism between one and others did not exist, because Romania was – exactly for that reason – not invited to the consultations. The Czechoslovak leadership nevertheless very soon turned into the topic of conversation rather than a partner, even though the initial meeting in Dresden still provided the Czechoslovak leaders with the opportunity to remain part of 'the six', as they had been two weeks earlier during the PCC meeting in Sofia, so long as they condemned the developments in their own country. The Czechoslovak refusal to join the meeting in Warsaw in July heralded the birth of 'the five', who now began to strive to definitively solve the situation in Czechoslovakia. Although the Bratislava meeting seemed to reunite 'the six', the Czechoslovak leadership eventually excluded itself from the decision-making by failing to fulfil the agreements at Cierna nad Tisou and Bratislava. The Czechoslovak withdrawal from the multilateral process in Warsaw came at a price: the salvation of socialism was no longer in Czechoslovak hands.

Meanwhile, the one WP ally that was threatened with isolation after the PCC meeting in Sofia in early March 1968 had suddenly found a new ally: although Dubcek had been loath to submit to Romanian advances at the beginning of the Prague Spring, the quickly concluded Romanian-Czechoslovak friendship treaty in June and his meeting with Ceausescu on 15-16 August sealed a seemingly everlasting friendship. The Czechoslovak defiance of Soviet imperatives enabled the Romanian leadership to cast the Prague Spring into a new narrative, according to which the reform process

primarily served to emancipate Czechoslovakia from the Soviet grip after the Romanian model. The invasion of 'the five' in turn allowed Ceausescu to stir the nationalist feelings of the Romanian people and present himself as the staunch supporter of those leaders who were subdued by the Kremlin. The impending Romanian isolation in March 1968 had thus turned into a heroic quest for independence, which caused Ceausescu's finest hour. At the same time, Dubcek's acceptance of the Romanian friendship proved a turning point in the relations between Dubcek and 'the five'.

The invasion of 'the five' hardly proved to be Brezhnev's finest hour. A military success, it was a political failure, since the 'healthy forces' in Czechoslovakia had evaporated in the face of Soviet tanks. The salvation of socialism came at a price. The fact that 'the five' had to resort to military force highlights the limits of the Kremlin's political power: Brezhnev was too weak to enforce a political solution. The decision-making concerning the Czechoslovak crisis proves that a military solution was only chosen as a last resort and under pressure from other allies. Although the invasion in Czechoslovakia often serves to reinforce conventional wisdoms about the WP as a Soviet transmission belt, which served to subdue unruly Eastern European allies, the evidence concerning the Prague Spring points in a different direction. The invasion was conducted by a 'coalition of the willing', which consisted of four countries in addition to the Soviet Union, who had put more pressure on the Kremlin to invade than vice versa. Not only the political decision-making took place outside the WP framework, but the military intervention, too, was commanded by the Soviet deputy minister of defence Pavlovskii, and not by the Warsaw Pact's supreme commander Yakubovskii. The members of the 'coalition of the willing' had gone to great lengths to avoid using the WP as an instrument to invade. It was accordingly not even a WP invasion in a military sense.

Brezhnev needed to invent his own doctrine, exactly because nothing within the Warsaw Treaty could legitimise the invasion. Brezhnev's doctrine of 'limited sovereignty' at the same time indicates the limits of emancipation for the WP members: emancipation from the Soviet grip was only allowed if accompanied by the unquestionable communist monopoly on power. Sovereignty had as such become conditional on socialism. The Brezhnev doctrine thus gives a retrospective clue to the reasons why the Kremlin never even conceived of invading Romania: under Ceausescu's rule socialism was never at stake. Ceausescu quickly realised this himself, and made an effort to reinforce the 'friendship' with the Soviet Union after the invasion so as to prevent further isolation. At the same time, Ceausescu gained an indirect influence on the post-invasion period, since his preference for 'normalisation' within Czechoslovakia was much more in line with Brezhnev's own thinking than the preference of Gomulka, Zhivkov, and Ulbricht to implement a military dictatorship. The Romanian stance during the Prague Spring once again shows that the WP

members had considerable scope for manoeuvre, so long as they did not push it to the limits. The Romanian leadership exactly understood the limits of emancipation.

These limits were not primarily established by a regime's loyalty to the Warsaw Pact, but by its capacity to safeguard the communist monopoly on power. It was, indeed, not so much the Czechoslovak attitude to the Warsaw Pact that caused the invasion, as the fact that the process of reforms in Czechoslovakia spiralled out of Dubcek's control, exacerbated by an ever radicalising press. Although the Czechoslovak media voiced severe criticism of the pact, it was clear that the Czechoslovak leadership itself intended to carry out a process of *domestic* reforms, while remaining a member of the Warsaw Pact. The Romanian interpretation of the Czechoslovak reform process as an act of defiance against the Soviet Union served Romanian purposes more than Czechoslovak ones. Although Dubcek was keen to improve his contacts with West Germany – which in itself was a sensitive issue – the Prague Spring represented, in the first instance, an *internal* process of reforms, which only had *external* repercussions to the extent that socialism was under threat. The Brezhnev doctrine served to legitimise the intervention for exactly those reasons.

The mere existence of the Brezhnev doctrine also suggests that Brezhnev had more scope for unilateralism *outside* the confines of the WP than *within* the alliance. No foreign policy decision within the WP carries Brezhnev's name. Although the multilateral decision-making during the Prague Spring was a clear effect of the multilateralisation within the WP, Brezhnev was able to convene meetings and dictate the agenda in a way that had become impossible within the alliance. By 1968 the WP had multilateralised too much to enable the kind of transmission belt approach that is often associated with the alliance. For unilateralism the Kremlin had to bypass the Warsaw Pact, instead of using it. The intervention in Czechoslovakia by the 'coalition of the willing' thus took place in spite of the Warsaw Pact's existence, although the fact that it was decided within a multilateral framework is a clear indication that the WP's multilateralisation had become irreversible.

7

**CLOSING RANKS,
WHILE CLASHING WITH CHINA**

When people are confronted with a firmly sustained position, they yield.¹
Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Romanian Prime Minister

The Prague Spring and the invasion of the Eastern European 'Coalition of the Willing' in Czechoslovakia on 21 August 1968 have put such a stamp on the year 1968 in Eastern Europe that it is easy to forget that there were still several unresolved issues within the WP, which initially demanded more attention than the situation in Czechoslovakia. Although the Romanian dissent on a non-proliferation treaty had been neutralised by issuing a separate declaration of the 'six' during the PCC meeting in Sofia from 6-7 March 1968, further proposals on military reforms had been postponed to the next PCC meeting, since it was impossible to bypass Romania on the reforms of an alliance of which it was itself a member. The WP's only official organ remained the PCC, and no consensus had been reached on intra-allied coordination on military and foreign policy issues. The question of the intergovernmental versus supranational nature of the alliance's institutions had not yet been resolved, nor had the Bucharest Declaration on European Security of July 1966 been complemented by a more concrete proposal. The WP had even been side-lined through the multilateral decision-making during the Prague Spring, which was conducted outside the confines of the alliance. The WP, accordingly, found itself in limbo until the next PCC meeting in March 1969.

Meanwhile, the consolidation of the WP became particularly urgent since its Western counterpart, NATO, had overcome the crisis, which the dissent of French president Charles de Gaulle had caused, by the end of 1967. Although the French government had decided to withdraw from NATO's military structures in March 1966,

¹ 'Minutes of the session of the RCP CC Politburo', 18 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 40/1969, 11.

it ultimately agreed to sign the Harmel Report, which enshrined NATO's reforms, in December 1967.² In this report it was decided to restructure NATO according to the slogan 'defence cum détente', which indicated that NATO would strive after a relaxation of tensions with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, while deterring a further escalation of such tensions by an increased defence capability.³ Thus NATO had resolved its internal crisis through the Harmel Report, which also 'stressed the importance of having military capabilities that covered the full spectrum of potential conflict' in order to 'deter aggression and counter the political influence of Soviet military power, paving the way for détente.'⁴ In December 1967 NATO had adopted the military strategy of 'Flexible Response', which proclaimed an incremental escalation of the fighting in case of a war with the WP.⁵ Through the Harmel Report the Western alliance had not only solved its political crisis by neutralising the French 'Alleingang', but it had also found a new purpose by redefining itself as a military alliance in order to further détente. The Warsaw Pact had, however, not found a solution to dealing with Ceausescu's 'Gaullist challenge'.

At the same time the Eastern European alliance had not yet overcome its internal crisis. The German Question had become all the more sensitive, since a new direction in West German foreign policy threatened to sow even more disunity in the alliance. The so called new 'Ostpolitik' of the social democratic West German foreign minister Willy Brandt to seek an improvement of relations with Eastern Europe, while still refusing to recognise the GDR, created a delicate divide between Eastern Germany and the other WP countries. When Willy Brandt became chancellor in October 1969, the reaction to his 'Ostpolitik' became an even more urgent issue. Meanwhile, the Sino-Soviet split was about to turn from an ideological battle into a military one, which would even culminate in the Soviet Union and China being on the brink of war during Sino-Soviet border clashes in March 1969.

While the WP was under pressure from two fronts, the Prague Spring further exacerbated the situation within the Eastern bloc. The alliance had been split into a 'club' of five, leaving Romania and Czechoslovakia isolated, whereas Albania had officially withdrawn from the alliance in protest to the invasion in Czechoslovakia in September 1968. The restructuring of the alliance thus became all the more imperative, and the WP members urgently had to find an appropriate response to NATO's Harmel Report. Since the WP's Sumava Exercise in June 1968 caused a lot of tensions, whereas the invasion in Czechoslovakia on 21 August 1968 was *not* a WP venture at all,

² Cf. A. Wenger, 'The Multilateralization of Détente: NATO and the Harmel Exercise, 1966-68', in A. Locher and C. Nünlist, *The Future Tasks of the Alliance. NATO's Harmel Report, 1966-1967* (2005), Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security (PHP), <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?id=108636&lng=en>, accessed 21 September 2013, 10.

³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 'The Future Tasks of the Alliance. The Harmel Report' (1967), http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_26700.htm, accessed 21 September 2013.

⁴ A. Wenger, 'Crisis and Opportunity. NATO's Transformation and the Multilateralization of Détente, 1966-1968', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6:1 (2004), 65.

⁵ V. Mastny, 'Was 1968 a Strategic Watershed of the Cold War?', *Diplomatic History* 29:1 (2005), 149.

the functioning of the alliance's military aspects remained questionable. After the invasion in Czechoslovakia, the WP members now had to show to the world that they could make a positive contribution to the relaxation of European tensions, as well as underlining their unity after several members had sailed a different course during the Prague Spring. Meanwhile, the WP leaders also needed to finalise the alliance's military consolidation in reaction to the increased emphasis on military strategy within NATO. At the same time the beginning of 1969 heralded the reign of Richard Nixon as American president, who immediately proclaimed his intention to strengthen NATO.⁶

This chapter therefore deals with the same period as the previous one, but from a totally different angle. Instead of assessing the role of the WP during the Prague Spring, it aims to examine the functioning of the alliance by focusing on the issues that have been central to the rest of this book. Even though the WP played no role in resolving the crisis in Czechoslovakia, the customary issues, such as WP military reforms and European Security, did not grind to a halt during the Prague Spring. On the contrary, business continued – almost – as usual, and during the first PCC meeting after the Prague Spring, in March 1969, several issues were resolved which had been dominating WP discussions throughout the 1960s. Although this chapter deals with various issues that have received some attention in historiography, such as the aftermath of the Prague Spring,⁷ European Security,⁸ and the escalation of the Sino-Soviet split in March 1969,⁹ it is the interplay and denouement of all these issues that deserves to be studied in greater depth. According to Mastny this meeting even represented the PCC's 'landmark event'.¹⁰ Against the backdrop of the German Question and the Sino-Soviet split the issues of reforms and European Security will be analysed during the period that also witnessed Dubcek's rise and fall: starting with the PCC meeting in Sofia in March 1968, and finishing with the one in Budapest in March 1969, this chapter will trace a decisive period in the evolution of the WP, in which the alliance was confronted with a simple question: to consolidate or to disintegrate.

⁶ Meeting between Ceausescu and Brezhnev, 16 March 1969, 10.30 pm, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 7/1969, 21.

⁷ See M. Munteanu, 'When the Levee Breaks: The Impact of the Sino-Soviet Split and the Invasion of Czechoslovakia on Romanian-Soviet Relations, 1967-1970', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 12:1 (2010), 43-61.

⁸ See W. Jarzabek, *Hope and Reality. Poland and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1964-1989*, CWIHP Working Paper No. 56 (Washington, 2008), and C. Békés, 'Der Warschauer Pakt und der KSZE-Prozess 1965 bis 1970', in T. Diedrich et al. (eds.), *Der Warschauer Pakt. Von der Gründung bis zum Zusammenbruch 1955 bis 1991* (Berlin, 2009), 225-244.

⁹ See L. Lüthi, 'Restoring Chaos to History: Sino-Soviet-American Relations, 1969', *The China Quarterly* 210 (2012), 378-397, and B. Schäfer, 'The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the Warsaw Pact, 1969-1980', in M. A. Heiss and S. V. Papacosma (eds.), *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intra-bloc Conflicts* (Ohio, 2008), 206-218.

¹⁰ V. Mastny, 'Meeting of the PCC, Budapest, 17 March 1969, Editorial Note', PHP, http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll_pcc/ednote_69.cfm, accessed 12 September 2013.

MILITARY REFORMS

The military restructuring of the WP, proposed by Brezhnev in January 1966, was intended to strengthen the alliance's military capability vis-à-vis NATO. Up to 1966 the military dimension of the WP had been even less institutionalised than the political one: apart from a (Soviet) Supreme Commander with a general staff there were no military organs at all within the alliance. Soviet military thinking was not shared in detail with the other members of the alliance, and 'even the leading GDR general officers had not been privy to the real-time planning of Moscow's strategists.'¹¹ The same applied, presumably, to other WP officers, who were merely supposed to cooperate in an all-out nuclear strike in Europe, if NATO were to attack. None of these plans were, however, discussed within any WP organs, even though the 'plans envisaged greater sacrifices for the Soviet allies than for the Soviet Union itself.'¹² Although the WP members would be likely to close ranks in the event of an actual war with NATO, Soviet unilateralism on a *military* front seemed to have grown so much out of sync with the *political* multilateralisation of the WP that the military reforms within the WP became all the more urgent.

The WP defence ministers had agreed to establish a staff of the Unified Armed Forces and a Committee on Technology during a meeting in May 1966, but the reforms had stagnated ever since due to Romanian dissent.¹³ In the first half of the 1960s Romania had already 'adopted an independent military doctrine of "Total People's War for the Defence of the Homeland," as well as a national military structure entirely separate from that of the Warsaw Pact,' and Ceausescu had prohibited joint WP manoeuvres on Romanian territory.¹⁴ The Romanian leadership was accordingly determined to use the process of reforms to safeguard Romanian sovereignty in military matters, too. The Romanians were particularly concerned about a potential transfer of jurisdiction over their national army to the Warsaw Pact's Supreme Commander, and they had proposed the creation of a Military Council in order to control the power of the Supreme Commander.¹⁵ After Ceausescu had succeeded in removing the discussion of any kind of reforms from the agenda during the PCC meeting in Bucharest in July 1966, the Kremlin finally tried to breathe new life into the

¹¹ T. Diedrich, 'The German Democratic Republic', in J. Hoffenaar and D. Krüger (eds.), *Blueprints for Battle. Planning for War in Central Europe, 1948-1968* (Lexington, 2012), 175.

¹² Cf. V. Mastny, 'Imagining War in Europe. Soviet Strategic Planning', in V. Mastny et al. (eds.), *War Plans and Alliances in the Cold War. Threat Perceptions in the East and West* (London and New York, 2006), 29.

¹³ 'Memorandum of Results of the Chiefs of General Staff Meeting regarding Reorganization of the Warsaw Treaty', 1 March 1968, in V. Mastny and M. Byrne (eds.), *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (Budapest and New York, 2005), 249-251.

¹⁴ M. Kramer, 'The Kremlin, the Prague Spring, and the Brezhnev Doctrine', in V. Tismaneanu, *Promises of 1968: Crisis, Illusion, and Utopia* (Budapest and New York, 2010), 286.

¹⁵ Protocol of the meeting of WP defence ministers, Moscow, 27-28 May 1966, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 38/1968, 184.

military reforms in preparation for the PCC meeting, which Ceausescu had convened in Sofia on 6-7 March 1968 in order to discuss the non-proliferation treaty.

The meeting of the Chiefs of the General Staff from each WP country, which took place from 29 February till 1 March 1968 in Prague, nevertheless sealed the Romanian 'Alleingang' on military reforms. To the great delight of the Romanian delegation the other delegations accepted the Romanian proposal to create a Military Council, after the Romanians had supposedly abandoned their insistence on the principle of unanimity. Although the other delegates were prepared to agree on a draft statute for the Council in question, the Romanians objected to the pressure on 'deciding in a great hurry', and the Romanian chief of staff General Ion Gheorghe insisted on discussing matters of principle first, while including these in a new statute of the Unified Command, before creating any more organs.¹⁶ The Romanian delegation was particularly interested in specifying the relations between the Unified Command and the respective governments, as well as the Unified Command and the PCC, in order to determine where the power to decide over the individual armies would reside.

Moreover, the Romanian delegates wanted to prevent their allies from being misled by the name 'Unified Command'. Referring to the provisions of the Warsaw Treaty, the Romanians claimed that a Unified *Command* does not imply unified *armed forces*, while emphasising that the armed forces of the WP countries would *not* unite, but remain under national command. The Romanians thus attempted to ensure that the Unified Command would not turn into a supranational organ either, which would entail the Romanian loss of control over its own armed forces. In order to enshrine the intergovernmental nature of the Unified Command, the Romanian participants had even brought their own draft statute of a Unified Command with them. In an ironic reversal of roles the other participants claimed that they had no mandate to discuss the Romanian draft.¹⁷

Meanwhile, the Kremlin feared that the Romanian instrumental use of the Warsaw Treaty served to undermine the existence of the Unified Armed Forces altogether, and decided to leave the approval of 'the establishment of principal institutions of the Unified Armed Forces' open to 'the sides interested in a positive resolution to this matter'.¹⁸ Allowing Romania 'an open opportunity to join and participate in the established institutions whenever it recognises this to be appropriate' the Soviet leaders were accordingly prepared to tolerate a Romanian version of the French withdrawal from NATO's military structures in March 1966.¹⁹ The Romanian Gaullism was once more underscored by the protocol of the meeting, which stated that

¹⁶ Letter from General Ion Gheorghe to Ceausescu, 1 March 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 40/1968, 105-106. See for the draft statute of the Unified Command, *ibid.*, 117-121.

¹⁷ Letter from General Ion Gheorghe to Ceausescu, 1 March 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 40/1968, 108.

¹⁸ 'Memorandum of Results', 250.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 251.

all delegations apart from the Romanian one had agreed.²⁰ A Romanian appendix underlined in turn the necessity of resolving problems of principle first.²¹

The military reforms were, accordingly, at this stage still much more pressing than the WP stance towards the Prague Spring. The Romanian delegates were pleasantly surprised by the cordial atmosphere during the meeting, and by Dubcek's personal greetings to Ceausescu.²² Although the disagreement during the meeting pre-empted any resolution on military issues during the ensuing PCC meeting in Sofia, it was, however, decided at the PCC meeting that the ministers of defence would analyse the documents and put forward their own proposals within six months.²³ Meanwhile, Soviet Supreme Commander Marshall Yakubovskii travelled Eastern Europe in an attempt to lobby the respective WP leaders for the Soviet proposals. The initiative on military reforms was still clearly a Soviet prerogative, which needed to be prepared bilaterally.

YAKUBOVSKII ON TOUR

Yakubovskii started his journey with one of Moscow's most ardent allies: the Polish leader Gomulka. On 19 April 1968, four weeks after the Dresden meeting of 'the six', Yakubovskii further increased Romanian isolation by underlining that drafts of the statutes had been sent to all governments except the Romanian one, although he did 'not exclude the possibility of visiting Romania' at a later stage.²⁴ Gomulka was not at all averse to bypassing Romania altogether, and 'emphasised the urgency of quickly implementing the documents even without Romania's participation.' Underlining that the PCC should be 'a full decision-making institution', which is exactly what the Romanians wanted to avoid, Gomulka clearly attempted to use the bilateral meeting to undermine the Romanian stance. Gomulka also drew the situation in Czechoslovakia into the conversation by adding that '[t]he disorganisation of their army leaves the border with the FRG practically open', which he considered a valid 'reason to keep Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia, within the framework of the Warsaw Pact'.²⁵ It is interesting to note that Yakubovskii had not brought this matter up, and did not commit himself to it either. The link between the Czechoslovak situation and the WP was a Polish one, not a Soviet one.

²⁰ Protocol of the meeting of WP deputy defence ministers, Prague, 29 February and 1 March 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 40/1968, 113.

²¹ Appendix to the protocol of the meeting of WP deputy defence ministers, Prague, 1 March 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 40/1968, 116.

²² Letter from General Ion Gheorghie to Ceausescu, 1 March 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 40/1968, 110.

²³ 'Report to Nicolae Ceausescu on the Meeting of the Political Consultative Committee in Sofia', 3 June 1968, in Mastny and Byrne (eds.), *Cardboard Castle*, 264-269.

²⁴ 'Record of Gomulka-Yakubovskii Conversation in Warsaw', 19 April 1968, in Mastny and Byrne (eds.), *Cardboard Castle*, 261.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 262.

The Hungarian leader Janos Kadar was, however, not at all prone to use the military reforms as a pretext for sending Soviet troops to Czechoslovakia. When Yakubovskii visited Hungary, the Soviet reform proposals met with caution instead. In stark contrast to Gomulka, Kadar wanted to *prevent* the reforms from enabling troop deployment on the territories of WP member states without their approval, thus also forestalling a possible invasion in Czechoslovakia. He also differed from Gomulka on his attitude to Romania, and advised Yakubovskii that ‘preventing a break with Romania, which could mean the end of the alliance, was more urgent than the situation in Czechoslovakia’.²⁶ As in the Prague Spring in general, Kadar also occupied the position of a mediator in Soviet-Romanian relations, urging Brezhnev to tread his ground carefully to prevent alienating Romania from the WP.

Soviet-Romanian relations had, in fact, deteriorated to such an extent that Romanian and Soviet delegates had spent almost hundred days negotiating on a treaty of friendship and cooperation in the heat of the Prague Spring.²⁷ This stood in sharp contrast with the speedy conclusion of a friendship treaty between Romania and Czechoslovakia, as we have seen in the last chapter. The Soviet-Romanian treaty was subject to severe rows as to whether the WP would be mentioned or not, and to Ceausescu’s insistence that ‘provisions be added to ensure that Romanian troops would be used only in Europe and only against “imperialist” countries, not against other Communist states’.²⁸ The Romanian leadership thus wanted to ensure that its troops could not be used against China, but the provisions ironically ruled out any interference in Czechoslovak affairs, too. The Kremlin ultimately yielded to the Romanian demands, although with a delay of more than two years: the new treaty was concluded in July 1970.²⁹

Yakubovskii nevertheless did not follow Gomulka’s advice to bypass Romania altogether, and decided to send the documents to the Romanian government in May. In direct contradiction with the Polish view Romanian defence minister Ion Ionita stressed the consultative nature of the PCC again and argued that the Supreme Command should not be turned ‘into a supranational command and control organ’, since the armed forces of the WP states should ‘remain subordinate to the national commands’.³⁰ The Military Council should therefore have ‘functions of consultation and recommendation’, in which proposals cannot be adopted ‘by a simple majority of votes’, since that is ‘a principle applicable within the internal framework of the parties and states, and I think it cannot be extended to relationships between parties and states’. The Romanians thus prevented the principle of democratic centralism from

²⁶ Mastny, ‘Watershed’, 157.

²⁷ ‘Message about the state of relations between the Soviet Union and the Socialist Republic of Romania’, GDR embassy in Moscow, 10 June 1968, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/162, 413-414.

²⁸ Kramer, ‘The Kremlin’, 286.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ ‘Report to Nicolae Ceausescu’, 267.

being transferred to international relations, as they had argued in January 1965.³¹ Distinguishing yet again between domestic politics and international relations, the Romanians prevented the WP from functioning like a politburo writ large.

The Romanian perspective was, however, directed towards the West. Emphasising that they would not cooperate 'with the provisions of these documents' if 'they turn the Political Consultative Committee and the Unified Command into supranational bodies', the Romanian leadership also unprecedentedly reserved the French option for itself: 'As a follow-up to this position, the Socialist Republic of Romania, without declaring that it is leaving the Treaty, places itself outside of the integrated military organs of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation'. This would also have direct military consequences, since it would imply 'the right to review the number of tactical and operational units (...) in the structure of the Unified Armed Forces with a view toward reducing them'.³² The Romanians thus had an instrument to undermine the alliance's tendency towards supranationalism, and defended their scope for manoeuvre in military terms as ardently as in political terms. Potentially copying the behaviour of the most recalcitrant NATO member, the Romanian side almost turned the WP's evolution into an alliance more akin to NATO into a self-fulfilling prophecy: the Romanian 'Alleingang' could not be resolved within the tradition of democratic centralism.

When Yakubovskii travelled to Prague as part of his tour to improve 'the combat readiness of the Warsaw Pact', the meeting with Czechoslovak defence minister Martin Dzur 'took place in a spirit of full understanding'. Regarding the respective treatment of military reforms, too, it is easy to forget the fact that the Prague Spring was in full swing, since the Romanian leaders were at this stage still much more radical on military reforms than their Czechoslovak comrades. Discussing ways 'to strengthen the Warsaw Pact's military institutions', the Czechoslovak delegation 'proposed adjustments' according to which 'the commander-in-chief [= Supreme Commander] must base his activity not only on the decisions of the Political Consultative Committee, but also at all times on the consent of the governments or defence ministers of the member countries concerned'. Apart from echoing the Romanian emphasis on intergovernmental decision-making, the Czechoslovak delegation also resembled the Romanian proposal that the chief deputies of the Supreme Commander 'may be chosen from among the armed forces of any member country'. All Czechoslovak proposals were 'taken into consideration (...) with an open mind', and the Czechoslovak defence minister sincerely believed that the discussions had contributed 'to the strengthening of mutual relations'.³³

³¹ Cf. Chapter 4 of this book, 160.

³² 'Report to Nicolae Ceausescu', 269.

³³ 'Report by CSSR National Defense Minister Martin Dzur on a Meeting with Marshal Yakubovskii, Commander-in-Chief of the Warsaw Pact Joint Armed Forces', 24-25 April 1968, in J. Navrátil et al. (eds.), *The Prague Spring 1968* (Budapest and New York, 2006), 112-113.

At the beginning of July, before the fateful meeting of the five socialist leaders in Warsaw on 14 July, the Czechoslovak side responded much more constructively to the Soviet proposals, and stressed its 'strong resolution to strengthen the allied ties within the Warsaw Treaty', while backing Yakubovskii's proposals 'to make the Warsaw Pact more flexible and operational'. It also referred to the resolve within the CPCz action programme 'to contribute to joint activities of (...) the Warsaw Treaty in a more active way', as well as 'seeking to increase our active share in the joint defence of the Warsaw Treaty states, as we do not want to be a mere passive member'.³⁴ Instead of considering opting out of the WP's military structures in the Romanian way, the Czechoslovak leaders seemed ready to embark on a self-consciously constructive course.

GENERAL PRCHLIK'S CHALLENGE

Despite the obvious differences between Romania and Czechoslovakia, the two regimes had nevertheless grown closer during the Prague Spring, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Although the Czechoslovak leadership kept professing its allegiance to the Warsaw Pact, there were several leading officials whose views on this matter were more extreme than those of Dubcek and Cernik. The most prominent of those was Lt. General Vaclav Prchlik, who had been in charge of the CPCz CC department for state organs since February 1968,³⁵ and who had developed a report on 'the Internal and External Security of the State', which would serve as 'the starting point for formulating decisions of the Extraordinary 14th Party Congress.' This report argued for a 'Czechoslovak defence system', which would be based on a 'Czechoslovak military doctrine', instead of 'operational tasks set forth by the Warsaw Pact command'.³⁶ Although Romania already had its own military doctrine, a Czechoslovak military doctrine carried still more risks, since the country was increasingly straying from the path of communism.

Echoing the Romanian emphasis on intergovernmentalism, the report emphasised that '[e]very government should be responsible for this most important sphere of state authority on both the national and the international levels'. Although the report underscored that 'the doctrine will also take as its starting point the alliance obligations to the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact partners', it was clear that it paved the way for the kind of emancipation that Romania had already achieved.³⁷ If

³⁴ 'Czechoslovak and East German Views on the Warsaw Pact', July 1968, in Mastny and Byrne (eds.), *Cardboard Castle*, 302-303.

³⁵ Kramer, 'The Kremlin', 290.

³⁶ "Problems with the Policy of Safeguarding the Internal and External Security of the State, Their Status at Present, the Basic Ways to Resolve Them," Czechoslovakia's Plans for Future Changes in Military and National Security Policies', July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 268-276.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

this were to be implemented at the Congress in September 1968, it might well become the Czechoslovak 'Declaration of Independence', with still more emphasis on military issues than the Romanian one, and with far more detrimental effects, since it could herald the collapse of communism in Czechoslovakia.

Prchlik also gave a press conference on the last day of the meeting of the five socialist countries in Warsaw, in which he stated that 'it is deplorable that a meeting is being held among allied states that have disregarded our views'. Increasingly frustrated by the fact that Soviet troops had still not withdrawn after the Sumava exercise, he had attempted to find out whether the Warsaw Treaty legitimised 'the right to deploy (...) units arbitrarily on the territory of other member states', but had discovered instead that the treaty emphasised 'the need to respect the sovereignty of states as well as the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs'. This was, presumably, why the decisions about the Sumava exercise were made outside the confines of the WP: the treaty had more respect for sovereignty than some of its members. Denouncing the 'violation of the fundamental clauses of the Warsaw Treaty', Prchlik accordingly argued 'that necessary qualitative changes should also be carried out in the Warsaw Pact's concept of its function and in the establishment of relations within the Warsaw Pact'. Arguing for 'genuine equality of all members of the coalition', he proposed to 'reinforce the role of the Political Consultative Committee', while also criticising the fact that the WP's Unified Command 'consists solely of marshals, generals, and other senior officers of the Soviet army'.³⁸

Most of Prchlik's proposals were not new, but they acquired a dynamics of their own within the heat of the Prague Spring. Rather than discussing such issues within the enclosed framework of the PCC, Prchlik went public with his criticism at a time when Czechoslovak foreign policy inspired little confidence with its allies, anyhow. Prchlik also seemed to ignore that reforms of the PCC had already been discussed for several years, with considerable input by the NSWP members. Prchlik's ominously concluded his press conference with 'the fact that views within the Warsaw Pact itself are now divergent. As I see it, we must do what we can to exploit this divergence, and we must also take advantage of the different views expressed by fraternal parties outside the Warsaw Pact'.³⁹ Whereas the CPCz leaders had been eager to profess their unflinching loyalty to the alliance, Prchlik's press conference was an explicit exhortation to undermine the unity of the WP still further. Thus Dubcek's pledges of allegiance lost their credibility.

The Soviet reaction to Prchlik's remarks was, accordingly, very violent, and three days after the press conference Yakubovskii wrote a letter to Dubcek in which he accused Prchlik of 'distort[ing] the essence of this structure and its organisation (...), divulg[ing] some top-secret information', and 'defam[ing] Soviet military commanders'.

³⁸ 'Press Conference with Lt. General Vaclav Prchlik', 15 July 1968, Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 239-242.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

He accordingly requested Dubcek 'to prevent any possibility of further disclosures of interstate secrets', and to 'draw the proper conclusions in this case'. Two days later, on 20 July, the Soviet government reinforced Yakubovskii's letter by sending a similar one to the Czechoslovak government, in which it regarded Prchlik's remarks as part of a larger campaign 'aimed at undermining the Warsaw Pact'. Reminding Czechoslovakia of its 'responsibility to the Warsaw Pact' instead, the Soviet government expressed its expectation that 'effective measures will be taken to establish the necessary border control system on the frontiers with the FRG and Austria', where the borders were still open, thus echoing Gomulka.⁴⁰

Dubcek ultimately decided to close the CPCz CC State Administration Department, which was headed by Prchlik, altogether, but this did little to salvage the situation.⁴¹ The fact that Prchlik was the only one to be replaced during the Prague Spring, despite various Soviet requests to remove other officials, nevertheless clearly illustrates that Prchlik's depiction of the WP also exceeded Dubcek's intentions. Dubcek's expressions of allegiance were not merely rhetorical. They were, however, undermined by several articles in the Czechoslovak press, where the arguments to leave the WP and 'neutralise' Czechoslovakia grew more frequent.⁴² Prchlik's removal was, accordingly, too late to reassure the Kremlin of Czechoslovak loyalty to the WP.

Brezhnev's most 'loyal' allies nevertheless did not trust Dubcek's motives either: two weeks after the Warsaw meeting on 14-5 July the East Germans emphasised that '[b]y refusing to join the Warsaw meeting, the party leadership of the CPCz and the government of the CSSR have clearly violated article 3 [of the Warsaw Treaty]', according to which '[t]he "guarantee of the joint defence, the maintenance of peace and of mutual security" has to be discussed immediately, if one or more of the member-states believe that "danger is ... imminent"'. The East German report even continued to argue that the Warsaw Treaty could legitimise a 'pre-emptive' strike, since 'other agreed measures necessary for strengthening the defence of member-states can be implemented in order (...) to guarantee protection against potential aggression'.⁴³ Despite Dubcek's pledge of allegiance to the alliance, the East German perception was quite the opposite. Contrary to Kadar and Ceausescu, Ulbricht and Gomulka were eager to use the WP to deploy troops on WP territory. If Brezhnev had sanctioned such a use of the Warsaw Pact, it would have fundamentally altered the nature of the alliance. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the alliance was, however, *not* used as an instrument for the invasion in Czechoslovakia.

⁴⁰ 'Soviet Government Diplomatic Note to the Czechoslovak Government', 20 July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 265-267.

⁴¹ Cf. 'Letter from Marshal Yakubovskii to Alexander Dubcek on Gen. Prchlik's News Conference', 18 July 1968, in Navrátil et al. (eds.), *Prague Spring*, 259-260.

⁴² 'About the politics of the CPCz, Working Group CPCz, strictly confidential', SAPMO-BArch, 31 July 1978, DY 30/IVA2/20/1166, 63.

⁴³ 'Czechoslovak and East German Views', 304.

REFORMS IN THE POST-INVASION PERIOD

The invasion in Czechoslovakia on 21 August 1968 toned down Soviet military ambitions. Even though the invading armed forces faced no Czechoslovak resistance, the Soviet army 'ran into bottlenecks and its supply lines became strained in ways that could be fatal in combat conditions.'⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Soviet troops were ordered not to engage in battle during a hypothetical encounter with NATO troops, whereas NATO decided not to interfere and struggled with a dysfunctional communication system. Both sides were not only 'caught unprepared', as Mastny convincingly argues, but the invasion in Czechoslovakia also suggested that 'Europe was not so much safe *for* war as safe *from* war.'⁴⁵ Mastny accordingly regards the invasion in Czechoslovakia as a 'strategic watershed' in the Cold War, since the restraint from both sides 'highlighted the growing divergence between the pointless U.S.-Soviet nuclear rivalry and the more important confrontation of the two military groupings in Europe', and accordingly 'fostered the budding détente'.⁴⁶ At the same time, the invasion also exposed the military shortcomings within the Soviet bloc, and made the conclusion of the WP's military reforms all the more pressing.

Meanwhile, the Romanian leadership used the invasion in Czechoslovakia to demarcate its sovereignty all the more clearly. The Grand National Assembly immediately adopted a law, which prohibited the presence of foreign troops on Romanian territory, and which subordinated the Romanian army exclusively to the Romanian parliament.⁴⁷ The invasion had, accordingly, forced the Romanian leadership to clarify its position on reforms still further. It is therefore no coincidence that Marshall Yakubovskii decided to visit Ceausescu and Maurer a month after the invasion, on 28 September 1968. This clearly proves that Yakubovskii's failure to visit Romania at an earlier stage arose from its 'Alleingang' on reforms, rather than its stance in the Prague Spring. The Romanian-Soviet division on the Prague Spring had, after all, become all the more poignant *after* the invasion. Ignoring Ceausescu's severe condemnation of the intervention, Yakubovskii returned to business as usual, and discussed a new version of the drafts with the Romanian leadership, after he had already coordinated them with the Romanian defence minister General Ion Gheorghe.⁴⁸ Concurrently with the normalisation in Czechoslovakia, relations with Romania needed to be normalised, too, and Yakubovskii had gone to great lengths to incorporate Romanian suggestions in the revised drafts, while also stressing that the observations from *all* defence ministers were included.

⁴⁴ Mastny, 'Imagining War', 30.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Mastny, 'Watershed', 176.

⁴⁷ Munteanu, 'When the Levee Breaks', 56.

⁴⁸ Discussions between Ceausescu, Maurer, and Yakubovskii, 28 September 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 140/1968, 1-8.

Yakubovskii accordingly proposed that decisions within the Military Council should be made by a majority of two thirds instead of a simple majority, as a compromise for the Romanian preference for unanimity. In order to avoid subordinating the WP defence ministers to the Supreme Commander, he suggested that the deputy defence ministers should participate in the Military Council, while creating a military committee to also provide the defence ministers with an instrument for consultations within a WP framework, which would *not* be subordinate to the Supreme Commander. This would significantly increase the intergovernmental dimension of military consultations within the WP, while preventing the supreme command from becoming supranational. Ceausescu was, therefore, not averse to the Soviet suggestions, even though he still added that they 'should fight for unanimity', although 'in case of divergences with one state' the respective defence ministers and the Supreme Commander might be able to solve the issue. Ceausescu nevertheless emphasised that the Supreme Commander could only 'make recommendations' about the deployment of troops of the United Armed Forces on the territory of a WP country, with 'the agreement of all countries'.⁴⁹ This was, interestingly, an issue on which the Czechoslovak side had also presented an alternative proposal, which Yakubovskii praised.

Ironically, Yakubovskii had more difficulty with understanding the Romanian objections, since he failed to grasp why the agreement of those WP members who did not participate in the deployment was also needed. Ceausescu explained that when troops were deployed 'in the name of the Treaty' it is necessary 'that we all take responsibility'. Emphasising that acting 'outside the Treaty' was an altogether different matter, Ceausescu clearly alluded to the invasion in Czechoslovakia, while striving to prevent the WP from being used as an instrument to legitimise such a deployment of troops. Yakubovskii now understood, and also agreed to the suspension of the discussion about the level of representation within the PCC, which Ceausescu regarded as a separate issue. Ceausescu therefore declared himself 'ready to participate in the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee'.⁵⁰ Despite the crisis in Czechoslovakia the targets at the March 1968 PCC meeting had accordingly been met: all governments had reviewed the proposals within half a year after the meeting in Sofia, as they had agreed.

The impending PCC meeting was prepared in the usual manner, this time by the ministers of defence, on 30 October 1968 in Moscow. The meeting in question also followed the customary pattern, although the consensus was greater than usual. All delegations agreed to ask the PCC and the respective governments to approve the creation of a Committee of Defence Ministers, a statute of the Unified Command, a technical committee, a statute of the Military Council, and an anti-aerial defence system, and recommended that a general staff and a technical committee should be

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

formed in the first half of 1969.⁵¹ The Romanian delegation nevertheless appended a separate opinion to the protocol, 'reserving itself the right to review' article 12a of the statute of the Unified Command, according to which the 'governments in common agreement' would decide about the dislocation of troops. Although this formula was already a concession to the Romanian participants, the Romanian delegates insisted on 'the agreement of all countries', as they had done in their conversation with Yakubovskii a month earlier.⁵²

The rest of the document also testified to Romanian input, since it was emphasised that the Supreme Commander could be appointed 'from the marshals (generals) of any state participating in the Warsaw Pact' (and not just the SU), while he would 'conduct himself according to the decisions by the governments of the states participating in the Warsaw Treaty'. The Romanian emphasis on intergovernmentalism had thus been incorporated in the treaty, which at the same time sealed the alliance's multilateralisation by emphasising that 'the Military Council multilaterally analyses current problems concerning the situation and the development of the Unified Armed Forces of the states participating in the Warsaw Treaty'.⁵³

All other delegates were, however, primarily interested in finalising all documents, although the Hungarian representatives strikingly seemed to support their Romanian comrades by proposing to eliminate points 12a and b altogether, but they ultimately backtracked.⁵⁴ The Hungarian delegation had obviously gained confidence after its mediating role during the Prague Spring, but it did not want to push the limits too far. Since the meeting took place while the Soviet leaders were negotiating the deployment of their troops on Czechoslovak soil, it was a particularly sensitive issue. The meeting accordingly ended with agreement on everything apart from article 12a, which once again sealed the customary difference between Romania and the rest. This seemed to herald the return of 'the six', despite the fact that 'five' of those had invaded the other one. The dynamics within the alliance thus seemed surprisingly unaffected by the invasion in Czechoslovakia.

Two months later, when Dubcek was still struggling to 'normalise' Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak General Staff even contrasted Czechoslovakia 'as a pillar of the coalition' to the 'detrimental endeavours' of Romania in an official 'Study on the Warsaw Treaty'. Considering the WP 'too loose' an alliance, which could not 'compare to the organisational refinement of NATO', the study emphasised the need to strengthen the military bodies, and underlined that '[a]t such occasions, the leading officials of the Czechoslovak People's Army have always been among those who have

⁵¹ Protocol of the meeting of WP defence ministers, 30 October 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 40/1968, 17-18.

⁵² Separate opinion of the Romanian delegation about article 12a, 30 October 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 40/1968, 20.

⁵³ Statute of the Unified Armed Forces and the Unified Command in peace time, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 40/1968, 33-36.

⁵⁴ Letter from General Ion Ionita to Ceausescu, Bucharest, 30 October 1968, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 40/1968, 61.

taken the most initiative'. Criticising Romania for its 'narrow perception of state sovereignty', the report nevertheless credited the Romanians with revealing 'a statutory lack in the military organisation of the coalition, i.e. a vagueness concerning the rights and duties of both the Supreme Commander and the General Staff, as well as concerning the influence of coalition members on their activities'. The Romanian insistence on procedural matters had thus inspired its allies with a more critical look at the proposals for reforms, which, according to the study, had 'reached a qualitative turning point'.⁵⁵

Concluding that 'the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia have [not] had a substantial impact on the development of these problems', the study had identified a very peculiar fact of the year 1968: the Prague Spring and its suppression did not really seem to have changed the dynamics within the Warsaw Pact at all.⁵⁶ Examining the evolution of military reforms during 1968, it is sometimes hard to believe that all this went on during the Prague Spring, despite the Polish and East German attempts to draw the WP into condemning the Czechoslovak developments. The Soviets nevertheless ignored these attempts, and continued rallying support for military reforms as though socialism was not at stake in Czechoslovakia. The difference resided in the fact that the proposals for military reforms were more strongly coordinated by the Kremlin than other issues within the WP, which is logical concerning the fact that the military dimension of the alliance had solely been a Soviet prerogative up to the reforms. The NSWP members had, however, considerable room for manoeuvre, as is illustrated by the Romanian 'Alleingang', which continued unhampered after the Prague Spring, and even seemed to approximate the French stance within and outside NATO. Relations within the official structures of the WP seemed to have stayed fairly 'normal' throughout the Prague Spring, without needing further 'normalisation'. The invasion in Czechoslovakia nevertheless added a very delicate perspective to the reforms, by clearly illustrating the military repercussions of a lack of input from *all* WP members in the decision-making, albeit *outside* the official WP framework.

THE 'QUALITATIVE TURNING POINT'

The discussion on military reforms had, indeed, reached such a 'qualitative turning point' that the Soviet leaders deemed the time ripe to convene the PCC in March 1969 in order to finalise the documents. The other WP members had already been ready to convene the PCC in November 1968, but due to the Romanian reservations about paragraph 12a on the statute of the Unified Command, the meeting had been

⁵⁵ 'Czechoslovak General Staff Study on the Warsaw Treaty', 21 December 1968, in Mastny and Byrne (eds.), *Cardboard Castle*, 317-319.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

postponed till March.⁵⁷ Although this was the first PCC meeting since July 1963 whose convention was actively initiated by the Kremlin, the Romanian leadership managed to assert its authority yet again by disagreeing with the suggested date of 12 March, and postponing the meeting till 17 March.⁵⁸ Moreover, the Hungarian leader Janos Kadar suggested adding an appeal on European Security to the agenda.⁵⁹ On 7 March Brezhnev and Kosygin duly sent a letter to all WP leaders, in which they proposed to convene the PCC in Budapest on 17 March in order to reach an agreement on the military reforms, 'adopt a short appeal' on European Security with the renewed proposal to convene a European Security Conference, and to conduct 'an exchange of opinions' on such international issues as the situation in Vietnam, and 'the intensification of NATO's aggressive activity'. In the letter Brezhnev explicitly suggested 'that it would be useful to ask the Hungarian comrades, as organisers of the conference, to assume the task of preparing (...) the drafts of the appeal and the communiqué.'⁶⁰

Brezhnev's letter was striking in a number of ways. It was not only the first time in six years that the Kremlin again assumed active control over the convention of a PCC meeting and its agenda, it was also the first time that Brezhnev explicitly asked another WP member to prepare the meeting. The choreography, which seemed to have been lacking throughout the sixties, was thus entrusted to the Hungarian leadership, whose increasingly important role was sealed by Brezhnev's request. Although Budapest was a logical venue for a PCC meeting, since it was the only WP capital where it had not yet been convened apart from Berlin, the fact that the Hungarian leadership was asked to prepare the meeting testified to the Hungarian emancipation during the Prague Spring. Brezhnev's trust in the Hungarian leadership was particularly striking since the Hungarian press had frequently underlined Hungary's different stance on the invasion in Czechoslovakia.⁶¹ After Kadar's mediating role between the WP five and Dubcek throughout the crisis in Czechoslovakia he nevertheless seemed the only leader who might be able to unify all participants. This was, after all the first PCC meeting after the invasion in Czechoslovakia, and retrospectively the last one during which Dubcek was still present as Czechoslovakia's party leader. It was also the first time that the Romanian leadership re-joined the multilateral fold, six months after its severe condemnation of its allies' decision to invade Czechoslovakia.

⁵⁷ 'Note on the March 1969 PCC Meeting for the First Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (János Kádár)', 19 March 1969, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=18020&navinfo=14465>, accessed 21 September 2013, 1.

⁵⁸ Conversation between Basov and Ceausescu, 5 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 8/1969, vol. I, 72.

⁵⁹ Békés, 'Der Warschauer Pakt', 231.

⁶⁰ Letter from Brezhnev and Kosygin to their WP comrades, 7 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 37/1969, 6-8.

⁶¹ 'Note concerning some aspects about the Hungarian frame of mind', ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 8/1969, vol. I, 98.

The Hungarian leaders were particularly sensitive to the delicate situation, and advised their Soviet comrades on how to proceed. In a preliminary discussion on 9 March Kadar even advised the Soviet leaders against any discussion on political reforms, and he 'stressed that given recent events, the very fact that the Political Consultative Committee is convening has political significance. The main focus should be on signing the military documents.'⁶² In the same vein as his mediation during the Prague Spring, Kadar attempted to establish common ground between all participants, while emphasising that 'intelligent compromises should be made. It should not happen that there are seven of us there, but only six sign.' Instead of antagonising the Romanian participants, Kadar thus showed great political will to unify the WP members. Although the Kremlin was therefore greatly interested in close coordination with the Hungarian leaders, Kadar 'agreed with the Soviet comrades that though we were the hosts, they should take the task of political agitation, for they were the only people here that could have an impact on the sides present.'⁶³ In stark contrast to the Romanian leaders' tendency to unilaterally coordinate the PCC meeting in Bucharest in 1966 to achieve *their* aims, Kadar intended to use his position as host to transcend his domestic interests and unite the participants.

The PCC's convention in Budapest also proved a strategic move from the Romanian point of view. The Hungarian preparation of the PCC was welcomed by the Romanian leaders, since Kadar's moderation on the Prague Spring, but also before, had prevented any antagonism between the two leaderships. The Romanian leadership did, however, suggest participating in the preparation of the PCC by convening the WP's deputy foreign ministers or foreign ministers before the meeting started, which was also suggested by the Hungarian and Polish leaderships.⁶⁴ The Romanian reaction to the convention of the meeting and its agenda was unprecedentedly positive, but the Romanian attempt to prevent the meeting from being pre-concocted without Romanian input, was also characteristic. Although the Romanians had succeeded in undermining any East German attempts at enshrining foreign policy coordination *de iure*, they had also managed to gain a greater input in the alliance's foreign policy *de facto*. The request was granted, and the deputy foreign ministers arranged to meet in Budapest on 16 March 1969.

Meanwhile, Brezhnev's request for Hungarian preparation of the appeal on European Security and the communiqué illustrated both Moscow's increased willingness to treat its WP allies as equals, and Brezhnev's attempt to regain some control over the process, by preventing the kind of anarchy which had defined past

⁶² 'Note on the March 1969 PCC Meeting', 1.

⁶³ Minutes of the Hungarian Party Politburo Session - Report on the PCC Meeting by the First Secretary of the MSzMP (János Kádár)', 24 March 1969, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=18017&navinfo=14465>, accessed 21 September 2013.

⁶⁴ Letter from Ceausescu and Maurer to Brezhnev and Kosygin, 11 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 37/1969, 5. For the Hungarian and Polish proposal see Mastny, 'Meeting of the PCC'.

meetings, where almost every delegation turned up with its own draft declaration.⁶⁵ The fact that the Soviets had prepared the definitive drafts of all the military documents, whereas the preparation of the documents on European Security was delegated to an NSWP member, also shows that the Kremlin was much more prone to share the responsibility on foreign policy issues than on military issues. As Brezhnev had underlined in his letter, the European Security Conference would be a truly multilateral occasion, in whose preparation *all* members of the WP would participate.⁶⁶ The military reforms would, on the contrary, be elucidated by Marshall Yakubovskii at the beginning of the PCC meeting. They were, however, reviewed by *all* WP defence ministers, who had accordingly become involved within the alliance, too. The agenda for the PCC meeting thus testified to the alliance's multilateralisation in both a political and a military dimension.

The Hungarians, meanwhile, rose to the occasion, and proactively organised the meeting. They decided that all delegations apart from the Soviet one would be housed in the same hotel, which meant that the Hungarians could coordinate matters with the Soviet comrades unhampered.⁶⁷ Much to Brezhnev's delight the Hungarian leaders insisted that the meeting could be concluded in one day,⁶⁸ which would be a record, and in order to speed up the process Brezhnev had asked his allies not to prepare any speeches.⁶⁹ Whereas the speeches in the past had served to give the NSWP members the semblance of input, the absence of speeches illustrated that this meeting was not a mere rhetorical ploy, but that, on the contrary, it was a means to a far more important end. The purpose of this meeting was not only to consolidate the alliance through military reforms, but also to underscore the Warsaw Pact's unity to the world, after it was severely questioned in the light of the events in Czechoslovakia. A constructive appeal for a European Security Conference would underline the alliance's quest for peace. A WP response to NATO's strategy of 'defence cum détente' had become all the more urgent, and the pursuit of European détente became particularly pressing in the wake of the invasion in Czechoslovakia. The PCC meeting would thus serve to conclude a number of issues that had remained unresolved since the severely contested PCC meeting in Warsaw in January 1965, which had been Brezhnev's first performance within the WP, such as the convention of a European Security Conference and WP reforms.

⁶⁵ Cf. Chapter 5 for the three separate declarations on Vietnam, 226-231.

⁶⁶ Letter from Brezhnev and Kosygin to their WP comrades, 7 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 37/1969, 8.

⁶⁷ Diplomatic note, Budapest, 14 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 8/1969, vol. I, 94.

⁶⁸ Diplomatic note, Budapest, 15 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 8/1969, vol. I, 91.

⁶⁹ 'Minutes of the session of the RCP CC politburo', 18 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 40/1969, 10.

THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT

The purpose of the meeting was overshadowed by the fact that it took place against the backdrop of a severe escalation in Sino-Soviet tensions. Whereas the meeting in January 1965 was convened three months after the Chinese leadership had detonated its own nuclear device, the one in 1969 was planned two weeks after severe Sino-Soviet border clashes on the island of Zhenbao at the Ussuri river had begun on 2 March, which had led to a number of casualties on both sides. As a consequence of the Sino-Soviet split the mutual border had become increasingly militarised on both sides during the 1960s.⁷⁰ According to the latest evidence, the Chinese leadership had provoked the attack either ‘to discourage Moscow from adventures’ such as the invasion in Czechoslovakia,⁷¹ or to create a kind of war hysteria in the heat of the Cultural Revolution ‘to forge national unity.’⁷² The Kremlin was bewildered by the Chinese offensive. Since Sino-Soviet communication had ground to a halt during the Cultural Revolution, the border clashes caused huge misperceptions on both sides. Failing to fathom their limited scope, the Soviet leaders allegedly started to ponder the possibilities of an invasion or a pre-emptive strike against China’s nuclear facilities.⁷³

The border clashes escalated on 15 March with a disproportionately large Soviet counter-attack, causing still more casualties, and coinciding with the Warsaw Pact’s deputy foreign ministers meeting on 15-16 March.⁷⁴ The Soviet reaction confirmed Chinese fears of a repetition of the invasion in Czechoslovakia, with the result that both sides thought that the other side was about to embark on a full scale war.⁷⁵ As the Polish ambassador to Beijing recounts, this was a ‘more than frightening prospect’ for the WP leaders, since ‘they had only minimal influence – or rather none at all – in the course of events on the Sino-Soviet border.’⁷⁶ The intention to restore unity to the WP had, accordingly, become all the more urgent, since there was much more at stake than the WP’s fragmentation after the invasion in Czechoslovakia. The fact that Brezhnev had ordered the counter offence on 15 March during his train journey to the PCC meeting in Budapest could imply that he hoped to force his WP allies to close ranks on the Sino-Soviet split.⁷⁷ The dynamics of the Cold War had changed to such an extent that the WP did not need to unite in the face of an imperialist enemy, but in the face of

⁷⁰ Lüthi, ‘Restoring Chaos’, 383.

⁷¹ Polish ambassador Rowiaski in X. Liu and V. Mastny (eds.), *China and Eastern Europe, 1960s-1980s. Proceedings of the International Symposium: Reviewing the History of Chinese-East European Relations from the 1960s to the 1980s. Beijing, 24-26 March 2004*, Zürcher Beiträge zur Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktforschung Nr. 72 (Zurich, 2004), 106-7.

⁷² Lüthi, ‘Restoring Chaos’, 378.

⁷³ Rowiaski in Liu and Mastny (eds.), *China and Eastern Europe*, 106.

⁷⁴ Cf. Lüthi, ‘Restoring Chaos’, 383, and Schäfer, ‘The Sino-Soviet Conflict’, 208.

⁷⁵ N. Bernkopf Tucker, ‘China under Siege: Escaping the Dangers of 1968’, in C. Fink et al. (eds.), *1968: The World Transformed* (Cambridge, 1998), 193-216.

⁷⁶ Rowiaski in Liu and Mastny (eds.), *China and Eastern Europe*, 107.

⁷⁷ Schäfer, ‘The Sino-Soviet Conflict’, 208.

a communist one, even though this defied article 4 of the Warsaw Treaty, which confined the WP members' mutual assistance to an 'armed attack in Europe'.⁷⁸

The Kremlin nevertheless aimed to use the meeting of deputy foreign ministers to formulate a united stance against Chinese aggression, and the Soviet deputy foreign minister Firyubin proposed to include Chinese condemnations in the communiqué. The Polish leaders had in fact privately suggested to their Soviet comrades 'that the Chinese should be condemned', and during the meeting the East German leadership joined them in urging 'the condemnation of China's border violations'.⁷⁹ The Romanian leaders nevertheless persisted in their refusal to turn the WP against China. Thus the customary dichotomy between the Poles and East Germans on the one hand, and the Romanians on the other threatened to undermine the unity for which the Hungarians and Soviets were striving. Firyubin described the Romanian attitude in the resulting debate as 'a deliberate attempt to bury the organization of the Warsaw Pact', but the Romanian leadership was more interested in limiting the scope of the WP than destroying it altogether.⁸⁰

The Romanian politburo immediately met in Bucharest to decide how to proceed. Although the deputy foreign ministers had been convened at Romanian request, the Romanian delegates were adamant against discussing any issues that were not on the agenda, as the Romanian representative Malita immediately underscored. Arguing that the Romanian delegates had no mandate to discuss the matter, Malita added that a WP stance on the Sino-Soviet border clashes contradicted article four of the Warsaw Treaty, according to which its members should defend their *European* borders in common. The WP was, after all, 'conceived as an instrument of defence against aggression of the imperialist countries of Europe', and not against aggression from a communist neighbour.⁸¹ Thus the Romanians succeeded again in using the Warsaw Treaty as an instrument to support their own arguments.

This was, however, the crux of the matter, as Bodnaras underlined during the politburo meeting in Bucharest. The Romanians were consistent in their insistence that the alliance should not be directed against China, which they had also successfully avoided by arguing against the Mongolian accession to the WP in July 1963.⁸² The invasion of the five socialist countries of Czechoslovakia had provided the Romanians with an extra reason to avoid any extension of the WP, as politburo member Gheorghe Stoica argued. Referring to the doctrine 'of limited sovereignty' (a.k.a. the Brezhnev doctrine), which the Romanians and the Yugoslavs had severely denounced, Stoica emphasised the importance of the 'European character' of the treaty, which should

⁷⁸ 'The Warsaw Treaty', 14 May 1955, in Mastny and Byrne (eds.), *Cardboard Castle*, 77-79.

⁷⁹ 'Note on the March 1969 PCC Meeting', 2, and 'Minutes of the Hungarian Party Politburo Session'.

⁸⁰ 'Note on the Meeting of the Deputy Foreign Ministers', 15 March 1969, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&cid=17250&navinfo=15700>, accessed 21 September 2013, 2.

⁸¹ 'Minutes of the session of the RCP CC politburo', 16 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 39/1969, 7.

⁸² Cf. Chapter 2, 91-95.

simply remain 'an instrument of defence against imperialist aggression (...), and cannot be used in another situation of intervening in any socialist country'.⁸³ The Romanians had to ensure that the WP was not retrospectively employed to justify the invasion in Czechoslovakia under the guise of the Sino-Soviet split.

In the light of the Czechoslovak invasion, a condemnation of China within the WP would not primarily turn the WP against *China*, but against another *socialist* country.⁸⁴ If the WP was no longer a primarily 'anti-imperialist' alliance, it could serve to legitimise the Brezhnev doctrine, and turn against any other socialist country in future, including Romania. Stoica therefore suggested using the PCC meeting to condemn the invasion in Czechoslovakia instead, since it was 'a severe transgression of the treaty'. To maintain their own scope for manoeuvre within the alliance, the Romanians had to ensure that the treaty remained directed against Western Europe. It was therefore emphasised that the Romanians should 'refuse any form of uniting with one group of socialist countries against other socialist countries'. The condemnation of any socialist country within the scope of the alliance was a precedent that the Romanian members wanted to avoid at all costs. Since they also wanted to avoid any further isolation, it was, however, agreed to only mention 'the problem with Czechoslovakia', if the situation required it.⁸⁵

Meanwhile, the Romanian politburo members feared that the Kremlin intended to do exactly the opposite by concentrating on the Sino-Soviet border clashes. They believed that 'the Soviets would use it to exercise pressure on the communist parties to condemn the Chinese actions. A severe condemnation of China would considerably strengthen Brezhnev's hand now that the Sino-Soviet split had become irreversible. Stoica even argued that the border clashes were so widely publicised, *because* they coincided with the PCC meeting, since previous Sino-Soviet border clashes had hardly gained any attention. This did not seem a farfetched suggestion, since the Hungarian report of the meeting shows that Firyubin had already drafted a communiqué on 9 March, six days before the escalation of the border clashes, which 'even condemned the Chinese for border violations without citing them by name'.⁸⁶ The Romanians therefore continued to emphasise that any Sino-Soviet disputes should be resolved bilaterally. It was decided to firmly oppose the added paragraph on China in the communiqué, which had 'a tone as though we are on the threshold of a world war'. Although the Romanian insistence on clearly defining the limits of the WP primarily served to safeguard the Romanian scope for manoeuvre within the alliance, it also prevented its NSWP allies from being drawn into a severe escalation of Sino-Soviet

⁸³ 'Minutes of the session of the RCP CC politburo', 16 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 39/1969, 10-12.

⁸⁴ This also represents an attempt to prevent Brezhnev doctrine from being applied to China. Cf. Munteanu, 'When the Levee Breaks', 60.

⁸⁵ 'Minutes of the session of the RCP CC politburo', 16 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 39/1969, 10-12.

⁸⁶ 'Note on the March 1969 PCC Meeting', 1.

tensions.⁸⁷ The 'anti-imperialist' nature of the alliance was thus, ironically, consolidated by the Romanians.

The other delegations were nevertheless adamant that the Chinese actions should be condemned within the WP framework, as Brezhnev stressed in one of his preliminary conversations with Ceausescu. Although Brezhnev argued that it was 'inconceivable' that the Chinese actions were ignored within the PCC, Ceausescu and Maurer insisted that they shared Brezhnev's concerns, but that the Chinese issue went beyond the confines of the Warsaw Treaty and could not be discussed within the framework of the PCC. The situation threatened to turn into the usual division of 'six' against 'one', since Brezhnev asked '[h]ow can one ask six parties and states to renounce their positions (...) in favour of one country? Why should Gomulka or Zhivkov concede to do what pleases Ceausescu?' These rhetorical questions enabled Ceausescu to insist once again that '[s]uch questions cannot be resolved through a majority of votes', since only unanimous opinions could be consigned to a communiqué. The Romanian move against democratic centralism on the WP drove Brezhnev to such despair that he began to shout about the 'situation of war' in the far East, but he nevertheless conceded to only discuss the Chinese question unofficially after the PCC meeting, outside the WP framework, and without committing the discussion to paper.⁸⁸ Just as the Prague Spring had been kept out of the WP framework, so the Romanians had kept the Sino-Soviet split out of the PCC. The alliance's multilateralisation clearly implied that Soviet concerns could no longer occupy centre-stage.

Brezhnev's concession to the Romanian opposition was all the more timely, since Ceausescu had gained an ally during the PCC meeting in 1969: several hours before the PCC meeting the Czechoslovak leader Dubcek had a private conversation with Ceausescu in the lobby of the hotel, in which Dubcek warmly thanked Ceausescu for his 'support and solidarity' during the Prague Spring and the period afterwards. Confessing that his assessment of the invasion in Czechoslovakia would never change, Dubcek underscored his defiance of the Soviet Union, and emphasised that he fully agreed with the Romanian opposition to raising the Chinese issue at the PCC. Nervously looking around him to see if no one overheard them, Dubcek even related that he had to chair the meeting 'according to the principle of rotation', but that he had refused to accept an agenda, which contained 'other items than those previously agreed'. While other delegates in the hotel tried to work out what they said – according to the Romanian report – Dubcek told Ceausescu that he nevertheless wanted to restore unity to the meeting, so that he would not be held responsible for disagreements.⁸⁹ Fully agreeing with one another, the intra-alliance dynamics had

⁸⁷ Cf. Schäfer, 'The Sino-Soviet Conflict', 209.

⁸⁸ Meeting between Ceausescu and Brezhnev, Budapest, 16 March 1969, 10.30 pm, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 7/1969, 20-30.

⁸⁹ Note concerning discussions between Ceausescu and leaders of the delegations at the PCC meeting in Budapest, 16-17 March 1967, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 7/1969, 31-33.

changed somewhat with respect to previous PCC meetings: after the invasion in Czechoslovakia the 'six' had definitively turned into the 'five', and Romania was no longer isolated.

The Romanian insistence to prevent the WP from being used against China was no mean success. As the American historian Bernd Schäfer argues, the Romanian insistence saved 'all Eastern European alliance members (...) from being drawn into a potential conflict.'⁹⁰ The Romanian leadership had reigned in the military ambitions of the WP, while also preventing further legitimization of the Brezhnev doctrine. By ensuring that the WP could only be targeted against 'imperialism', the alliance could by no means justify an invasion of a socialist country. The WP could not be used to turn China into another Czechoslovakia, and the Kremlin could not count on military backing from its allies as it had done during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the second Berlin Crisis. The Romanians had successfully limited the scope of the WP as well as Soviet ambitions, instead of limiting anyone's sovereignty.

EUROPEAN SECURITY

The Romanian leadership had ensured that the central concern of the WP remained European Security, which was officially on the agenda for the meeting of deputy foreign ministers. In the wake of the invasion in Czechoslovakia, which lay at the heart of Europe, a European settlement was particularly desirable. Some WP members, such as the GDR, considered 'the safeguarding of European Security' an essential response to NATO's military build-up, whereas others, such as Hungary, again began to emphasise the need for a European Security Conference in an attempt to salvage European détente after the invasion in Czechoslovakia.⁹¹ Moreover, the East German and Polish members fully agreed in putting both the German Question and 'European Security in the foreground of [their] foreign policy', with as 'starting-point (...) the recognition of the *status quo* in Europe'.⁹² Against the backdrop of the Sino-Soviet border clashes détente within Europe had become still more important. The Kremlin even argued that 'because the Soviet Union was making preparations for the European Security Conference, China intended to show its existence and assert influence through fighting the battle.'⁹³

The meeting was in fact supposed to deal with the preparation of a communiqué and an appeal on European Security. The Kremlin had drafted both documents, but the Hungarian leaders had agreed to present it as their own proposals,

⁹⁰ Schäfer, 'The Sino-Soviet Conflict', 209.

⁹¹ 'Information report 38/1968', GDR embassy in Moscow, 10 December 1968, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/163, 235.

⁹² 'Information about the politics of the PRP, Division neighbouring countries', Berlin, 19 April 1968, PA AA, MfAA, C 332/711, 39.

⁹³ Li Xiangqian in Liu and Mastny (eds.), *China and Eastern Europe*, 124.

presumably to forestall Romanian defiance of Soviet proposals, even though the Hungarians considered the draft of the communiqué 'so bad' that it was 'out of the question that it would be accepted and signed by the Romanians'. According to the Hungarians, 'the German Question was outlined in the usual way', with the FRG being represented as 'an aggressor, a revanchist, a provocateur', and the communiqué also contained a condemnation of Israeli aggression, which the Romanian side would not accept, considering its refusal to break diplomatic ties with Israel after the Six Day War. The Hungarian side therefore 'asked the Soviet comrades to consider what exactly we wanted and what could be a realistic goal', and suggested only issuing a short and factual communiqué. The Soviets were so eager to bring the meeting to a good conclusion that they 'agreed with [the Hungarians] in everything by the letter.'⁹⁴

The Soviet-Hungarian willingness to compromise and to avoid Romanian isolation was, however, not shared by all participants. Brezhnev had already confided to Kadar that he 'considered the main problem to be convincing Comrades Gomulka and Ulbricht', and that indeed seemed to be the case. After the Polish delegation had unsuccessfully put forward its own draft of an appeal for European Security, 'whose tone was sharper than the original', the Polish and East German participants engaged in 'an unfruitful debate' with the Romanian delegation, with the former recommending 'lengthening the drafts and strengthening the wording', and the latter desiring 'to cut the content and dilute the text'.⁹⁵

The Romanian deputy foreign minister Malita thought that his Polish colleague wanted to go into far too much depth about the condemnation of the FRG, by *inter alia* denouncing the West German claim to West Berlin, and concentrating on the West German nuclear ambitions. Although Malita agreed to emphasise the inviolability of the European borders and the existence of two German states in the communiqué, he refused to explicitly mention the Oder-Neisse border and to condemn West German imperialism.⁹⁶ The Polish delegation clearly intended to use the communiqué to secure the 'Warsaw Package', according to which it had conditioned potential diplomatic relations with the FRG on a number of demands, which served to consolidate Polish and East German sovereignty.⁹⁷ This was already enshrined in a declaration during the meeting of deputy foreign ministers in February 1967, but because the Romanian delegation had refused to sign the document, it did not have the status of official WP policy. Whereas the Polish delegation wanted to reintroduce the Warsaw Package into the WP via the back door, the Romanian delegates wanted to prevent this at all costs: instead of condemning the FRG, Malita wanted to use the appeal for a European Security Conference to bestow the diplomatic relations between Romania and the FRG with an air of legitimacy.

⁹⁴ 'Note on the March 1969 PCC Meeting'.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Minutes of the meeting of deputy foreign ministers, 16 March 1969, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/JIV2/2A1362, 72.

⁹⁷ See Chapter 4 of this book, 192.

Brezhnev attempted to resolve the issue in vain by visiting all delegations separately, but 'no matter what room he visited, he found a different position'. Declaring that '[i]t would not matter (...) if only six delegations signed the political documents', as had happened in February 1967, the East German and Polish delegates totally undermined the Soviet-Hungarian attempts at restoring unity within the alliance. Restoring unity was, however, not the main priority for the East German and Polish participants. They were particularly disgruntled that the criteria for a normalisation of relations with the FRG, which constituted the Warsaw Package, were not included in the appeal. Instead of referring to the *recognition* of the GDR and the Oder-Neisse border as a prerequisite for a European Security Conference, the appeal mentioned 'the *inviolability* of the existing borders and the recognition of the *existence* of the GDR' as a condition for European Security itself.⁹⁸ Prioritising the normalisation of relations to the recognition of the *status quo*, the appeal hardly served Polish and East German interests. Ulbricht and Gomulka deemed the price for WP unity too high, if it meant that the European Security Appeal would not secure *their* borders. It was, after all, this interest, which had spurred the Polish campaign on European Security.

Gomulka and Ulbricht therefore stuck to the tested method of bypassing and isolating Romania where necessary, while underestimating the necessity of restoring unity to the alliance, after the cooperation of all seven members had been severely damaged by the fact that five of them had invaded Czechoslovakia. The conference therefore revealed an interesting shift in Brezhnev's priorities: he considered Ulbricht and Gomulka 'the main problem', instead of Ceausescu, and Kadar's willingness to compromise the solution.⁹⁹ At the same time Brezhnev's fundamental interests were, again, closer to Ceausescu's, because Brezhnev particularly valued a normalisation of relations with West Germany in the wake of the Prague Spring, and had even embarked on a 'renewed dialogue with Bonn over renunciation of force'.¹⁰⁰ Brezhnev's attempt to avoid Romanian isolation by visiting the Romanian leadership twice and taking the Romanian objections seriously accordingly also served Soviet interests. In his first meeting with Ceausescu Brezhnev emphasised his willingness to conclude a short communiqué, despite Ulbricht's proposals to include passages that would provide the GDR with 'moral support'.¹⁰¹ After visiting all other delegations, Brezhnev returned to Ceausescu late at night in a somewhat more pessimistic mood. Emphasising that the appeal for European Security had almost been concluded, he nevertheless explained that the German Question was still a major bone of contention:

⁹⁸ D. Selvage, 'The Warsaw Pact and the European Security Conference, 1964-69: Sovereignty, Hegemony, and the German Question', in A. Wenger et al. (eds.), *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited* (London and New York, 2008), 93.

⁹⁹ 'Note on the March 1969 PCC Meeting', 1.

¹⁰⁰ Selvage, 'The Warsaw Pact and the European Security Conference', 93.

¹⁰¹ Note on discussions between Ceausescu, Maurer, Brezhnev, and Kosygin, 16 March 1969, afternoon, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 7/1969, 18.

whereas the Romanians insisted on ‘weakening’ the appeal regarding the position on West Germany, the other delegations intended to ‘strengthen’ it.¹⁰²

Ceausescu nevertheless argued for a realistic assessment of the situation, since the West German foreign minister Willy Brandt had been critical of NATO, and this West German tendency deserved support. Although Ceausescu told Brezhnev that he did not foresee ‘too great difficulties’ on the European Security Appeal, he did not manage to reassure him. Brezhnev had failed to reach an agreement with the other delegations on the communiqué, and became so frustrated by the deliberations about the German Question during the Sino-Soviet border clashes, that he raised his voice and exclaimed: ‘I spit on the FRG’. Ceausescu, meanwhile, concluded the meeting with the uncharacteristically positive observation that ‘the spirit of collaboration’ was such that he trusted that there would be ‘a realistic foundation for agreement’.¹⁰³

Practising what he preached, Ceausescu accepted Gomulka’s proposal to solve the issue bilaterally. The crux of the matter was in fact an extremely delicate issue. The remaining disagreement did not so much concern the German Question, as an indirect condemnation of the invasion in Czechoslovakia. The Romanian delegation had ingenuously suggested introducing a paragraph ‘to terminate with the demonstrations of force and manoeuvres (...) in the interest of peace’. Although the proposal at first sight seemed to condemn military manoeuvres by NATO and the WP alike, it actually served to delegitimise the intervention in Czechoslovakia altogether. The Polish delegates were particularly vexed, since they had vigorously defended the ‘fraternal assistance’ to Czechoslovakia, and fully realised the ramifications of the Romanian amendment. They therefore agreed to remove their amendment on rejecting the West German claim to Berlin in exchange for a Romanian concession on *their* amendment. The Romanians accepted a new formula, which stated that no European state should ‘undertake actions, which could serve to poison the atmosphere in the relations between states.’¹⁰⁴ The Brezhnev doctrine was, accordingly, undermined in the European Security Appeal, too.

The fact that a bilateral meeting between the Polish and Romanian leaders had resolved the conference’s most contested issue seemed to indicate that the Polish and Romanian positions yet again determined the dynamics within the alliance. The Polish delegation was, however, supported by the Soviet deputy foreign minister Firyubin, who ‘conducted the greatest part of the discussion (...), while the Poles remained passive.’¹⁰⁵ It is illustrative of the weakened stance of the Polish delegation that it needed support from a Soviet comrade in a supposedly *bilateral* meeting in order to explain its point of view to the Romanian delegation. The authority of the East

¹⁰² Meeting between Ceausescu and Brezhnev, Budapest, 16 March 1969, 10.30 pm, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 7/1969, 21.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 27, 30.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Minutes of the RCP CC politburo session’, 18 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 40/1969, 9.

¹⁰⁵ Note concerning discussions between Ceausescu and leaders of the delegations at the PCC meeting in Budapest, 16-17 March 1967, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 7/1969, 34.

German and Polish hawks thus seemed to have eroded after their pressure to invade Czechoslovakia.

Meanwhile, the Romanians successfully exploited the East German and Polish participation in the invasion to force their allies to modify their stance on the FRG in a 'significantly diluted' appeal for a European Security Conference.¹⁰⁶ At the same time, the Romanians had succeeded in phrasing the appeal in such a way that it could serve as a '[r]etrospective justification of the diplomatic recognition of West Germany by Romania', to the great chagrin of their East German colleagues.¹⁰⁷ With their insistence on the normalisation of relations with the FRG, the Romanians had inadvertently done their Soviet comrades a great service: for the latter 'normalisation' within Czechoslovakia went hand in hand with a 'normalisation' of relations with the FRG.¹⁰⁸ The Romanian move had left the Polish and East German delegates largely empty-handed, by turning the Warsaw Package into an anachronism.

The appeal nevertheless contained aspects that served the interests of all participants. It stated the importance of sovereignty, equality, and independence, and the need to overcome the division of Europe into two military blocks, while also emphasising the inviolability of borders, and the need to recognise the GDR. Reiterating once again the proposal to convene a European Security Conference without any preconditions, the appeal stressed the necessity for security, cooperation, and improving peace, while underscoring the need to strive after 'the organisation of multilateral collaboration on a European level'.¹⁰⁹ The Romanian 'dilution' and the commitment of the WP allies to resolving European tensions had thus turned it into a very constructive document, which emphasised the need for 'multilateral' collaboration. The Warsaw Pact's multilateralisation had spilled over into its appeal for European Security. A multilateral conference on a European level could now be envisaged, since its Eastern European proponents had grown accustomed to multilateralism within the framework of their own alliance.

MILITARY REFORMS REVISITED

The Romanian emphasis on *unlimited* sovereignty was also central to the Romanian stance on military reforms, which was governed by the refusal to allow any movement of troops on foreign territory, too. As the East German diplomats in Bucharest observed, '[a]ny integration is rejected as irreconcilable with sovereignty and

¹⁰⁶ 'Note on the March 1969 PCC Meeting', 3.

¹⁰⁷ 'Information report, 11-24/3/69', GDR embassy Bucharest, 24 March 1969, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/375, 223.

¹⁰⁸ T. Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name. Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York, 1993), 16 and 280.

¹⁰⁹ 'APPEAL from all states participating in the WP to all European states', ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 7/1969, 40.

independence.¹¹⁰ Although the military reforms had been largely approved by all members during the meeting of defence ministers on 30 October 1968, the Soviet leaders had to find a way to deal with the Romanian objection to paragraph 12a of the statute of the Unified Armed Forces, on the deployment of troops. The Kremlin seemed to have taken the Romanian reservations seriously, and had suggested a number of amendments, which greatly pleased Ceausescu and his comrades.

The Romanian politburo convened the morning before the PCC meeting to discuss the Soviet proposals. The Soviets had suggested erasing paragraph 12a altogether, while emphasising in the statute that the armies would remain under the jurisdiction of the national governments in peace time.¹¹¹ This was a crucial concession to the Romanians, who wanted to avoid at all costs that the Soviet Supreme Commander could involve the Romanian army in military manoeuvres without the government's consent. The intergovernmental aspect of the unified command, which the Romanians so much valued, was enshrined in paragraph 12b by emphasising that the governments, and not the PCC, decided about the dislocation of troops.

Moreover, the Soviets had yielded to the Romanian request that the Supreme Commander did not in principle have to be a Soviet citizen, and they had limited his power by substituting the word 'recommendations' for 'orders', which provided his subordinates with the possibility 'to be or not to be in agreement'. The Romanian politburo members were very pleased about this, and considered it 'a very important concession'. The statute of the Military Council had also been revised to take account of the Romanian objections, since it was explicitly stated that the council was 'consultative', and any measures required 'the approval of the government'.¹¹² The supranational nature of any of the reforms, which the Romanians had feared, had thus been completely undermined, and Ceausescu suggested approving the documents. The Romanian approval, before the PCC meeting actually took place, was unprecedented, and illustrated the Romanian political will to solve the issue on military reforms. The reforms were, after all, to the Romanian advantage, since the power of the Supreme Commander in peace time was now fully controlled. The fact that these decisions were enshrined in the new statutes meant that any intervention similar to the one in Czechoslovakia could never be made in the name of the WP, even if all other members agreed. The intergovernmental aspect in the reforms gave the NSWP members a stake in the military structures of the alliance, which they had lacked previously, and would prevent 'the six' from ever moving against Romania in the name of the Warsaw Pact.

In the bilateral meetings preceding the PCC meeting both the Soviet and the Romanian delegates stressed their goodwill in concluding the military reforms. Brezhnev met Ceausescu and Maurer at the beginning of the evening on 16 March and

¹¹⁰ 'Information report, 29/1-11/2/69', GDR embassy Bucharest, 11 February 1969, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/375, 107.

¹¹¹ 'Minutes of the session of the RCP CC politburo', 16 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 39/1969, 18.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

promised them to return to them at the end of the evening after he had discussed the matters with all other delegations.¹¹³ Relating that Yakubovskii had phoned him three times during his visit to Bucharest on 28 September 1968, Brezhnev emphasised that he was well acquainted with the Romanian objections to paragraph 12 and that he would suggest eliminating it altogether to the other delegations. Unaware that Ceausescu had already decided to agree to the military reforms anyhow, Brezhnev underlined their importance by referring to Nixon's preoccupation for strengthening NATO. Having successfully rallied every delegation behind the revised drafts of the military reforms, Brezhnev returned to visit Ceausescu in his hotel room late at night and thanked him profusely for his constructive attitude on military reforms.¹¹⁴ Ceausescu in turn emphasised that he had a mandate to sign the reforms and was ready to do so. In this respect Ceausescu had obviously decided *not* to follow the Gaullist example.

In order to leave nothing to chance Soviet Supreme Commander Yakubovskii stressed the intergovernmental nature of the reforms during the opening session of the PCC meeting on 17 March, as well as the consultative functions of the established organs – i.e. the Military Council and the Committee of Defence Ministers. The Soviets had clearly taken the Romanian fear of a supranational military alliance to heart. Emphasising the 'multilateral examination' of matters within the Military Council, Yakubovskii clearly stated that the military dimensions of the WP were no longer a Soviet prerogative.¹¹⁵ The Warsaw Pact's multilateralisation had thus also affected its military organs, which became simultaneously institutionalised and multilateralised. To seal the intergovernmental nature of the reforms Ceausescu proposed 'that the decision be taken by the governments, not by the Political Consultative Committee', which the other delegates approved. To ensure that the documents were appropriately amended, Ceausescu tore out the page with the reference to the PCC from the official document, as Maurer had suggested, and signed the document in the name of 'the participating states' instead.¹¹⁶ Supranationalism was thus literally ripped out of the WP, and the statute of the Committee of Defence Ministers, the statute of the unified command, and the statute of the Military Council were approved with genuine unanimity.¹¹⁷ After more than three years of discussions on military reforms, all participants had gained a vested interest in consolidating the military dimensions of the alliance.

Whereas 'Gomulka considered the continued existence of the Warsaw Pact an immutable necessity and its consolidation the highest duty of the Polish People's

¹¹³ Note on discussions between Ceausescu, Maurer, Brezhnev, and Kosygin, 16 March 1969, afternoon, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 7/1969, 18-19.

¹¹⁴ Meeting between Ceausescu and Brezhnev, 16 March 1969, 10.30 pm, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 7/1969, 21.

¹¹⁵ Minutes of the PCC meeting, Budapest, 17 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 7/1969, 7.

¹¹⁶ 'Minutes of the RCP CC politburo session', 18 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 40/1969, 10.

¹¹⁷ See for all these statutes ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 8/1969, vol. I, 117-149.

Republic', according to an East German report,¹¹⁸ Ceausescu and his comrades had succeeded in using the military reforms to eliminate any elements of supranational decision-making, which could bind a WP member to certain measures against its will. Although Mastny argues that the Warsaw Pact remained 'a mere extended arm of the Soviet general staff' where it concerned the WP's 'operational significance', since the armed forces of the WP members only remained 'under their national command in peace time', the effect of the reforms on the NSWP members was still considerable.¹¹⁹ They had introduced a number of unprecedented checks and balances, which had integrated the Soviet dominated supreme command in the political structures of the WP, thus multilateralising the military aspects of the alliance, too, instead of leading a parallel existence as they had done throughout the 1960s. Apart from turning 'the alliance into a more effective military instrument', the reforms ensured that this instrument could no longer unilaterally be used by the Soviet Union, whether in war or in peace.¹²⁰

Moreover, the multilateralisation of *all* decision-making in peace time carried considerable advantages to all WP members, since it meant that the reforms actually prevented a repetition from the invasion in Czechoslovakia. Multilateralisation ultimately proved beneficial from the Kremlin's perspective, too, since it endowed all WP members with a stake in the alliance. Although the reforms were of 'diminished relevance (...) at the time of rising détente',¹²¹ as Mastny argues, their relevance would only have diminished if they had catered for *war* instead of *peace* time. Since the likelihood of an all-out European war had considerably decreased in the wake of the invasion in Czechoslovakia, as Mastny himself argues, the reforms were all the more *relevant* at the time of détente: they did, after all, ensure that the Kremlin's power was considerably checked in peace time. The way in which the reforms clarified the processes of decision-making within the WP, while incorporating an intergovernmental aspect that was hitherto lacking, was of vital importance to the balance of power within Eastern Europe. Not only could the WP not be used to facilitate 'fraternal assistance', it actually made such assistance illegitimate, since it enshrined the approval of each national government for a deployment of foreign troops on its territory. It is, accordingly, no coincidence that the Brezhnev doctrine was never enforced after the invasion in Czechoslovakia, not even during the Polish Crisis in 1980-1981.¹²²

¹¹⁸ PUWP 5th Party Conference, Warsaw, 29 November 1968, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IVA2/20/1160, 85.

¹¹⁹ Mastny and Byrne (eds.), *Cardboard Castle*, 39.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, cf. Brezhnev, in 'Minutes of the PCC meeting', 17 March 1969, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/JIV2/2A 1362, 97.

¹²¹ Mastny, 'Watershed', 175.

¹²² Cf. M. J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill, 2003), 5, 131-170, and for primary sources, which corroborate this assertion: A. Paczkowski and M. Byrne (eds.), *From Solidarity to Martial Law. The Polish Crisis of 1980-1981* (Budapest and New York, 2007), 446-455.

THE DENOUEMENT

In a preliminary meeting of first secretaries and prime ministers, convened by Kadar to discuss the proceedings of the ensuing PCC meeting later that day, Gomulka announced that he had reached an agreement with the Romanian delegation on the appeal.¹²³ Brezhnev underlined the use of the bilateral meetings, and suggested adopting the military reforms, the European Security Appeal, and the communiqué at the PCC meeting. At Ceausescu's request, the delegations received the ultimate draft of the communiqué, which was six pages shorter than the original proposal, and only stated that the military statutes and the appeal to all European countries had been accepted in a 'friendly spirit and comradely collaboration'.¹²⁴ Meanwhile, Ceausescu once again succeeded in enshrining the intergovernmental nature of the alliance, by persuading his comrades to sign the communiqué in the name of 'the participating states' instead of the 'Political Consultative Committee'.¹²⁵ In sharp contrast to the early 1960s this communiqué was not a rhetorical declaration of WP unity, but a genuine document, which reflected the fact that the WP members had learnt to reach a compromise in order to restore unity to the alliance. The Sino-Soviet split was definitively removed from the alliance's confines, and the alliance was now directed to securing peace in Europe.

Contrary to usual practice, everything had accordingly been agreed already before the actual PCC meeting started. Instead of being confronted with surprise proposals from various delegations during the PCC's convention, the participants merely had to listen to Yakubovskii's elucidation on the military reforms, and sign the agreed documents. The PCC meeting itself did, however, contain a painful moment, since Dubcek 'got very nervous' about chairing the meeting, and arrived 'in an awful state'. According to Kadar Yakubovskii 'gave his report in a very harsh, soldierly and frightening language, and nobody demanded the floor', apart from the Czechoslovak delegates, who 'went crazy, and since Dubcek did not know how to give himself the floor, eventually they did not speak'.¹²⁶ Although the Czechoslovak report of the meeting confidently concluded that Dubcek's chairmanship of the meeting was 'important, both from the viewpoint of normalisation and deepening our cooperation with our allies', Dubcek's attitude illustrated that the relations between Czechoslovakia and its allies had far from 'normalised'.¹²⁷ The fact that this report was written a week

¹²³ Note on the meeting of the WP first secretaries of the WP states, 17 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 7/1969, 16.

¹²⁴ 'Communiqué of the PCC of the states participating in the WP', 17 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 7/1969, 48. Cf. for the original Hungarian proposal, with Romanian amendments: ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 8/1969, vol. II, 223-234.

¹²⁵ Note on the meeting of the WP first secretaries, 17 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 7/1969, 16.

¹²⁶ 'Minutes of the Hungarian Party Politburo Session', 4.

¹²⁷ 'Czechoslovak Report on the PCC Meeting', 25 March 1969, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=18016&navinfo=14465>, accessed 21 September 2013, 10.

before the Soviet-Czechoslovak ice-hockey crisis would force Dubcek to resign was a supreme instance of dramatic irony.

Both Brezhnev and Kadar were, however, enormously relieved that they had managed to reach agreement within the PCC, especially since it concerned an agreement about issues that had been determining the debates within the alliance since 1965 or even earlier. Their conclusion had become increasingly urgent after the WP had become divided into a 'club' of five countries versus the rest, as the Hungarian prime-minister Jenő Fock confided to Ceausescu during the dinner, which concluded the conference. During the same conversation with Ceausescu Kadar stressed 'the extraordinary political importance' of the meeting, which 'the Hungarian side had insisted to effectuate', while emphasising the 'need of the manifestation of unified politics'.¹²⁸ At the same dinner Kadar told Brezhnev that 'practically only the two of us had spoken at the meeting, those two sides that had always wanted to have this meeting'. Evaluating the meeting in a Hungarian politburo meeting a week after the conference, Kadar accordingly stressed its 'great importance', since 'after painful months and years' all seven sides had finally reached an agreement.¹²⁹ The renewed unity did not only serve 'the relaxation of international tensions', but also the 'consolidation of relations among the member-states'. Although Kadar regretted that the military reforms were not complemented by political ones, he greatly looked forward to '[t]he preparation of a large international conference'.¹³⁰

Meanwhile, the Romanian delegation also returned to Bucharest in an optimistic mood, and in the ensuing politburo meeting 'the extraordinary productive activity' of the Romanian delegation at the PCC meeting was praised profusely. Thus the power of the Romanian leadership was consolidated by its independent stance on foreign policy issues. But the Romanian insistence on avoiding a warmongering stance also served a further purpose, as Bodnarus emphasised:

And when [the other delegations] go home many will breathe freely. The adventurous spirit has been stopped here. Both concerning the formulas about Europe, which were very bellicose, and concerning the spirit of European Security, which was founded on the spirit of 21 August.¹³¹

The Romanian delegates accordingly claimed credit for turning the adventurous tide of the Warsaw Pact, and stressed the 'harsh position of the Poles', as well as their intensified contacts with the Czechoslovaks, and Brezhnev's gratitude for their cooperative attitude. Summarising the Romanian stance, Maurer triumphantly concluded that 'when people are confronted with a firmly sustained position, they

¹²⁸ Note on conversations with Kadar, Fock, Zhovkov, and Svoboda during dinner, Budapest, 19 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, IR, 7/1969, 35, 39.

¹²⁹ 'Minutes of the Hungarian Party Politburo Session', 4.

¹³⁰ 'Note on the March 1969 PCC Meeting', 3.

¹³¹ 'Minutes of the RCP CC politburo session', 18 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 40/1969, 13.

yield'.¹³² Thus Maurer inadvertently identified the crux of the matter: although the Romanians had forced some of their allies into submission, they, too, had learnt how to compromise for the sake of larger unity.

The consensus on the military restructuring of the alliance was, however, 'extraordinarily important' to the Romanian leadership, as Ceausescu underlined in a speech at the plenary session of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers on 10 April 1969. According to Ceausescu the reforms had clarified 'that apart from our constitutional organs no one can engage our army.' Emphasising that 'at Budapest we have not discussed the participation in other actions and we do not conceive that Romania can participate in other military actions than those enshrined in the Treaty and with the goal for which they are enshrined in the treaty', Ceausescu made it clear that Romania would neither turn against a socialist country, nor would it allow a socialist country to turn against Romania.¹³³ The military reforms could thus serve to safeguard the sovereignty, which the Romanians had upheld so vigorously throughout the 1960s.

In a visit by Ceausescu to Moscow on 16 May Brezhnev even stated that the Romanians had talked 'too much about sovereignty', and that 'the Romanian positions had departed over the last years (...) from the common principles', such as concerning 'the Chinese problem, Czechoslovakia, and the problem of the Middle East'. In reply to the Czechoslovak question Ceausescu nevertheless riposted '[g]uilty are those who did not invite us', while referring to the fact that Romania had not been involved in any of the multilateral meetings during the Prague Spring. At the same time Ceausescu emphasised that the Romanians were not against the Soviet Union, 'but we are against hegemony', and explained that he wanted 'to act and develop the relations of friendship on that basis'.¹³⁴ Brezhnev's willingness to develop Romanian-Soviet relations on exactly those conditions illustrates the evolution of the dynamics of relations within the WP in the 1960s.

THE AFTERMATH

Straight after the PCC meeting several other issues drew to a close, which would further determine the course of the Cold War in the 1970s. Echoing the situation ten years earlier, the Kremlin was planning to organise another international Communist conference in 1969. The preparatory gathering for this conference took place the day after the PCC meeting. During this meeting in Moscow, in which 66 fraternal parties participated, Brezhnev also tried in vain to get support for a general condemnation of

¹³² Ibid., 11.

¹³³ Ceausescu's speech at the Council of State, 10 April 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 174/1969, 2.

¹³⁴ 'Minutes of the RCP CC politburo session', 16 May 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 75/1969, 8. Cf. E. Dragomir, 'The Perceived Threat of Hegemonism in Romania during the Second Détente', *Cold War History* 12:1 (2012), 116.

the Chinese Communist Party. Under pressure from *inter alia* the Romanian, Italian and Spanish communist parties it was agreed to invite all parties, including the Chinese one, to the international Communist conference.¹³⁵ Although the international Communist conference from 5-17 June was meant to ‘overcome past divisions – divisions not only over Czechoslovakia but also over the PRC’,¹³⁶ Brezhnev attempted to use it to rally support for the creation of an Asian security system similar to the WP. According to Lüthi, ‘Brezhnev explicitly called for a *new, separate* alliance system because he knew that some WAPA members previously had rejected the use of that alliance against China.’¹³⁷ Brezhnev failed on this account, too, and was accordingly back to square one: without succeeding in uniting the communist movement, which had fallen apart in 1960, against China, he had united the WP instead. United in an intergovernmental alliance instead of an ideological movement, the WP members had begun to resemble their NATO counterparts.

Brezhnev had, nevertheless, managed to contain the Sino-Soviet tensions by meeting Zhou Enlai at Beijing airport and showing that ‘neither side had the strategic intent of launching a large-scale, direct military conflict.’¹³⁸ Although the PRC agreed in May ‘to convene the Sino-Soviet Commission on the Navigation of Boundary Rivers in mid-June’, which reflected Beijing’s decision to balance its foreign policies’, Mao also decided to orient its foreign policy towards the US.¹³⁹ China drew different conclusions from the SU after the border clashes: where the Kremlin intended to further isolate China, China wanted to break through its isolation by seeking rapprochement with the other super power. In July 1969 both the American and the Chinese administration tentatively began to consider rapprochement.¹⁴⁰ In August 1969 American president Nixon even travelled to Bucharest, which was ‘the culmination of Ceausescu’s drive for international recognition’,¹⁴¹ and at the end of his stay ‘he asked his host to play “a mediating role between [the US] and China.”’¹⁴² This heralded a process, which would later come to be known as ‘triangular diplomacy’.¹⁴³ Meanwhile, the Romanian autonomy and its rapprochement to the West were sealed by postponing Brezhnev’s trip to Romania to finally sign the Romanian-Soviet friendship treaty until the autumn in order to receive the American president Nixon first.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁵ Lüthi, ‘Restoring Chaos’, 385.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 389.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Liu Qibao in Liu and Mastny (eds.), *China and Eastern Europe*, 127.

¹³⁹ Lüthi, ‘Restoring Chaos’, 389. Cf. Rowiaski in Liu and Mastny, *China and Eastern Europe*, 107: ‘Recognizing the Soviet threat as a major one and remembering about Czechoslovakia, China made a strategic turn in its relations with the US. And so Beijing’s position and its categorical opposition to peace talks in Vietnam came up for review.’ See also Li Fenglin, *ibid.*, 123.

¹⁴⁰ Lüthi, ‘Restoring Chaos’, 390-391.

¹⁴¹ Munteanu, ‘When the Levee Breaks’, 58.

¹⁴² Lüthi, ‘Restoring Chaos’, 392.

¹⁴³ R. D. Schulzinger, ‘Détente in the Nixon-Ford Years, 1969-1976’, in M. Leffler, and O. A. Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume II: Crisis and Détente* (Cambridge, 2010), 378.

¹⁴⁴ Munteanu, ‘When the Levee Breaks’, 58.

Both the Romanian and the Chinese turn to America proved another blow to Soviet hegemony, but also showed how much Cold War dynamics had changed since the early 1960s. The fact that Ceausescu prioritised meeting Nixon over meeting Brezhnev again testifies to the Romanian emancipation from the Soviet grip. But Ceausescu was not the only WP member, who began to move more unilaterally. Gomulka, too, decided to bypass Moscow in an attempt to salvage some of the remnants of the 'Warsaw Package', which had been sacrificed in the Budapest Appeal of March 1969. In December 1970 he managed to move the German social democrat Willy Brandt, who had become chancellor in October 1969, into concluding the so called 'Warsaw Treaty', which included West Germany's *de facto* recognition of the Oder-Neisse border. Brandt's *neue Ostpolitik* ironically granted Gomulka what the Budapest appeal had denied him. Although the treaty in question was concluded two months after Brezhnev had concluded the similar 'Moscow Treaty' with Brandt over Gomulka's head, Gomulka 'insisted on different language than the Soviet-West German treaty' in order to 'underline [Polish] sovereignty'.¹⁴⁵ Whereas Gomulka had previously been eager to use the WP as an instrument to constrain the flexibility on foreign policy of other WP members, most notably Romania, this time Gomulka himself had transcended the WP in order to secure Polish sovereignty. Thus Gomulka profited from the scope for manoeuvre within the WP that Ceausescu had secured.

Paradoxical though it may seem, it was the multilateralisation of the WP that had facilitated *inter alia* Romanian and Polish unilateralism on foreign policy. The dynamics of dissent within the WP had, after all, increased the WP members' self-consciousness and had spurred their quest for sovereignty, since the alliance had provided them with a platform to further their state interests, which they had previously lacked. It was through the assertion of the member states' *individual* interests that the WP turned from a monolith into a multilateral forum. This forum also served as a convenient platform for the launch of a proposal on a European Security Conference at the PCC meeting in March 1969, which paved the way for a European, multilateral concept of détente. The so-called 'multilateralisation' of détente would have been inconceivable without the multilateralisation of the WP. Détente could hardly multilateralise on the Western side of the Iron Curtain alone. The WP had facilitated the emancipation of the WP members as individual states, and thus paved the way for the multilateral campaign for European Security.

The Budapest appeal of March 1969 proved the first concrete step in the preparation for a multilateral conference on European Security, and already in May 1969 the Finnish president Urho Kekkonen offered Helsinki as the venue for a European Security Conference.¹⁴⁶ The Eastern European proposal was seriously

¹⁴⁵ D. Selva, 'The Warsaw Pact and the German Question, 1955-1970', in M. A. Heiss and S. V. Papacosma (eds.), *NATO and the Warsaw Pact: Intrabloc Conflicts* (Ohio, 2008), 188.

¹⁴⁶ J. Hanhimäki, 'Détente in Europe, 1962-1975', in M. Leffler and O. A. Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume II: Crisis and Détente* (Cambridge, 2010), 213.

discussed within NATO in the latter half of 1969 and the first half of 1970, and further developed at another WP meeting in Budapest, in July 1970, in which the Western ideas on such a conference were taken into consideration, and the potential inclusion of the United States and Canada in the conference was emphasised. The fact that this was decided in Budapest, too, was no coincidence: the Hungarian leadership had begun to use the WP to assume a 'mediating role' in the whole process.¹⁴⁷ Other WP members also gained considerable input in the process, and according to an American report 'the post-1968 European Security campaign (...) became an instrument that individual Warsaw Pact member states used for the pursuit of autonomous policies', with Poland, Romania and East Germany playing the most active roles.¹⁴⁸ These countries had, however, already developed their 'autonomous policies' through asserting their interests within the WP.

This move removed the last obstacles for convening a conference on the Western side, and in November 1972 the 'Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe' (CSCE) was kick-started with Multilateral Preparatory Talks just outside Helsinki.¹⁴⁹ In the process of multilateral negotiations representatives from 35 European countries (except Albania) convened in order to negotiate on such issues as the inviolability of borders, economic issues, and human rights, which culminated in the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in August 1975.¹⁵⁰ This heralded the so-called 'Helsinki Process', which entailed a series of follow-up conferences to monitor the conduct of the participating states. The conference was a turning point in the Cold War, since it was the first time since World War II that 'all-European negotiations could take place' within a multilateral forum.¹⁵¹ The WP had provided its members with the diplomatic platform that proved essential in the preparation for the negotiations within the Helsinki Process. It was, accordingly, not the Helsinki process, which served to emancipate the WP members from the Soviet grip, as is often assumed, but the multilateralisation of the WP had, on the contrary, facilitated the WP members' autonomous stance within the Helsinki Process.

The Helsinki Process and the WP were so closely related that the WP members finally agreed on the establishment of a committee of ministers of foreign affairs (CMFA) in 1976 in order to prepare or follow-up the CSCE meetings, which ensued from the conclusion of the Helsinki Final Act.¹⁵² After the intra-European relations

¹⁴⁷ C. Békés, 'Der Warschauer Pakt', 238-239.

¹⁴⁸ A.R. Johnson, *The Warsaw Pact's Campaign for "European Security". A Report prepared for United States Air Force Project Rand* (Santa Monica, 1970), viii.

¹⁴⁹ Hanhimäki, 'Détente in Europe', 213.

¹⁵⁰ For an excellent account of the real nature of the Helsinki Final Act see: R. Davy, 'Helsinki Myths. Setting the Record Straight on the Final Act of the CSCE, 1975', *Cold War History* 9:1 (2009), 1-22.

¹⁵¹ Hanhimäki, 'Détente in Europe', 215.

¹⁵² A. Locher, 'Shaping the Policies of the Alliance – The Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the WP, 1976-1990, PHP,

http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll_cmfa/cmfa_intro.cfm?navinfo=15699#Faltering, accessed 22 September 2013.

were normalised and the Eastern European borders declared inviolable through the Helsinki Final Act, the WP members agreed on further consultations on foreign policy within an official WP framework. At the height of European détente WP foreign policy had become more important than its military structures. Moreover the establishment of the CMFA served both as a way to recognise the 'increased political weight' of the NSWP members in the wake of the CSCE, as well as preventing WP disintegration through the allies' increased autonomy.¹⁵³ By this time the NSWP members had emancipated so much from the Soviet grip that they no longer needed the alliance to further their national interests. Multilateralisation ironically threatened to turn into disintegration.

CONCLUSION: THE WARSAW PACT MULTILATERALISED

The PCC meeting on 17 March 1969 in Budapest was, indeed, as Mastny argues, 'a landmark event'.¹⁵⁴ During the meeting the WP members had presented the world with *their* version of 'defence cum détente': a resolution on military reforms as well as another, more concrete, appeal for a European Security Conference. Although the WP's military reforms did not translate into a concrete military strategy, unlike NATO's strategy of flexible response, they prove that the WP members, too, considered a relaxation of international tensions and an improved military structure different sides of the same coin. Meanwhile, the conclusion of the PCC meeting in Budapest emulated the Harmel Report in terms of détente: by concluding both the military reforms and the European Security Appeal, the WP members had succeeded to complement the slogan 'defence cum détente' with a concrete strategy for achieving a new, multilateralised, version of détente. The campaign for European Security thus gained precedence over the military reforms, which is why it was no bone of contention that the military reforms only applied to peace time. In the shadow of the invasion in Czechoslovakia seven months earlier the allies had succeeded to restore unity to the alliance, as well as imbuing it with a new purpose: peace in Europe.

All issues which had dominated the alliance since January 1965 had been resolved, although the reforms on foreign policy had turned into military ones. Much to the discontent of the East German leader Walter Ulbricht, it was his Hungarian comrade Janos Kadar who had convinced Brezhnev to prioritise concluding the military reforms over political ones. Meanwhile, the East German attempt at foreign policy coordination had already been *de facto* undermined by the Romanian 'Alleingang' on Israel, FRG, China, and Czechoslovakia. Whereas the Polish initiative on European Security had now been further elaborated by the Kremlin in the Hungarian name,

¹⁵³ Cited in G. Holden, *The Warsaw Pact. Soviet Security and Bloc Politics* (Oxford and New York, 1989), 24.

¹⁵⁴ Mastny, 'Meeting of the PCC'.

Walter Ulbricht's push for foreign policy coordination had been replaced by the Soviet campaign for a military restructuring of the WP. The East German endeavour to coordinate the alliance accordingly bore fruit, albeit in a different way from the one the East Germans had envisaged. The same applied to the initially Polish proposal on European Security, in which the recognition of the status quo no longer occupied centre-stage. Since both initiatives had been subject to profound multilateral analysis in the second half of the 1960s, they no longer merely served the interests of the initiator.

During the actual PCC meeting in March 1969, the military reforms were surprisingly quickly agreed on due to ample preparation. Soviet Supreme Commander Yakubovskii had travelled Eastern Europe since the previous PCC meeting in March 1968, and had managed to rally most WP leaders behind the Soviet proposals in the heat of the Prague Spring. The military consolidation of the alliance had become all the more urgent, because of the military measures taken to stem the internal reforms in Czechoslovakia. Although the military reforms enabled the Soviets to take control again over the evolution of the alliance, the Soviet leaders were prepared to a lot of concessions in order to restore genuine unity to the alliance. During the period of 'normalisation' the Kremlin decided to 'normalise' relations with its Romanian comrades, too, and in September 1968 Yakubovskii finally visited the Romanian leadership in order to gain its consent. Ultimately the Romanian leaders deemed the military reforms also in Romanian interest, because they could serve to increase the scope for manoeuvre, by preventing the Unified Armed Forces from turning to a supranational institution. Several Romanian amendments added an intergovernmental aspect to the alliance's military structures, which had not existed previously. The military reforms thus sealed the Warsaw Pact's intergovernmentalism, and prevented it from being a supranational institution that functioned like a mega-politburo. Meanwhile, the establishment of two organs in addition to the PCC – the Military Council and the Committee of Defence Ministers – testified to the alliance's multilateralisation. The Soviet leadership could no longer use the WP as a military transmission belt either, but had to consult its allies instead.

Another issue that had returned to the discussions with a vengeance was the Sino-Soviet split. The Soviet proposal to include the WP's stance towards China in a communiqué was all the more dramatic, because the meeting coincided with the escalation of the Sino-Soviet border clashes at the Ussuri river. The Romanian success in keeping the Chinese issue from the PCC's agenda enabled the Romanian leadership to once more define the limits of the alliance, and ensure that it would only be directed against potential 'imperialist' aggression. Thus a potential condemnation of the Romanian *Alleingang* through a WP framework was blocked once and for all, and the Brezhnev doctrine was fully undermined. The fact that the Chinese condemnation was so central in the discussion nevertheless underlines how far the alliance had drifted from its original purpose. The Cold War had developed in such a way that the bipolar antagonism between the United States and the Soviet Union no longer occupied

centre-stage, nor did the German Question. On the contrary, Brezhnev 'spat on the FRG' in his frustration about the Sino-Soviet border clashes. The Romanian success in keeping the Chinese out of the WP did, therefore, not only serve Romanian interests: although the Romanian involvement in defining the limits of the WP invested the Romanian leadership with power, it also served to remind the other WP members of the original purpose of the alliance.

Meanwhile, the Romanian stake in defining the limits of the WP also affected the Romanian stance towards the invasion in Czechoslovakia. The Romanian attempt to covertly condemn the invasion through the European Security Appeal testified to the way in which the Romanian leadership had gained the moral high-ground through *not* participating in the intervention. This put the Romanian delegation in a position to force its allies to concede to a more lenient stance on the German Question in the European Security Appeal, which therefore gained a remarkably constructive tone, even though European Security had become a more controversial issue in the wake of the invasion in Czechoslovakia than military reforms. Meanwhile, Ceausescu could afford to be more lenient on the military reforms after he had used the invasion in Czechoslovakia to successfully consolidate his popularity. At the same time, the Romanian delegation succeeded in limiting the Brezhnev doctrine of limited sovereignty on all fronts. It ensured that the WP could not interfere in China, which would *limit* the sovereignty of another socialist country, and firmly enshrined non-interference in the appeal on European Security. Instead of limiting sovereignty, these moves safeguarded it.

The Hungarian leader Janos Kadar had also benefited from his moderate stance during the invasion. Even though the Hungarians had participated, their attempts to mediate were well known, and during the PCC meeting in March 1969 Kadar harvested the fruits of his moderation. In the wake of the Prague Spring the Hungarian leadership had become a credible initiator on European Security. This served to raise the Hungarian profile within the WP, and sealed Hungarian emancipation, too. The Kremlin was particularly eager to coordinate the meeting with its Hungarian comrades, and Brezhnev unprecedentedly regarded the stance of Ulbricht and Gomulka – not Ceausescu – as the 'major problem'. The East German and Polish extremism during the Prague Spring seemed to have cost its leaders Soviet goodwill. In addition, the normalisation of relations with the FRG had also become a Soviet priority in the wake of the Prague Spring.

The Kremlin, meanwhile, seemed to have grown more comfortable with exercising a moderate amount of control over its allies in the wake of the Prague Spring. It prepared the PCC meeting in a much more proactive manner than usual, and showed a lot of initiative on military reforms. This stood in stark contrast to the way in which Ulbricht had seized the initiative on the WP's potential foreign policy reforms in 1965. The multilateral decision-making during the Prague Spring seemed to have forced the Kremlin to assume a more pro-active and assertive role in dealing with its

allies. Unlike Polish and East German influence, Soviet power did not seem to have eroded since August 1968. On the contrary, the situation after the invasion had forced the Kremlin to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Romanians, which bore fruit during the PCC meeting in March 1969. Thus the repercussions of the Prague Spring showed beneath the surface.

At the same time, the 1969 PCC meeting had been preceded by an unprecedented amount of preparation, which seemed to testify to the alliance's increased professionalisation. Even during the Budapest conference itself the allies reached much contested agreements in bilateral and multilateral meetings, so that the actual PCC meeting only served to finalise the approval of the WP allies. The fact that the meeting took place within the record time of one day, and that all speeches were removed from the agenda illustrates that it was no longer a primarily rhetorical exercise, but really dealt with the actual issues at stake. The WP had thus turned into a mirror image of what it had been in the 1950s: it was no longer the Soviet leadership that pre-concocted the communiqués, but the NSWP members contributed to the meeting's choreography by discussing the declarations and communiqués in preliminary multilateral sessions. The NSWP scope for manoeuvre had thus increased considerably, without the NSWP members undermining the interests of one another. During the 1969 PCC meeting *all* WP members could look back on a meeting that served their interests, even though the Polish and East German leaders were forced to reach a compromise on the German Question. The genuine compromise that was reached on *all* issues was a far cry from the rhetorical unanimity that had characterised such meetings ten years earlier.

'Multilateral' had become the magic word, both in the European Security Appeal and in the documents on military reforms, and that, too, was not empty rhetoric. It was, in fact, the multilateralisation of the WP that would enable the multilateral preparation of the CSCE. Since the Romanian leaders successfully insisted on signing the documents in the name of the governments, the WP had become more professional, more intergovernmental, and more multilateral by March 1969. Its members, meanwhile, had become ready to play an autonomous role in the CSCE. The fact that the Budapest appeal was taken seriously by NATO testifies to the evolution of the WP itself. By 1969 it had become a mature counterpart of NATO. Although Wenger concludes that 'NATO, unlike the Warsaw Pact, resolved its internal crisis (...) by transforming itself into a more political and participatory alliance', this is exactly what the WP did, too.¹⁵⁵ Both alliances seemed to have found a format in which they could function well, which enabled them to overcome the rigid division of the world into two blocs, and embark on a multilateral campaign for European Security.

¹⁵⁵ Wenger, 'Crisis and Opportunity', 71.

CONCLUSION: THE WP AS UNDERESTIMATED ALLIANCE

An international monolithic organisation with a directive international centre does not exist and cannot exist in the communist movement.¹
Zenon Kliszko at the PUWP Third Party Plenum, 7 April 1965

The PCC meeting which took place in March 1969 sealed the WP's transformation from a 'cardboard castle' into a multilateral alliance. Various NSWP members left the meeting with the feeling that their input was taken seriously. The Hungarian leader Janos Kadar concluded that both the alliance and the relations between its members had 'consolidated', a Polish delegate 'returned home from Budapest with an impression that his country's room for manoeuvre had increased', and the Romanian leadership happily concluded that the Kremlin had 'yielded' to Romanian pressure.² The WP had turned from a primarily Soviet instrument in 1955 into an instrument that the NSWP members could use to further their national interests. At the same time it had become more political, more professional, and more multilateral. The WP had, in short, matured. The stigma of the WP as a cardboard castle had turned into an anachronism.

The difference between 1960 and 1969 is so remarkable that it deserves to be analysed from different perspectives. The most significant aspects in the evolution of the WP will be discussed one by one in order to analyse how they evolved and what the result of those changes was, while using the concepts of emancipation, dynamics of dissent, and multilateralisation. A brief comparison with the crisis in NATO in the 1960s will reveal to what extent the WP had developed into something more akin to its North-Atlantic counterpart, which in turn serves to debunk conventional wisdoms on the WP as well as evaluating what this book has contributed to New Cold War History, before establishing an agenda for future research.

¹ Discussion at the 3rd plenum of the Polish United Workers' Party, 7 April 1965, FIG ACP, Poland, mf 0528, 51-2.

² 'Note on the March 1969 PCC Meeting for the HSWP (János Kádár)', 19 March 1969, PHP, <http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/colltopic.cfm?lng=en&id=18020&navinfo=14465>, 3; V. Mastny, 'Editorial note, PCC meeting 17 March 1969', PHP, http://www.php.isn.ethz.ch/collections/coll_pcc/ednote_69.cfm; and 'Minutes of the session of the RCP CC Politburo', 18 March 1969, ANIC, RCP CC, C, 40/1969, 11.

EMBRYONIC EMANCIPATION

The period from February 1960 till December 1964 marks the first phase of the Warsaw Pact's transformation, since the 1960 PCC meeting was the last one in which the Soviet leadership could call the shots, albeit unprecedentedly subjected to criticism from the Chinese observers. The myth of a communist monolith began to be severely undermined by the Sino-Soviet split, which posed a severe challenge to Soviet hegemony. The Albanian leadership immediately capitalised on this by attacking Khrushchev's policies at the PCC meeting in March 1961. Although this meeting superficially concluded in a victory for Khrushchev, since the NSWP members sided with the Kremlin against the Albanian leadership, the Albanian dissent profoundly affected the way the alliance functioned: the 'ritualistic' aspects of the WP had been undermined and the alliance could no longer serve as a façade of unity.³

On the contrary, the Albanian dissidence sparked a lively exchange of letters, which all NSWP members used to redefine their stance in the WP, and to critically review the Warsaw Treaty. Because the process in question involved the active participation of all NSWP members, the seeds for the multilateralisation of the alliance had begun to sprout, since the Albanian dissent had paved the way for the embryonic emancipation of the other NSWP members. The Kremlin had, for the first time, lost control over a process within the WP.

This loss of control was evident in Khrushchev's handling of the second Berlin Crisis, too: turning the GDR into a central issue in his foreign policy, Khrushchev had not only inadvertently invested Ulbricht with power, but he had also enabled Ulbricht to use the WP as a platform to discuss the German Question. Thus it once again eroded Soviet choreography within the WP, since the meeting in August 1961 had been convened under pressure from an NSWP member. Moreover, the fact that the Polish leader Gomulka took the lead in questioning the need for a separate peace treaty with the GDR during the party leaders' meeting in August 1961 testifies to his embryonic emancipation, too. By behaving as junior allies instead of satellite leaders, the emancipation of both Ulbricht and Gomulka turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy. Sharing a vested interest in the German Question, both leaders had begun to realise that the Warsaw Pact could be used as an instrument, which could further their interests, too.

The WP thus began to turn into a *multilateral* platform, and was no longer a mere over-arching collection of *bilateral* ties between the SU and its 'satellites'. The 'satellites' in question appeared to have interests of their own, which they could further through the WP. Meanwhile, the Chinese leadership was particularly keen to engage in consciousness-raising on this front, and sought to cultivate its relations with the Romanian leadership in particular to this end, which had also withstood Soviet pressure within COMECON. At the same time the higher echelons in Bucharest avidly

³ Z.K. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict. Revised and Enlarged Edition* (Harvard, 1967), 458.

studied the Chinese appeals to equality, independence, and non-interference. As the Romanian leadership later acknowledged, the way in which the Chinese leadership had charted its own, independent, course, had paved the way for their 'emancipation', too.

The PCC meeting in July 1963, in which Khrushchev proposed Mongolian accession to the WP, sealed the end of Soviet choreography. It took place a couple of months after the bonds between Romania and China had tightened. Both the Polish and the Romanian leaderships had criticised Khrushchev's proposal, which testifies to the way in which the NSWP members increasingly felt at ease to question the way in which the Kremlin used the alliance, while beginning to emancipate themselves from the Soviet grip. The NSWP influence still consisted primarily in *blocking* Soviet initiatives, but the ability to do so in itself was a remarkable feat.

The Polish and Romanian objections to Mongolian accession were in fact based on a profound examination of the nature of the Warsaw Treaty, which limited the extent of the alliance to Europe, and thus sparked the NSWP members' consciousness of the scope of the treaty. The Warsaw Treaty was accordingly used to limit the Soviet ambitions for the WP. Moreover, the Romanians were particularly keen to confine the WP's scope to Europe without turning it against Asia: like their Albanian comrades, they, too, had benefited from the Sino-Soviet split in extending their scope for manoeuvre within the alliance, and they thus needed to refrain from antagonising their Chinese comrades.

The PCC meeting in July 1963 also coincided with the successful conclusion of the limited Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (NTBT) between the Soviet leaders and their American and British colleagues on the one hand, and with the failed summit meeting with the Chinese leaders on the other hand. The Sino-Soviet split had become irreversible, and the Cold War had entered in a new phase, in which American ideological adversaries proved a more reliable partner than the Chinese 'comrades'. Although the Kremlin needed its Eastern European allies more than ever within the communist world, they still proved dispensable in their dealings with the West. The Soviet Union had after all concluded the NTBT treaty unilaterally.

The WP nevertheless also limited the Soviet scope for manoeuvre on nuclear issues. When the Kremlin intended under pressure from the Sino-Soviet split to set its stakes on rapprochement with the Americans by decoupling MLF from non-proliferation, both Ulbricht and Gomulka put a halt to Khrushchev's enthusiasm, and both of them even suggested convening a PCC meeting in order to discuss the WP-stance on MLF. The alliance accordingly checked Khrushchev's unilateralism on matters in which the allies had a particular stake. As with the second Berlin Crisis and the Mongolian question the WP was, accordingly, used to constrain Khrushchev's impulsive diplomatic manoeuvring. Although the East German zeal to convene the PCC was subsequently checked by the Romanian leadership, this in itself marks an interesting development in the WP: the NSWP members also began to control the

extent to which the WP could serve as a transmission belt for other NSWP members, notably the GDR.

The disagreements between the Romanian and East German leaders on convening the PCC resulted in a Romanian triumph, in that the PCC was not convened at all between July 1963 and January 1965. There was, however, a lot of diplomatic activity and several notable developments in the NSWP countries. On the level of the individual NSWP countries the Romanian 'Declaration of Independence' in April 1964 proved that the Soviet influence within Eastern Europe had diminished to such an extent that it could be openly challenged. The attempted Romanian 'mediation' between China and the Soviet Union had facilitated this move. Once again the Sino-Soviet split had been instrumental to emancipation of an NSWP member.

The Romanian attempts to paralyse the alliance also led to the first convention of the WP's deputy foreign ministers in December 1964, convened at NSWP initiative. This meeting unprecedentedly served to prepare the incumbent PCC meeting in January 1965 in a multilateral framework, which would prevent the Kremlin from deciding on the meeting's outcome in advance. It also marked a move towards intergovernmentalism, since the preparation of a PCC meeting by the deputy foreign ministers shifted the responsibility from the party leaders, which used to dominate the PCC meetings, to the governments.

The emancipation of several NSWP members thus seemed to go hand in hand with increasing intergovernmentalism. After one and a half years of apparent inactivity, the WP began to gain the contours of an alliance that was both intergovernmental and multilateral. At the same time the preparation of the PCC meeting in this multilateral and intergovernmental framework marked an important step in the WP's professionalisation. It prevented the Kremlin from convening a PCC meeting at short notice in order to rubberstamp Soviet proposals, as it had still attempted with the accession of Mongolia in July 1963, and it enabled the NSWP members to shape the WP meetings in accordance with *their* national interests.

THE DYNAMICS OF DISSENT

The PCC meeting in January 1965 was a turning-point in the history of the WP. It was convened by Walter Ulbricht instead of the Kremlin, and took place in Warsaw instead of Moscow. It paved the way for a series of meetings which the NSWP members prepared in a multilateral setting and hosted, which gave the NSWP member in question a considerable stake in choreographing the meeting. Apart from limiting Soviet ambitions, the meeting also provided a platform for NSWP initiatives, as shows in the Polish proposal for a conference on European Security and the East German proposal for WP reforms. The NSWP members had moved from using the WP to undermine Soviet proposals to using it as a platform to present their own.

The meeting also ensured that the Kremlin could no longer go it alone on the nuclear front: a serious discussion on the formulation of a non-proliferation treaty severely challenged the Soviet prerogative of deciding nuclear issues over the head of its allies. At the same time the meeting exposed a new dynamics within the alliance, since it heralded the division between 'one' and 'six', with Romania not primarily undermining the Kremlin, but rather vetoing the proposals from other NSWP members. The fact that Gomulka proved the most able to rise to the Romanian challenge – even in Romanian eyes – indicates once again the extent to which the NSWP members had emancipated themselves. The Romanian dissent also raised the other allies' consciousness of their position in the alliance, not so much in order to withstand Soviet pressure as to prevent the WP from Romanian paralysis.

The Romanian leadership had, however, made an important point in its approach towards the WP, by stressing the fundamental difference between domestic politics *within* a communist country and international politics *between* communist countries. The Romanian leaders compelled the Kremlin to realise that democratic centralism did *not* apply to the WP, and that a mere majority was not sufficient to decide on international issues. However much the Romanian use of veto frustrated the ambitions of other NSWP members, it also compelled them to critically examine WP's provisions, thus turning the WP increasingly into a joint venture. The dynamics of the Romanian dissent indeed had a constructive aspect, which ultimately paved the way for the reforms that were agreed in 1969. Moreover, it raised the stakes of intergovernmental decision-making within the alliance, while preventing it from turning into a transmission belt of any one member. The WP was thus compelled to develop into a genuine interstate institution.

The process of the WP's transformation is reflected in the vocabulary the NSWP members began to use for describing the development of the alliance. The Kremlin and the NSWP members alike increasingly used words such as 'flexibility', 'manoeuvrability', and 'elasticity' to describe their aims for the alliance. The word 'multilateral', too, began to appear more frequently. The WP was no longer regarded as an unwieldy monolith, but as a pliable instrument for the pursuit of the national interests of all of its participants. The PCC meeting in January 1965 sparked an enormous amount of activity within the WP. The fact that deputy foreign ministers, foreign ministers, deputy ministers of defence, and ministers of defence began to meet informally on a regular basis does not only prove that the previously dormant alliance had come to life, but it also enhanced the interstate aspects of the alliance. Conducting foreign policy within the WP was no longer a prerogative of party leaders at PCC meetings, but, on the contrary, the bulk of the negotiations took place between ministers and their deputies. The intra-party aspects accordingly evaporated, whereas the interstate aspects gained more substance.

The increase in activities also changed the nature of the PCC. The PCC meeting in July 1966 completely lacked the Soviet choreography that had once characterised the

PCC meetings. The Romanian challenge on the difference between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism prevented the Kremlin from putting its own proposals on reforms on the agenda. By agreeing to study these concepts, the Kremlin inadvertently acknowledged the WP as an interstate institution, since both intergovernmentalism and supranationalism represent two variations of interstate relations. The Romanian and Polish drafts of a Vietnam declaration testify to the increased preparation and claim for equality by the NSWP members. The same applies to the declaration on European Security, which was a genuinely joint venture and allowed the NSWP members a greater stake in the foreign policy in Europe.

The declaration on European Security turned into a considerable boon for the Romanians, who used it to legitimise the establishment of diplomatic relations with the FRG in January 1967. Although the Polish leadership in turn attempted to use the WP's foreign ministers meeting in February 1967 to condemn the Romanian move, it only succeeded in doing so in a separate declaration outside the confines of the WP. The WP could, accordingly, not be used to limit the members' scope for manoeuvre in foreign policy terms at a domestic level, but had facilitated a Romanian move Westward instead. The February 1967 declaration had set a precedent in isolating Romania in separate declarations, albeit outside the official confines of the WP. The same strategy was employed during the PCC meeting in March 1968, where all WP members apart from Romania expressed their support for the non-proliferation treaty. This, in turn, paved the way for the Romanian isolation from the decision-making on the measures to take in reaction to the Prague Spring in 1968.

FROM CRISIS TO CONSOLIDATION

The decision-making concerning the invasion in Czechoslovakia in August 1968 is symptomatic for the emancipation of the NSWP members, who put Brezhnev under increasing pressure to invade, or – in the case of Kadar – played an important role in delaying the process. Kadar's mediating and moderating role in the Prague Spring even sealed the emancipation of the Hungarian leadership, which had so far taken an active, but moderate stance within the WP. It also testified to the increased experience with multilateralism in Eastern Europe, since the decision-making was multilateral, even though it took place outside the framework of the WP. Even so, the process marked a rise in Brezhnev's confidence, who had taken a fairly passive stance within the WP from the PCC meeting in January 1965 onwards, while being outwitted completely by the Romanian leadership at the July 1966 meeting. Since the Soviet Union still called the shots where it concerned military operations, the Prague Spring enabled Brezhnev to take control again, and reassert Soviet authority over multilateral decision-making.

The Prague Spring in itself shows to what extent the WP had matured into a genuine, multilateral alliance: the WP itself was *not* used as an instrument to control the process of reforms in Czechoslovakia and to limit Czechoslovak sovereignty. Brezhnev had to invent his own doctrine of 'limited sovereignty' to legitimise the interference in internal affairs that could not be legitimised through the Warsaw Treaty. Brezhnev had, however, only succeeded in limiting sovereignty outside the institutional confines of the WP, and the Romanian leadership used the PCC meeting in March 1969 to undermine the premises of the Brezhnev doctrine. Both the declaration on European Security, and the nature of the reforms, and the fact that China was not condemned within the WP served to safeguard the sovereignty of the NSWP members. The doctrine on limited sovereignty had thus lost its validity.

The PCC meeting in March 1969 formed the culmination of the professionalised and multilateralised Warsaw Pact. In one day all the major issues had been resolved, not because the meeting had been fully pre-concocted by the Kremlin, but because it had been properly prepared by all the WP members. Moreover, the cooperation between Brezhnev and Kadar testified to the Hungarian emancipation in the wake of the Prague Spring. In this case, too, Kadar's moderate attitude served to consolidate the alliance. The eventual unanimity on reforms and a declaration on European Security was not a 'ritualistic' expression of 'the bloc's support of Soviet foreign policy initiatives versus the West',⁴ but the culmination of a severely contested process of decision-making, which was shaped by all the WP allies. The WP was no longer a mere façade.

The agreement on military reforms was the result of serious negotiations, both at a bilateral and a multilateral level, in which the input of all allies was taken seriously. The WP's military structures were now formally integrated into the alliance through the creation of a Committee of Defence Ministers and a Military Council. Although this also consolidated the WP as a military alliance, the establishment of these organs primarily testifies to the WP's *political* transformation: both of these organs facilitated consultations between all WP members, and ensured an intergovernmental aspect within the decision-making, which prevented the Soviet Supreme Commander from going it alone in peace time. The intergovernmental nature of the new organs finally resolved the tension between democratic centralism and the right of veto.

The period 1960-1969 accordingly marked the emancipation of the NSWP members from satellites into junior allies.⁵ Although the Kremlin could no longer go it alone on foreign politics, the Soviet leadership had emancipated itself, too. Whereas Khrushchev had largely ignored the WP in the period 1955-1960, before losing control over the alliance from 1961 onwards, Brezhnev began to take an increasingly proactive stance in the alliance. The method of isolating Romania had proved a successful way of dealing with Romanian dissent, and the Prague Spring had inadvertently compelled

⁴ Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, 458.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 454.

Brezhnev to take control again, even though his allies were primarily more proactive in this respect than Brezhnev was himself.

By 1969 the Warsaw Pact was consolidated in a number of important ways. The internal crisis that threatened to paralyse the alliance halfway through the sixties had, in fact, served to multilateralise the alliance, since it forced the NSWP members to clearly identify their position on a number of issues. The topics of European Security and reforms had necessitated an increased number of consultations between all allies, which had in turn provided the NSWP members with a platform to participate in debates on both Soviet bloc foreign policy and the nature of the alliance. This turned the alliance into a more consultative and less hierarchical institution, and reinforced the interstate nature of the alliance. It also enhanced the political dimension of the alliance, since many of the contested topics concerned issues of foreign policy, such as non-proliferation, European Security and the Vietnam War. The Romanians nevertheless clearly limited the WP to Europe at the PCC meeting in March 1969, by preventing their allies from using the alliance to condemn Chinese aggression. While beginning to look more like NATO, the WP's scope was also limited to meeting the challenge that NATO posed.

COMPARISON TO NATO

Whereas the WP's transformation resulted in a greater likeness to NATO, NATO had undergone a transformation, too, in the 1960s. It is, therefore, interesting to compare the transformation of both alliances in order to assess to what extent the WP's evolution was an anomaly. Like in the WP, the German Question loomed large within NATO. NATO was as vital for the safe-guarding of the FRG's sovereignty as the WP was for the GDR. The West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer accordingly took an equally proactive stance in the second Berlin Crisis as his East German counterpart Walter Ulbricht. Both German leaders pressed their respective alliance leaders to take a firmer stance on the German Question, and in both cases the second Berlin Crisis stimulated a great amount of discussion within both alliances.⁶

Unlike the WP, NATO was, however, not in crisis yet in the early 1960s, even though the parameters of American hegemony began to shift. NATO's crisis began in January 1963 with the so-called 'triple non' of the French President General Charles de Gaulle to the British accession to the EEC, Polaris missiles, and Multilateral nuclear Forces (MLF). By expressing his 'triple non' De Gaulle wanted to clearly indicate the French opposition to the increasing American influence within NATO.⁷ The French

⁶ See for Adenauer's 'rigidity', M. Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace. The Making of the European Settlement, 1945-1963* (Princeton, 1999), 274-282.

⁷ A. Locher, 'A Crisis Foretold. NATO and France, 1963-66', in A. Wenger et al. (eds.), *Transforming NATO in the Cold War. Challenges beyond Deterrence in the 1960s* (Oxford and New York, 2007), 108.

obstruction paralysed the decision-making within NATO, in a way that very much resembles the Romanian impact on the WP.⁸ Although the Romanian impact on the WP was in 1963 still fairly limited, the Romanian objections to the Mongolian accession in the WP in July 1963 only succeeded the French ‘triple non’ by six months. It was, accordingly, no coincidence that Romania sought to improve its relations with France in the wake of its Declaration of Independence in April 1964, while becoming the first NSWP member to visit France in a top level delegation in August 1964.

At the same time the nuclear issue and in particular the nuclearisation of West Germany caused the smaller allies in both alliances to ask for more consultations, and a greater stake in the decision-making in each alliance respectively. Within NATO, too, the smaller allies had not been involved in the Limited Nuclear Test-Ban treaty, which was concluded in July 1963, between the British, the Americans and the Soviets. Moreover, both the Americans and the Soviets had gone it alone in the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, to the great frustration of their allies. The potential nuclearisation of West Germany and the proposals on MLF caused raised eyebrows in both alliances, since some NATO allies feared the nuclearisation of West Germany, too.⁹ Thus the debates on MLF sparked vehement discussions in both alliances.

The crisis within NATO was sealed by the French withdrawal from NATO’s military structures in 1966.¹⁰ As a nuclear power itself, France could afford such a move more easily than Romania, even though the Romanian developments of a nuclear programme also compelled the Romanian leadership to prevent being ensnared in the WP’s military structures. Moreover, in the late 1960s Romania seriously considered following the example of France, and the Kremlin signalled that it would allow such a withdrawal. *De facto* Romania had already withdrawn from the WP’s military structures, by only sending token forces or none at all to any military manoeuvres. The Kremlin increasingly began to deal with the Romanian dissent through isolating Romania, thus copying the American treatment of France.¹¹

Moreover, the smaller countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain had begun to emancipate themselves from the control of the alliance leaders in order to prevent the two super powers from taking more decisions over their heads, as had been the case in the second Berlin Crisis and the Cuban Missile Crisis. While the Polish foreign minister Adam Rapacki had become particularly proactive in the convocation of a European Security Conference within the WP from 1965 onwards, the Belgian foreign minister Pierre Harmel had taken the initiative in the “Harmel exercise” in 1966 “to study the future tasks which face the Alliance, and its procedures for fulfilling them in order to

⁸ See for the French obstruction: A. Locher, *Crisis? What Crisis? NATO, de Gaulle, and the Future of the Alliance, 1963-1966* (Berlin, 2010), 60-92.

⁹ H. Haftendorn, *NATO and the Nuclear Revolution. A Crisis of Credibility, 1966-1967* (Oxford, 1996), 134-139.

¹⁰ Locher, *Crisis? What Crisis?*, 267.

¹¹ Cf. France’s isolation within NATO in December 1966: A. Wenger, ‘Crisis and Opportunity. NATO’s Transformation and the Multilateralization of Détente, 1966-1968’, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6:1 (2004), 39.

strengthen the Alliance as a factor for a durable peace.”¹² Just as Brezhnev had welcomed the Polish proposal on European Security and had actively sought the Hungarian input in the preparation of the PCC meeting in March 1969, so American president Johnson was delighted that a smaller ally had taken the initiative on defining the future of NATO.¹³ In both alliances the scope for manoeuvre had increased to such an extent that smaller allies had the opportunity to use the alliance as an instrument to develop their initiatives.

The crises in the respective alliances compelled both alliance leaders to take the interests of the smaller allies more seriously. NATO, too, had been subject to ‘the dynamics of dissent’, since the French ‘Alleingang’ also raised the self-consciousness of the smaller allies within NATO. The need for consultations grew on either side of the Iron Curtain, and both Washington and Moscow involved the allies within the negotiations on the non-proliferation treaty.¹⁴ Thus the smaller allies already gained a stake in defining détente before it had multilateralised through the Helsinki Process.

The PCC meeting in March 1969 dealt with all the issues that the Harmel Report had already resolved within NATO in December 1967. The proposal on a European Security Conference resembled NATO’s renewed purpose of détente, whereas the agreement on military reforms indicates that the WP members, too, regarded ‘defence cum détente’ – seemingly a contradiction in terms – as a natural combination. Both alliances had witnessed a huge increase in the number of consultations between the allies in the process of formulating the reforms, and both alliances had increasingly turned into a platform for discussions on foreign policy.¹⁵ The new institutions that were created in the WP in March 1969, namely the Committee of Defence Ministers and the Military Council, facilitated NSWP participation in this area of the WP, too, and the alliance greatly professionalised on procedural matters. Although meetings used to be convened by the Kremlin at short notice, all of the allies had gained a stake in the convention, the agenda and the proceedings of the meetings in question, just like in NATO. Moreover, the WP, too, had grown into a political alliance, which could be used as an instrument for the preparation of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

Both alliances had withstood their respective crises. Whereas NATO faced the danger “of developing into a sort of ‘shell with no real spirit left in it,’” as the German chancellor Kiesinger had feared in 1967,¹⁶ the WP was forced by the NSWP members

¹² L.S. Kaplan, ‘The 40th Anniversary of the Harmel Report’, *Reviewing Riga* (spring 2007), <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2007/issue1/english/history.html>, accessed 22 September 2013, and Wenger, ‘Crisis and Opportunity’, 59.

¹³ Wenger, ‘Crisis and Opportunity’, 69.

¹⁴ H. Brands, ‘Non-Proliferation and the Dynamics of the Middle Cold War’, *Cold War History* 7:3 (2007), 389-423.

¹⁵ Cf. Wenger, ‘Crisis and Opportunity’, 68.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

to develop from an 'empty shell' into an alliance with substance.¹⁷ For sure, NATO was still far more institutionalised and better developed than the WP in 1969, since the WP still lacked a general secretary, a secretariat, weekly meetings, and a body of civil servants exclusively devoted to running the alliance. Moreover, the Soviet Union still held a nuclear monopoly within its alliance, unlike the US. The Soviet nuclear umbrella was, however, generally welcomed by its allies as safety-valve against Western aggression, and it did not prevent the WP from developing into a less hierarchical alliance. The achievements of the NSWP members in emancipating themselves from the Soviet grip and contributing to the alliance's multilateralisation are, accordingly, all the more impressive, while testifying to the fact that nuclear and military power alone are not sufficient to keep junior allies under control. Although the WP is still bound to fall short in comparison to NATO, the WP had become a properly institutionalised and professionalised multilateral alliance by 1969, and its transformation was at least as profound as NATO's.

Both NATO and the WP had contributed to a process, which paved the way for the 'multilateralisation of détente' and the ensuing process for the CSCE. It takes two to tango, and if the WP had still been a cardboard castle, détente could not have multilateralised beyond the Iron Curtain. Moreover, the crisis of both alliances led to a multilateralisation of the decision-making, which was a precondition for the multilateralisation of détente. European détente in the 1970s was possible exactly because both alliances had experienced a similar transformation, which had emancipated the junior allies from the grip of the alliance leader.

APPLYING ALLIANCE THEORY

The fact that the WP began to share some of its features with NATO in the 1960s suggests that it should fit more easily into alliance theory than has generally been assumed. It is therefore worth returning to Snyder's theory on the 'alliance security dilemma' in order to assess to what extent his landmark theory on alliances can also serve to explain the WP's evolution in the 1960s, *pace* Snyder's own assertions. The WP tends to be ignored by alliance theorists, because it is an alliance that has seemingly skipped a crucial phase, namely that of 'alliance formation'. Whereas alliance formation generally consists of a 'bargaining process', in which each state attempts 'to maximise its share of the alliance's net benefits', no such process took place before the WP's foundation.¹⁸ Its foundation in 1955 was nevertheless less unilateral than is often assumed, since the Polish leadership had in fact suggested the foundation of a

¹⁷ A. Korbonski, 'The Warsaw Treaty After Twenty-five Years: An Entangling Alliance or an Empty Shell?', in R. W. Clawson, and L. S. Kaplan (eds.), *The Warsaw Pact. Political Purpose and Military Means* (Ohio, 1982), 3.

¹⁸ G. H. Snyder, 'The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics', *World Politics* 36:4 (1984), 462.

multilateral alliance, and most of its members had a vested interest in joining the alliance, as has been shown in chapter one. The NSWP members, however, had no stake in negotiating the terms on which they would join the alliance. It is, therefore, generally assumed that the WP was not really an alliance.

The WP should nevertheless be regarded as an alliance whose formative process took place *after* its foundation. In this respect it also resembles NATO, in that NATO, too, was further institutionalised after its foundation, especially in the wake of the Korean War.¹⁹ The foundation of the WP had, however, not been preceded by *any* bargaining process at all, and both the *formative* and the *bargaining* process took place after its foundation. However idiosyncratic, this still means there was a bargaining process in which the allies had a stake shaping the alliance in accordance with their interests. This *post factum* process was possible exactly because the alliance was such an empty shell upon its foundation. With a treaty that was copied largely from the Atlantic treaty, and the PCC as its only official organ, the WP left plenty of room for the participating members to contribute to the formation of the alliance. The 1960s accordingly did not so much witness a process of *reforms*, but rather a process of alliance formation. Before 1969 the WP was not properly formed yet, so there was nothing to reform either.

The process of alliance formation accordingly coincided with the second phase in the 'alliance security dilemma', namely the process in which the allies decide 'how firmly to commit themselves to the proto-partner and how much support to give that partner in specific conflict interactions with the adversary.'²⁰ Snyder continues to argue that the strategy of an ally is determined by the factors 'direct and indirect dependence, explicitness of commitment, disparity of interests in conflict with the opponent, and the behavioural record'.²¹ It is an interesting experiment to examine all these factors within the WP and see if they can serve to explain the different levels of commitment to the WP between various NSWP members. The abovementioned factors might in turn clarify the attitude of the NSWP members to the WP's formative process in the 1960s, and their stakes in the bargaining process. In order to look at the way various WP members played the 'alliance game', it is necessary to subject the least committed allies and the most committed ones to a comparative examination. Thus Albania, which ultimately defected, and Romania, which almost defected militarily, will be considered on the one hand, and Poland and the GDR, whose political status and security were closely linked to the existence of the WP, on the other.

The Sino-Soviet split offered the WP members, who had little strategic interest in the alliance, a serious option of realignment. For Romania the strategic interest in the WP had always been very low, since it was the only WP country that was encircled by communist countries, and that did not border on a NATO country. Moreover,

¹⁹ Wenger, 'Crisis and Opportunity', 24.

²⁰ Snyder, 'The Security Dilemma', 466.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 475.

Romania had specifically kept its commitment to the WP vague, by signalling to the US in 1962 that it would not choose sides in the case of war,²² maintaining good relations with China throughout the Sino-Soviet split, and establishing diplomatic relations with the FRG in 1967. Albania's strategic interests in the WP had declined considerably in 1956, when the reconciliation between Khrushchev and Tito occurred, because the Albanian leader Enver Hoxha had primarily valued the WP as a bulwark against Yugoslav irredentism.

The dependence on the WP was, accordingly, low in both cases, which means that both Albania and Romania could afford 'to keep their commitments tentative or vague as long as possible', in order to keep their options of realignment open, and 'to maximise bargaining leverage over the current partner by showing that they have alternatives', as states in multipolar alliances tend to do according to Snyder.²³ For Romania and Albania the world had, indeed, turned multipolar after the Sino-Soviet split, since realignment with China was a possible alternative, as the Albanian defection from the WP to China shows, or, at the very least, a valuable instrument to increase the bargaining power within the WP, as the Romanian mediation in the Sino-Soviet split proves.

The same did not apply to the GDR and Poland. Being respectively unrecognised or having unrecognised borders, both states needed the WP as a safeguard for their national security. Moreover, bordering on a potentially nuclearised West Germany, the unresolved German Question prevented both Poland and the GDR from being ambiguous about their commitment. The option of realignment with China was not open to them, not even for bargaining purposes, and their main aim was to ensure that the Soviet Union remained committed to their security interests, and to use the WP to commit the other allies to their security interests, too. Since both the Poles and the East Germans depended heavily on the alliance, they wanted to use the WP to diminish the disparity of interests in conflict with the opponent, and to increase the explicitness of commitment of all allies.

The Albanians and the Romanians thus found themselves on the opposite side of the spectrum within the alliance security dilemma from the Poles and the East Germans. Albania's dependence on the WP had even decreased to such an extent after the rapprochement between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia that it decided to realign itself with China, which did, after all, wage a severe ideological battle with Yugoslavia. The Romanians never seriously considered realigning, but used the relations with China and the West as bargaining power over the other WP members. Although the Romanians wanted to stay within the alliance, they wanted their commitment to be as

²² R. L. Garthoff, 'When and Why Romania Distanced Itself from the Warsaw Pact', in J. Hershberg (ed.), *Cold War Crises*, CWIHP Bulletin No. 5 (Washington, 1998), 111.

²³ Snyder, 'The Security Dilemma', 468.

'vague' as possible in order to avoid 'entrapment' in conflicts in which they shared no interest.²⁴

As Snyder predicts, 'asymmetrical dependence by itself will cause the more dependent ally to fear abandonment, but this anxiety will be reduced by a formal, explicit contract.'²⁵ Because the GDR was most asymmetrically dependent on the WP, it feared abandonment most of all, and this fear was shared by Poland. It is, therefore no coincidence that the East German leadership proposed reforms on foreign policy, and wanted everything to be captured within rules and statutes. The East Germans attempted to use the alliance's formative process in the 1960s to increase the explicitness of the alliance, while concluding as many 'formal, explicit contract[s]' as possible in order to avoid abandonment.

The same applied to the Polish leadership, which greatly welcomed the East German push for foreign policy reforms and the Soviet push for military ones. The Polish leadership even developed a more sophisticated strategy in avoiding abandonment by *inter alia* presenting the Warsaw Package in February 1967 to *entrap* its allies in agreeing to certain conditions before establishing diplomatic relations with the FRG, and also proposing various declarations on European Security, which indirectly served to prevent abandonment by securing the intra-European borders etc.

The Romanian leadership, on the contrary, did not fear abandonment, but entrapment, and therefore turned itself so vehemently against the East German proposal on foreign policy reforms and on a non-proliferation treaty, while modifying the Polish proposal for a declaration on European Security. Ulbricht wanted an explicit alliance so that he could use it to prevent abandonment, whereas the Romanians feared becoming entrapped in Ulbricht's approach. Because the proposals on European Security did, however, not constitute a mechanism of entrapment *within* the alliance, the Romanian leaders were more inclined to flexibility on European Security than reforms. The Romanian aversion to a non-proliferation treaty also stemmed from its zeal *not* to make anything explicit in a contract, so as to avoid entrapment on nuclear issues, too. Moreover, the Romanians were less averse to military reforms than to reforms on foreign policy, since the former would merely regulate the *status quo*, which was unlikely to change – Romania never seriously considered joining NATO – whereas the latter could entrap Romania in positions it did not want to occupy.

The Romanian fear of entrapment had arisen after the realisation that it could have possibly been entrapped in the Cuban Missile Crisis, and it also explains the Romanian refusal to allow the WP to take a stance against China. Moreover, the repeated Romanian emphasis on the potential dissolution of military blocs and the refusal to take a stance on the non-proliferation treaty are also instances of the Romanian fear of entrapment. The price of abandonment would not be very high for the Romanians, whereas entrapment would cost the Romanian leadership dearly. Its

²⁴ Ibid., 484.

²⁵ Ibid., 474.

strategy was largely successful: the Romanian resistance against entrapment through foreign policy reforms enabled it to establish diplomatic relations with the FRG in 1967, as well as going it alone on the six-day Arab-Israeli war.

The formative process in the 1960s was, accordingly, largely determined by the Romanian fear of entrapment and the East German and Polish fear of abandonment. In terms of the military reforms the solution lay in a compromise, which could allay both the fears of abandonment and of entrapment. The mere fact of reforms was a boon to the Poles and East Germans, because they made the terms of the alliance much more explicit, and thus reduced the risk of abandonment. The actual contents of the reforms nevertheless checked the risk of entrapment, because the intergovernmental nature of the decision-making within the new organs prevented entrapment through supranational decisions. The Romanian fear of supranationalism accordingly goes hand in hand with the fear of entrapment, whereas the eventual Romanian agreement to the military reforms stems from the fact that they actually served to decrease the risk of entrapment. Moreover, the Romanian isolation during the decision-making concerning the Prague Spring might have also instilled the Romanians with some fear of abandonment, which in turn made the Romanians more amenable to being moderately entrapped by concluding on military reforms.

The resolution of a range of issues in 1969 thus testifies to the fact that the WP members had succeeded in finding a middle road between entrapment and abandonment. Both the military reforms and the declaration on European Security provided the allies with aspects to reduce the fear of abandonment, such as the emphasis on the inviolability of the European borders, while also diminishing the risk of entrapment, by leaving the ultimate decision on security issues with the respective governments, instead of the organisation at large. The WP members had accordingly negotiated a bargain in which their disparity of interests was neutralised, whereas the negotiations on European Security had increased the sense of mutual interest. The WP's formative process was only completed in March 1969, after a long bargaining process in which the individual allies sought to shape an alliance, which served their level of commitment. The result was a compromise according to which the contract had become more explicit, although the commitment remained relatively vague.

In the 1960s the NSWP members began to play an active role in the 'alliance game'. Both the breakdown of the Sino-Soviet alliance, and the crisis within NATO raised their awareness of the fact that there was a game to play. The most active players were the ones who had most to lose, and even though Snyder's theories explain the parameters within which this game was played, it does not mean the game was predetermined. Personalities were important, too, albeit constrained by the circumstances. The fact that Ulbricht played the East German game and Gomulka the Polish one, was of considerable importance. Gomulka, assisted by Rapacki, was a more skilful player than Ulbricht, who failed to appreciate what game the other allies were playing. The fact that the Polish proposal for European Security was more successful

than the East German proposal for a foreign policy committee has to be explained by agency, rather than structure. The Romanian leadership cleverly played the game, too, and therefore managed to put its stamp on the bargaining process. The WP turned from a cardboard castle into a multilateral alliance of sovereign states as soon as the NSWP members started playing 'the alliance game'. *Pace* Snyder, this game was *not* fundamentally different from the game that was simultaneously played in NATO.

The alliance game within the WP was even played according to the central tenets of the Realist theory of international relations, which also forms the foundation for Snyder's theory. The quest for sovereignty, security, and power to a large extent determined the contours of the game, which was further conditioned by each country's geographic position and material circumstances. Realism has, however, usually *not* been applied to Eastern Europe, presumably because the Realist starting-point of *sovereign* states hardly seemed appropriate for an interpretation of the coercive and ideologically driven Soviet 'empire'. As we have seen, the NSWP members nevertheless used the WP throughout the 1960s as an instrument to safeguard their sovereignty and increase their security. As the Realist scholar Kenneth Waltz puts it, sovereignty means that '[s]tates develop their own strategies, chart their own courses, make their own decisions about how to meet whatever needs they experience and whatever desires they develop'.²⁶ It was exactly through the WP that the NSWP members could emancipate themselves into states, which increasingly charted their own courses, albeit as 'constrained and often tightly so' as any other sovereign state.²⁷

In one important respect the WP leaders were even *less* constrained than their Western counterparts in their pursuit of their state's sovereignty, and security, and their own power. Unhampered by electoral pressures or a civil society, the WP leaders had *carte blanche* in putting the interests of their state first. The WP in turn provided the NSWP leaders with an instrument to further these interests, while it emancipated its members from the major constraint of the Soviet hegemon. Not only did the WP itself evolve during the 1960s into a proper interstate organisation, but the participating states also developed into sovereign entities in the process. The NSWP members obtained a stake in negotiating the conditions according to which they would participate in the alliance, which marked a clear transition in international relations in Eastern Europe. International relations in the Soviet bloc could no longer be interpreted in imperialist terms, as it could be under Stalin, but in interstate terms. The concept of Eastern Europe as an 'empire by coercion' was seriously challenged by the end of the 1960s.²⁸

²⁶ K. N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston, 1979), 96.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ L. Bohri, 'Empire by Coercion. The Soviet Union and Hungary in the 1950s', *Cold War History* 1:2 (2001), 47-72.

CONTRIBUTING TO NEW COLD WAR HISTORY

The active role of the NSWP members in the bargaining process proves that the WP was turning into an alliance with substance in the 1960s. After the alliance had completed its formative process in the 1960s it was accordingly far from a cardboard castle, a Soviet transmission belt, or an empty shell. The juxtaposition of NATO as 'an empire by invitation', and Eastern Europe as an 'empire by coercion' does not do justice to the evolution of international relations in the Soviet bloc in the 1960s either.²⁹ The WP facilitated a bargaining process, which enabled the NSWP members to renegotiate the terms on which they committed themselves to the alliance, and to emancipate themselves from Soviet satellites into junior allies during the 1960s. The mere framework of the WP taught the NSWP members a new kind of diplomacy, according to which they could negotiate with one another as states on equal terms, which was very different from the kind of bilateral negotiations with the Kremlin, to which they had been used. Although the WP was not a cooperative venture of democracies, it proved, *pace* Thomas Risse-Kappen, that communist states could cooperate, too.³⁰ Just like their Western counterparts, so did the junior allies in the WP succeed in influencing the foreign policy of *their* alliance leader.

Moreover, the WP did compel the Soviet leadership, *pace* John Lewis Gaddis, 'to deal with independent thinking' in *other* ways 'than to smother it', and there was a 'sense of mutual interest' within the alliance.³¹ The Kremlin, too, became increasingly prone to negotiate and consult its allies. It was exactly the mutual interest in participating in the alliance's (re)formative process and formulating a stance on European Security which paved the way for the successful conclusion of military reforms and the declaration on European Security in March 1969. The WP's multilateralisation would not have been possible if the alliance had remained a mere Soviet transmission belt or an overarching collection of bilateral ties.

It is nevertheless important to bear in mind that the alliance was already the product of a fundamentally new course under Nikita Khrushchev, who founded the WP in 1955 one day before declaring Austria neutral and several days before flying to Belgrade to mend fences with Tito. Khrushchev's paradigm shift in Soviet foreign policy should be accorded due attention. The abolition of the COMINFORM one year later testifies to Khrushchev's intention to mould intra-Eastern European relations in a new cast. Even though the WP remained dormant in the first five years of its existence, it was never meant to serve as the coercive instrument that the COMINFORM had been. The reforms in 1969 definitively undermined democratic centralism by ensuring a process of intergovernmental decision-making in the new organs, which made the

²⁹ G. Lundestad, 'Empire by Invitation? The US and Western Europe, 1942-1952', *Journal of Peace Research* 23 (1986), 263-277.

³⁰ T. Risse-Kappen, *Cooperation among Democracies. The European Influence on U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton, 1995), 4.

³¹ J.L. Gaddis, *We Now Know. Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford, 1997), 289.

WP more like a normal interstate organisation with hardly any specific communist features. It was, as such, fundamentally different from the intra-party and primarily *communist* COMINFORM, and reflects the evolution of international relations within Eastern Europe.

Much of the WP's reputation is, however, linked to its alleged role in the invasion in Czechoslovakia. Any decision-making on the impending invasion was, however, deliberately conducted *outside* the confines of the WP, nor was the military operation conducted under the *aegis* of the alliance. The Kremlin was not eager to call the shots, but sanctioned an invasion in Czechoslovakia under persistent pressure from its junior allies: East Germany, Poland, and Bulgaria. It was, ironically, in the *mutual* interest of most WP members to stem the reform process in Czechoslovakia. The ensuing Brezhnev doctrine was not a product of the WP either, but its validity was discredited by the subsequent reforms and the declaration on European Security, both of which safeguarded national sovereignty and guaranteed non-interference within Europe. It is, accordingly, no coincidence that the invasion in Czechoslovakia proved the *last* invasion of an Eastern European state. Even during the Polish Crisis in 1980-81 the Kremlin decided at an early stage to avoid an invasion at all costs according to the latest research.³²

The research that has been done on the WP so far has mainly concerned bilateral relations between the Soviet leadership and one particular NSWP member. Any tension is, accordingly, attributed to the Kremlin. Research on the alliance at large nevertheless reveals that the tensions did not primarily arise in the relationship between the Soviet Union and Albania, or Romania, or the GDR, as is often assumed.³³ On the contrary, the NSWP members turned even more severely against Albania than the Soviet Union during the PCC meeting in 1961, and the Romanian quest for autonomy was primarily frustrated by the East German transmission belt approach and the Polish attempt for more coordination on foreign policy. Conversely, the East German quest for recognition frequently met with Romanian dissent, or was outwitted by a Polish move. Although Walter Ulbricht initially succeeded quite well in exercising leverage over Khrushchev, as Hope Harrison has convincingly shown, he was less successful in enthusing his allies for his foreign policy aims.³⁴ The Romanians challenged the sense of mutual interest that was generally fostered by the other 'six' members, but Soviet-Romanian relations were still less bleak than often suggested. The Romanian stance towards the West, such as on the normalisation of relations with FRG, could be quite

³² E.g. V. Mastny, *The Soviet Non-invasion of Poland in 1980/81 and the End of the Cold War*, CWHIP Working Paper No. 23 (Washington, 1998).

³³ Cf. A. Lalaj, 'Albanien und der Warschauer Pakt', in T. Diedrich et al. (eds.), *Der Warschauer Pakt: Von der Gründung bis zum Zusammenbruch 1955 bis 1991* (Berlin, 2009), 27-42; and D. Deletant, 'Taunting the Bear: Romania and the Warsaw Pact, 1963-89', *Cold War History* 7:4 (2007), 495-507; and H. Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall. Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton, 2005).

³⁴ Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 224-231.

useful to the Kremlin at a time when it sought to foster détente, but posed a far greater threat to the East German and Polish allies.

Moreover, the fact that the Albanian leadership sparked the dynamics of dissent has hitherto been overlooked. Albania was the first member to use the WP as an instrument to question Soviet hegemony in 1961, when it already sided with China in the Sino-Soviet split. Apart from the impact of the Albanian dissent on the Romanian course, the influence of Sino-Romanian relations deserves more attention, too, especially since the Chinese leadership took the initiative in the spring of 1963 to improve its relations with the Romanian leadership, because it appreciated the Romanian attempts to withstand Soviet pressure within COMECON. The Sino-Romanian rapprochement accordingly coincided with the Romanian opposition to the accession of Mongolia in July 1963, and paved the way for Romania's critical stance within the WP.

The relations with China were instrumental in charting Romania's course within the WP. They enabled the Romanian attempt at 'mediation' between China and the SU in the spring of 1964, which facilitated the subsequent 'Declaration of Independence'. Up to the outbreak of the Chinese Cultural Revolution the Romanian leadership discussed matters with the Chinese ambassador in Bucharest on a weekly basis. The conversations served both to assist the Romanians in developing their strategy vis-à-vis the other WP members, and to provide the Romanian leadership with ammunition to block certain processes, such as the reforms or the non-proliferation treaty, in the alliance. As the Romanians confessed in a conversation with their Chinese comrades during the Prague Spring, the contacts with the Chinese had paved the way for Romanian emancipation. The Romanians even attempted to extend the WP to Asia, by embarking on a campaign to involve the communist countries in Asia actively as observers within the alliance in order to counterbalance the increasing focus on the German Question. The fact that the hypothetical Asian coalition within the WP never materialised indicates that the Asian leaders – apart from, ironically, the Mongolian leader Yumjaagin Tsedenbal – regarded the WP as an Eastern European affair, which was irrelevant to them.

This, in turn, reflects the extent to which the communist movement had crumbled in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split: the sense of a common purpose had weakened, and the Asian leaders had no inclination to intensify their contacts with their Eastern European comrades. When researching Eastern Europe in the 1960s it is accordingly essential to pay due attention to the Sino-Soviet split. The diversification of power and the breakdown of ideological unity in the communist bloc provided the NSWP members with more scope for using the WP to further their national interest; there was, after all, no longer such a thing as *communist* interest. Moreover, it compelled the Kremlin to take the interests of its allies seriously, since WP unity had become more important than Soviet supremacy. The emphasis thus shifted from intra-party

relations within the communist movement to interstate relations in the WP.³⁵ In order to avoid fighting a Cold War on two fronts, it also drove the Kremlin to improve its relations with the American leadership, as well as seeking to normalise relations within Europe. The Sino-Soviet split drove the WP into the arms of Western Europe. It is also the greatest challenge to the conventional interpretation of the Cold War as a bipolar conflict, and thus reemphasises the tendency in New Cold War History to avoid interpreting the Cold War from a merely bipolar perspective.

The same applies to the prominence of the German Question in the 1960s, which dominated the debates within the WP more than the relations with the United States. As Melvyn Leffler has already stressed, the Cold War cannot be understood without paying sufficient attention to the German Question, which has often been underestimated.³⁶ The East German drive for recognition and the Polish drive for the recognition of its borders played a crucial role in the East German and Polish stance on reforms and the campaign for a European Security Conference. The East German and Polish insistence on these issues in turn determined the dynamics of the WP to a larger extent than has generally been assumed.

Furthermore, the German Question compelled the GDR just as much to bind itself to the WP as West Germany had done to NATO. A successful integration of both Germanys in the respective alliance was crucial in securing stability in Europe and managing the division of Germany. Just as the West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer developed a strategy of orienting the FRG firmly towards Western Europe and integrating in all its institutions, so did his East German colleague attempt to do exactly the same in Eastern Europe. The West German strategy of 'Westbindung' should be complemented by the term 'Ostbindung' to explain the East German strategy within the WP. This concept explains Ulbricht's drive to use the WP as an East German transmission belt, and helps to understand the impact of the German Question on the alliance. Both German leaders were often more extreme than their respective alliance leaders, since their sovereignty could only be safeguarded through their alliances.

Moreover, the debates on MLF and non-proliferation gave an impulse to a greater frequency of consultation within the WP in order to prevent the nuclearisation of the FRG. The quest for European Security was not only a way to seek security Westwards in the shadow of the Sino-Soviet split, but it was also an attempt to resolve the German Question by seeking to improve relations with Western Europe instead of exacerbating the differences between both Germanys. A united stance on European Security could alleviate the adverse affects of the division of Germany. The Eastern European quest for European Security was a serious one, in sharp contrast to the rhetorical proposal for a European Security conference in 1954, which had been a

³⁵ Cf. Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc*, 433.

³⁶ Cf. M. Leffler, 'Bringing it Together: The Parts and the Whole', in O. A. Westad (ed.), *Revising the Cold War. Approaches, Interpretation, Theory* (London, 2000), 48.

Soviet ploy to establish a European Security system under Soviet tutelage. The drive for European Security in the second half of the 1960s was part of a multilateral process in which all WP members together strove to find a way to alleviate tensions within Europe. Ideology, however, did not seem to be the driving force behind WP policy. The political decision-making was determined by security concerns, such as the concern for the nuclearisation of West Germany. Contrary to the current trend within New Cold War history empirical evidence does not emphasise the importance of ideas, but rather the primacy of security and national interests in a Realist vein, as has been explained above. If ideas had been the main catalyst of WP policy, the crisis in the 1960s would not have been so similar to the one in NATO.

The primary importance of security instead of ideology also explains the WP drive for the normalisation of relations within Europe. Reaching out to Western Europe and even America and Canada cannot be explained from a purely communist perspective. The German Question constituted an impulse to European détente exactly because security reasons demanded an improvement in East-West relations. This is also why the WP played such an important role in proposing a conference on European Security. In the second half of the 1960s the WP members were consciously developing a strategy, which aimed at securing the Eastern European borders on the one hand – an ardent desire of Poland and the GDR – and at normalising relations within Europe on the other – something Romania strove to emphasise. The different national interests, which were reflected in this strategy, did not only facilitate the multilateralisation of the WP, but also paved the way for the multilateralisation of détente, as we have seen, while constituting a viable counterpart on NATO's emphasis on détente in the Harmel report. The WP accordingly paved the way for a dialogue between East and West during the seventies, since it provided the WP members with a context for the multilateralisation.

The roots of the CSCE are often attributed solely to the charismatic West German chancellor Willy Brandt and his 'neue Ostpolitik'. But the Polish foreign minister Rapacki had already proposed a conference on European Security at the UN in 1964, long before Brandt had become foreign minister, and the preparations for this process were already made in the WP at a time when NATO was still primarily focused on overcoming its internal crisis. Especially on the multilateralisation of détente it takes two sides to tango, and Brandt's Ostpolitik would not have succeeded, if the Eastern European quest for European Security had not constituted a kind of *Westpolitik*, which contributed to a normalisation of relations between Eastern and Western Europe from both sides of the Iron Curtain. Moreover, the diplomatic experience gained during the multilateralisation of the WP was essential in the Helsinki process, where smaller members were expected to contribute to the multilateral CSCE. The Cold War had multilateralised just as much as détente by the end of the 1960s, and the multilateralisation of the WP constitutes the *conditio sine qua non* of both processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

However much this book has attempted to reconsider the conventional wisdoms on the WP, and showing the extent to which its evolution has been underestimated, there is still plenty of scope for further research. Although the 1960s represented a particularly interesting transition period in the evolution of the WP, it would also be worthwhile to research the evolution of the alliance in the 1970s and the role of both the WP at large and the NSWP members as individuals in the Helsinki Process. Some tentative research has been done in this respect concerning the role of one or two NSWP members, but apart from a couple of articles no monograph has yet been dedicated to examining the Helsinki Process from the perspective of the WP, while also looking at the other issues that concerned the alliance in the 1970s.³⁷ It would be particularly interesting to examine the role of the WP in the transition from European détente in the early 1970s to the outbreak of the second Cold War after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

There is an even greater lacuna where the functioning of the WP in the 1980s is concerned. Because the end of the Cold War is usually associated with the reforms of Soviet leader Michael Gorbachev, the role of the WP is completely overlooked in the Cold War's last decade. It would, however, be very interesting to look at the role the WP played in finding a solution to the Polish Crisis in 1980-1981, when the Brezhnev doctrine was already abandoned *de facto*, long before Gorbachev abandoned it *de iure* in 1987. It would also be fascinating to trace the way in which Gorbachev's new foreign policy affected the dynamics within the WP, and the extent to which the NSWP members used the WP as an instrument to deal with the Soviet reforms. By the late 1980s the NSWP members even convened a WP meeting to which they had *not* invited a Soviet delegation in order to establish a common policy on what they called 'the Moscow spring'.³⁸ In July 1989 the East German defence minister Heinz Kessler compared the PCC meeting under Gorbachev to 'an assembly of ghosts', claiming that it was 'frighteningly different' from previous WP meetings.³⁹ The way in which Gorbachev's foreign policy actually frustrated the NSWP members would, accordingly, merit further research, as well as the WP's role in the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

Research into the WP in the 1980s could, in turn, contribute to an explanation of the peaceful collapse of the Soviet bloc and the dissolution of the WP in 1991. The WP's demise might at first sight seem to contradict the findings of this book, since the alliance ultimately (albeit twenty-two years after 1969) evolved into non-existence, but it would be worth examining to what extent the cooperation within the WP also

³⁷ D. Selvage, 'The Warsaw Pact and the European Security Conference, 1964-69', in A. Wenger et al. (eds.), *Origins of the European Security System: The Helsinki Process Revisited* (London and Oxford, 2008), 85-106.

³⁸ V. Mastny and M. Byrne (eds.), *A Cardboard Castle?* (Budapest and New York, 2005), 629-631.

³⁹ Mastny and Byrne, *Cardboard Castle*, 653.

contributed to the remarkably bloodless transition from communism to democracy in Eastern Europe.⁴⁰ This is a feat that can by no means be attributed to Gorbachev alone: Gorbachev's 'Sinatra doctrine' of going 'your own way' capitalised on an already existing trend, since Brezhnev's doctrine of limited sovereignty was already discredited within the WP in 1969, as we have seen in chapter 7, and it was not applied to the Polish Crisis in 1980-1981 either.⁴¹ The WP members had begun to go their own way in an important sense in the 1960s, and even used the alliance in 1991 to part company altogether: the WP's infrastructure facilitated the speedy dissolution of the Soviet bloc, since it was used to organise the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the WP countries in question at record speed. It was exactly the WP's evolution in the 1960s that enabled the WP members to negotiate their way out of the alliance in 1991. It is hard to imagine how this would have been possible if Eastern Europe had been an empire by coercion up to Gorbachev, solely consisting of bilateral ties.

Apart from the necessity of further research on the WP, there is also a wider need to address the asymmetry of research on Eastern Europe and on Western Europe. Since many developments in the Cold War are primarily viewed from a Western (European) perspective, Eastern Europe is automatically seen, at best, as a passive bystander or the beneficiary of Western insights, as has been the case with *inter alia* the conventional wisdom on the multilateralisation of détente. It is, therefore, imperative to research several themes and processes, which affected the Cold War, in greater depth from an Eastern European perspective, in order to redress the balance in current scholarship and avoid a teleological approach, according to which the West automatically comes out as the winner within the Cold War. Both détente in the 1970s, and the escalation of the second Cold War in the early 1980s, as well as the rapprochement between the power blocs in the late 1980s need to be researched from an Eastern European perspective, instead of a merely Western European or Soviet one.

As this book has shown, research into an alliance from a multilateral perspective yields different results on both the alliance itself and its role in international politics from research into only a number of members. There is still plenty of scope for further research on both NATO and the European Union from a multilateral angle with an emphasis on the role of the smaller members. The conceptual tools, which have been used in this book, such as emancipation, dynamics of dissent, and multilateralisation, could facilitate such an analysis. Although several scholars have researched both institutions from a multilateral perspective,⁴² most books tend to

⁴⁰ Cf. A. Pravda, 'The Collapse of the Soviet Union, 1990-1991', in M. Leffler, and O. A. Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War. Volume III: Endings* (Cambridge, 2010), 369.

⁴¹ Cf. M. J. Ouimet, *The Rise and Fall of the Brezhnev Doctrine in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill, 2003), 131-170, and A. Paczkowski and M. Byrne (eds.), *From Solidarity to Martial Law. The Polish Crisis* (Budapest and New York, 2007), 455.

⁴² E.g. N. P. Ludlow, *The European Community and the Crisis of the 1960s. Negotiating the Gaullist Challenge* (London and New York, 2006) on the EEC, and Locher, *Crisis? What Crisis?* on NATO.

focus on a small number of allies or on one particular issue instead of tracing the interplay of different issues in a multilateral dynamics. Whereas scholars have increasingly conducted multi-archival research to examine the role of one particular country in an international institution, it should be used more frequently to analyse the interplay between several states.⁴³

Along the same vein, the disintegration of the international communist movement in the 1960s deserves to be researched from a multi-archival perspective on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Although the communist movement has proved to play a significant role in the dynamics of the Cold War in the 1960s, little has been written on it. This book's research in the archives of the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI) has shown that there was a trend in the communist movement that was parallel to the one in the WP, where smaller members in Eastern and Western Europe (such as the PCI itself) increasingly occupied individual and different stances. As in the WP, the East German and Polish participants within the communist movement tended to be most extreme, with Romania blocking several issues, and the Soviet Union attempting to moderate the entire process. It would be particularly interesting to examine the role of Eastern and Western European communists in the 1960s alike, in the run-up to the establishment of Euro-communism in Western Europe in the 1970s, which has been studied in greater depth.⁴⁴

So far as alliances are concerned, it could also be worthwhile to construct a comparison between the aims and strategies of the smaller allies, while linking their conduct to alliance theory. There is also scope for further research on individual Eastern European allies, since it has not been possible to deal with all of them in equal depth. It would be interesting to look at the perception of the WP within regimes, which played a less prominent role in the alliance. As this conclusion has briefly shown, the WP can also fit into general theories on alliances. A structured comparison of the strategies of smaller allies in various alliances could contribute to alliance theories by providing more explanations of the functioning of multilateral alliances, as well as revising many Realist theories by shifting the balance from the power of the alliance leader to the bargaining power of the smaller allies.

Such multi-archival research from a multilateral perspective on both sides of the Iron Curtain would also facilitate a structured comparison between NATO and the WP. Although nothing more than a brief comparison fell within the scope of this book, it would be fascinating to construct a parallel history of both NATO and the WP, which was one of the primary aims of the Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security.⁴⁵ The findings in this book have paved the way for a comparison between the crisis within both NATO and the WP, which, in turn, would provide a fascinating

⁴³ Cf. E. Karamouzi, *Greece, the EEC and the Cold War, 1974-1979* (Basingstoke, forthcoming).

⁴⁴ Cf. S. Pons, 'The Rise and Fall of Eurocommunism', in Leffler and Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History*, III, 45-65.

⁴⁵ Cf. V. Mastny, 'The New History of Cold War Alliances', *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4:2 (2002), 57.

inroad to an analysis of the increasing influence of smaller allies in both alliances, as well as the role both alliances played in the construction of multilateral détente. The WP was, however, not only an instrument of détente, but also of defence. Although this book has primarily analysed the political processes within the WP, there is also scope for more research on the military aspects within the WP from a *multilateral* perspective, which could also facilitate a comparison between NATO and the WP from a military point of view.⁴⁶

Last but not least, it would be interesting to delve into the archives of NATO countries and their intelligence services, such as the CIA, to examine to what extent the NATO members were at all aware of the simultaneous transformation within the WP, while also researching the bilateral relations between members on both sides of the Iron Curtain, which followed similar strategies, such as France and Romania, or Belgium and Poland. A comparison between the strategies of both Germanys within their respective alliances could also provide a stimulating perspective on the role of the German Question in the Cold War.

Meanwhile, this book has attempted to contribute to an explanation of the multidimensionality of the Cold War on the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain. Instead of approaching the WP from the angle of failure and crisis, it is more fruitful to research to what extent the WP, like NATO and the European Community, evolved through overcoming its crisis during the 1960s. As this book shows, the WP, too, matured into a more stable alliance after overcoming its internal crisis. But more importantly, its evolution did not only have an impact on the structure of the alliance but also played an important role in the way in which foreign policy was shaped within Eastern Europe. The Cold War, was, indeed, much more multi-dimensional than has often been assumed, and an interpretation of the Cold War in bipolar terms is as much of an anachronism on the Eastern side of the Iron Curtain as on the Western side. The Warsaw Pact, too, can nevertheless be reconsidered in many ways, although this book has hopefully prevented it from being underestimated any longer.

⁴⁶ Cf. J. Hoffenaar, 'Bündnispolitik und Kriegspläne im Kalten Krieg: Stand der Forschung, wichtige Fragestellungen und fruchtbare Perspektive', *Tagung vom Deutschen Historischen Institut Moskau und dem Militärgeschichtlichen Forschungsamt*, Moscow, 16-17 May 2008 (unpublished).

SAMENVATTING

Dit proefschrift beoogt het gebruikelijke beeld van het Warschaupact als verlengstuk van het Kremlin kritisch onder de loep te nemen en een nieuw licht op de dynamiek binnen Oost-Europa in de Koude Oorlog te werpen. In de historiografie is vooralsnog weinig aandacht besteed aan het Warschaupact, omdat het bondgenootschap veelal werd beschouwd als een ‘transmission-belt’ van de Sovjet-Unie, een ‘cardboard castle’ of slechts een overkoepeling van de bilaterale verbanden tussen de SU enerzijds en haar satellietstaten anderzijds. Zo heeft het Warschaupact als onderzoeksobject ook niet geprofiteerd van de tendens binnen de ‘New Cold War history’ om het archiefmateriaal dat na de val van de Berlijnse Muur is vrijgekomen te benutten om diepgewortelde veronderstellingen over de Koude Oorlog te herzien en de Koude Oorlog vanuit een multi-archivaal en multinationaal perspectief te benaderen.

Door het Warschaupact echter ook vanuit het gezichtspunt van de niet-Sovjet Warschaupact (NSWP)-leden te bestuderen en de dynamiek binnen het Warschaupact als multilaterale alliantie te analyseren, poogt dit proefschrift in kaart te brengen in hoeverre het Warschaupact daadwerkelijk een Sovjetinstrument was. Aan de hand van uitgebreid archiefonderzoek naar vooralsnog onderbelichte of zelfs nog nooit geraadpleegde bronnen in Berlijn, Boekarest en Rome worden verscheidene invalshoeken belicht, om een zo compleet mogelijk beeld te schetsen van de dynamiek achter de schermen van het Warschaupact. Hieruit blijkt dat de lidstaten het bondgenootschap gedurende de jaren zestig steeds meer als instrument gebruikten om invloed uit te oefenen op de Sovjet-Unie en hun nationale belangen te behartigen. Dit proefschrift toont daarom aan dat de speelruimte voor de NSWP-leden binnen het Warschaupact gedurende deze periode zodanig werd vergroot dat het zich tot een multilateraal bondgenootschap ontwikkelde. Het proces van emancipatie van de NSWP-leden leidde tot de multilateralisering van het Warschaupact in zijn geheel.

Aan dit proces lagen twee geopolitieke ontwikkelingen ten grondslag, die de mogelijkheden van de kleinere bondgenoten om zich assertief op te stellen tegenover de Sovjet-Unie aanzienlijk vergrootten. Ten eerste werd het Kremlin in het begin van de jaren zestig stevig ondermijnd door de polemieken van de Chinese partijleiding, die de leidende rol van de Sovjet-Unie in de communistische wereldbeweging bekritiseerde en het niet eens was met Nikita Chroesjtsjovs koers van destalinisatie en vreedzame co-existentie. Deze onenigheid groeide uit tot het Sino-Sovjet schisma, dat de Sovjetrol in de communistische wereldbeweging aanzienlijk verzwakte. Ten tweede werden de lidstaten met een direct belang in de ‘Duitse kwestie’ – met name de DDR en Polen –

steeds assertiever in de manier waarop zij het bondgenootschap trachtten te gebruiken om hun eigen soevereiniteit en grenzen veilig te stellen. Met de mogelijke nuclearisering van West-Duitsland en de tweede Berlijnse crisis (1958-1962) stond de Duitse kwestie begin jaren zestig op scherp. Onder druk van de Chinese polemieken enerzijds en de groeiende macht van de BRD anderzijds zag het Kremlin zich genoodzaakt zijn bondgenoten binnen het Warschaupact serieus te nemen.

In de eerste helft van de jaren zestig leidde dit ertoe dat de kleinste lidstaat van het Warschaupact, Albanië, het Sino-Sovjetschisma ging benutten om China en de SU tegen elkaar uit te spelen en de Sovjetleiding binnen het raamwerk van het bondgenootschap scherp te bekritisieren. Hoewel de andere Warschaupactleden zich achter het Kremlin schaarden, schiep de Albanese kritiek wel een precedent, omdat zij aantoonde dat het bondgenootschap benut kon worden om het Kremlin onder druk te zetten. Vooral de Roemeense partijleiding greep deze mogelijkheid aan om haar onafhankelijke koers binnen Roemenië kracht bij te zetten en zich te emanciperen van enige Sovjetregie over haar binnenlandse en buitenlandse politiek. Door zich op te stellen als bemiddelaar in het Sino-Sovjetschisma verhieven de Roemeense partijleider Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej en de zijnen zich boven de andere Warschaupactleden en ontnamen zij het Kremlin een deel van de regie over de communistische wereldbeweging. Dit leidde tot de Roemeense onafhankelijkheidsverklaring in april 1964, waarmee de Roemeense partijleiding duidelijk aantoonde dat zij niet bereid was tot verdere integratie in het Warschaupact.

De Roemeense belangen stonden lijnrecht tegenover de Oost-Duitse en Poolse belangen binnen de alliantie, aangezien zowel de DDR-leider Walter Ulbricht als zijn Poolse collega Wladyslaw Gomulka verdere samenwerking binnen het Warschaupact juist als essentieel ervoeren om hun soevereiniteit en hun grenzen met Duitsland te waarborgen. Op het hoogtepunt van de tweede Berlijnse crisis gebruikte Ulbricht het Warschaupact dan ook om Chroesjtsjov over te halen tot het bouwen van de Berlijnse muur, terwijl Gomulka en Ulbricht het Warschaupact beiden probeerden te benutten om Chroesjtsjov ervan te weerhouden om concessies te doen aan de West-Duitse regering op nucleair gebied. Binnen het multilaterale kader van het Warschaupact hadden de partijleiders meer gelegenheid hun stem te laten gelden dan in bilaterale bijeenkomsten.

Het Warschaupact was in de eerste helft van de jaren zestig echter nog verre van een goed functionerend bondgenootschap. De leden troffen elkaar slechts in de hoogste geleerden van de Politieke Consultatieve Commissie (PCC) en zulke ontmoetingen vonden, met name door Roemeense veto's, slechts jaarlijks of eens in de twee jaar plaats. Wel vond er reeds buiten het officiële kader van de alliantie een zekere multilateralisering plaats: door de Albanese dissidentie was een briefwisseling tot stand gekomen, waarin de NSWP-leden hun belangen binnen het multilaterale raamwerk van het bondgenootschap duidelijk definieerden en Ulbrichts pogingen om de bondgenoten bijeen te roepen leidden ook tot een multilateralisering achter de

schermen. Dit proces wierp in december 1964 zijn vruchten af, toen er op NSWP-initiatief voor het eerst werd besloten om de onderministers van Buitenlandse Zaken bijeen te roepen om in die gelederen de PCC-vergadering, die in januari 1965 plaats zou vinden, voor te bereiden. Dit NSWP-initiatief getuigt zowel van de emancipatie van de NSWP-leden als van de beginnende multilateralisering van het bondgenootschap: het schiep immers de gelegenheid om de naderende vergadering in een multilateraal kader voor te bereiden. Daarnaast geeft het feit dat niet de partijleiders, maar de onderministers convenieerden ook blijk van het groeiende interstatelijke belang van de alliantie.

In de tweede helft van de jaren zestig kwam het Warschaupact pas echt tot wasdom. De PCC-vergadering van januari 1965 was het begin van een nieuwe trend, waarin de NSWP-leden de vergaderingen telkens meer naar hun hand gingen zetten. De pas aangetreden Sovjetleider Leonid Brezjnev werd geconfronteerd met een Pools voorstel voor een conferentie over Europese veiligheid, een Oost-Duits voorstel over hervormingen binnen het Warschaupact en non-proliferatie en Roemeense veto's over beide Oost-Duitse voorstellen. De conflicterende belangen van de NSWP-leden dreigden de standpunten van het Kremlin te eclipsen en vergrootten de speelruimte van de NSWP-leden jegens de Sovjetleiding. Daarnaast verhoogde het spanningsveld tussen de Oost-Duitse drang naar verdere coördinatie enerzijds en de Roemeense veto's anderzijds het zelfbewustzijn van de NSWP-lidstaten, die er in groeiende mate toe werden gedwongen om een duidelijk standpunt in te nemen. De onenigheid binnen het bondgenootschap dwong de bondgenoten er ook toe om meer vergaderingen te beleggen om via verder overleg de verschillende belangen te verenigen. Het feit dat de Warschaupactleden vanaf 1965 minimaal vier keer per jaar bijeenkwamen op verschillende niveaus van representatie (variërend van partijleider tot onderminister) toont niet alleen aan dat het bondgenootschap tot leven kwam, maar ook dat zowel zijn interstatelijke natuur, als zijn multilaterale karakter geconsolideerd werden.

De niet aflatende invloed van het Sino-Sovjetschisma en de Duitse kwestie maakte een dergelijke activiteit noodzakelijk. Het bondgenootschap diende zijn gelederen te sluiten over zulke heikele kwesties als de Vietnamoorlog en non-proliferatie, waarbij de Chinese en Sovjetleiding lijnrecht tegenover elkaar stonden. Ook hierbij poogde de Roemeense partijleiding het Kremlin middels het Sino-Sovjetschisma binnen het Warschaupact onder druk te zetten, hoewel het obstructieve Roemeense gedrag in toenemende mate tot zoveel wrevel leidde bij de andere lidstaten dat er werd gezonnen op manieren om de Roemeense obstructie te neutraliseren. Waar de onenigheid over een gezamenlijke verklaring over de Vietnamoorlog in juli 1966 nog tot een door de Roemenen gedicteerd compromis leidde, besloten de zes andere WP-leden in maart 1968 tot een gezamenlijke verklaring ten gunste van non-proliferatie achter de rug van de Roemenen om. De NSWP-invloed op de buitenlandpolitiek van het Sovjetblok dankzij het Warschaupact was tegen die tijd al zodanig dat de overige NSWP-leden verdere obstructie niet noodzakelijk achtten.

Ook in zaken die verband hielden met de Duitse kwestie tekende zich aanvankelijk een dichotomie af tussen Roemenië en de rest, aangezien de overige Warschaupactleden zich schaarden achter de Oost-Duitse voorstellen voor verdere coördinatie op het gebied van buitenlandbeleid en de Sovjetvoorstellen voor hervormingen op militair gebied. Beide voorstellen hadden ook als doel om het Warschaupact een effectiever en elastischer bondgenootschap te maken tegenover een eventuele West-Duitse dreiging. Over het Poolse voorstel voor een Europese veiligheidsconferentie leken de gelederen zich aanvankelijk te sluiten, al zorgde de Roemeense partijleiding er uiteindelijk voor dat de normalisering van Europese betrekkingen centraler stond dan de erkenning van de DDR en de Oost-Duitse en Poolse grenzen in de Warschaupactverklaring over Europese veiligheid uit 1966.

Dit stelde de Roemenen er ook toe in staat om in januari 1967 diplomatieke betrekkingen aan te knopen met West-Duitsland, wat sterk veroordeeld werd door de Oost-Duitse en Poolse partijleiding op een met spoed belegde WP-vergadering. De Tsjecho-Slowaakse en Hongaarse afgezanten stelden zich echter milder op, aangezien ook zij de mogelijkheid tot diplomatieke betrekkingen met de BRD open wilden houden. Ook het Kremlin stond in feite meer aan de Roemeense kant, al dwongen de Poolse en Oost-Duitse hard-liners hun Sovjetkameraden om hen in deze zaak te steunen. Hoewel de Duitse kwestie aanvankelijk leek te leiden tot de gebruikelijke dichotomie tussen Roemenië en de rest, veroorzaakte zij uiteindelijk grotere verdeeldheid tussen alle lidstaten. In de periode 1965-1967 begonnen de verschillende belangen van alle WP-lidstaten zich telkens duidelijker af te tekenen, waardoor het bondgenootschap verder multilateraliseerde.

Hoewel het Kremlin binnen het Warschaupact telkens meer de controle leek te verliezen over de besluitvorming, werd er tijdens de Praagse Lente in 1968 juist door de hard-liners Ulbricht, Gomulka en de Bulgaarse partijleider Todor Zhivkov een beroep op Brezjnev gedaan om de touwtjes in handen te nemen en de hervormingen in Tsjecho-Slowakije een halt toe te roepen, desnoods met geweld. De Roemeense partijleiding nam geen deel aan dit proces en beschouwde de Praagse Lente juist als de ultieme Tsjecho-Slowaakse emancipatie van de Sovjet-greep. Toen de bemiddelingspogingen van de Hongaarse partijleider Janos Kadar nergens toe leidden, besloot ook hij om zich achter een militaire interventie in Tsjecho-Slowakije te scharen om het machtsmonopolie van de communistische partij te redden. Zowel de politieke besluitvorming als de militaire maatregelen omtrent de crisis in Tsjecho-Slowakije voltrokken zich echter buiten het officiële raamwerk van het Warschaupact.

Het Warschaupact heeft zijn negatieve reputatie grotendeels aan de invasie in Tsjecho-Slowakije te wijten, maar de alliantie werd dus niet gebruikt om de interventie voor te bereiden, omdat het verdrag van Warschau, net als het Noord-Atlantische verdrag van de NAVO, geen invasie *binnen* het bondgenootschap kon faciliteren. Het Kremlin was niet langer in een positie om unilaterale stappen te nemen, maar de stem van de andere Oost-Europese partijleiders woog zwaar mee in een beslissing, waarvan

Breznev zelf aanvankelijk minder gecharmeerd was dan Ulbricht en Gomulka, die een roep tot liberalisering in hun eigen land vreesden. De multilaterale besluitvorming omtrent de invasie kan daarom worden gezien als een uitvloeisel van de emancipatie van de NSWP-leden en de multilateralisering van het Warschaupact, waarin de NSWP-belangen telkens meer op de voorgrond traden.

De invasie in Tsjecho-Slowakije toont echter ook aan dat de kleinere bondgenoten op militair gebied afhankelijk waren van de Sovjet-Unie. Dit verklaart ook waarom het Kremlin het voortouw nam in de militaire hervormingen, waarover gedurende 1968 nog volop in bilaterale en multilaterale overleggen tussen de Sovjetleiding en haar bondgenoten werd gediscussieerd. Hoewel Breznev het initiatief had genomen tot verdere militaire integratie van het Warschaupact, hadden de Warschaupactleden ook op dit front wel degelijk iets in de melk te brokkelen: zo lukte het de Roemeense partijleiding om intergouvernementele elementen in te bouwen in de voorstellen over een Militaire Raad en een Commissie van de ministers van Defensie. Hierdoor kon het Warschaupact niet op supranationale wijze beslissen over de inzet van nationale legers, maar bleven de regeringen van de lidstaten ook op dit gebied soeverein. Dit was een aanzienlijke vooruitgang ten aanzien van het verleden, waarin het Statuut van het Verenigde Commando een parallel bestaan had geleid aan het Warschaupact en door Sovjetmilitairen werd gedomineerd. De multilateralisering van het bondgenootschap had dus ook haar weerslag op militair gebied.

Het proces van emancipatie en multilateralisering culmineerde in de PCC-vergadering van maart 1969, waarin voor het eerst in de geschiedenis van het Warschaupact werkelijke overeenstemming werd bereikt over een aantal fundamentele zaken, variërend van de militaire hervormingen tot een voorstel voor een conferentie over Europese veiligheid. Na de door de Roemenen sterk veroordeelde invasie in Tsjecho-Slowakije was het des te belangrijker om de gelederen te sluiten, temeer omdat de PCC vergadering samenviel met grensgevechten tussen Chinese en Sovjetsoldaten, waardoor het Sino-Sovjetschisma dreigde te escaleren. Hoewel de Roemeense partijleiding erin slaagde om het Warschaupact niet te betrekken bij een veroordeling van het Chinese geweld, zag ook zij de noodzaak ervan in om een aantal compromissen te sluiten over enkele belangrijke vraagstukken.

Zo werden alle Warschaupactleden het uiteindelijk eens over de militaire hervormingen, die door het creëren van een Commissie van ministers van Defensie en een Militaire Raad juist ook de besluitvorming over militaire aangelegenheden multilateraliseerden. Daarnaast werd de emancipatie van de lidstaten geconsolideerd door de intergouvernementele elementen binnen de desbetreffende statuten. Hetzelfde gold voor het voorstel voor een conferentie over Europese veiligheid, waarvan de totstandkoming grotendeels op het conto kan worden geschreven van de NSWP-leden. Hoewel de spanning tussen de normalisering van de Europese betrekkingen en het vastleggen van de grenzen met Duitsland bleef bestaan, werden de belangen van alle lidstaten in het voorstel behartigd, waardoor alle lidstaten het voorstel steunden.

De besluitvorming in maart 1969 bezegelde het proces van emancipatie en multilateralisering dat aan het begin van het decennium in gang was gezet. Nadat er in de tweede helft van de jaren zestig al regelmatig en op verschillende niveaus van representatie binnen het bondgenootschap was vergaderd, werd deze ontwikkeling deels geïnstitutionaliseerd door het creëren van nieuwe organen. Hiermee begon het Warschaupact meer te lijken op zijn Noord-Atlantische tegenhanger, die ook uit zowel politieke als militaire organen bestond. Daarnaast hadden ook de kleinere bondgenoten in de NAVO in dezelfde periode een proces van emancipatie jegens de Verenigde Staten meegemaakt, in reactie op het Amerikaanse unilateralisme tijdens de tweede Berlijnse crisis en de Cubacrisis. Gepaard met het Franse Gaullisme leidde dit tot hervormingen binnen de NAVO, waardoor het bondgenootschap meer consultatief en minder hiërarchisch werd. Hoewel het Warschaupact in de historiografie veelal gecontrasteerd wordt met de NAVO, voltrok zich binnen het Oost-Europese bondgenootschap dus een gelijkaardig proces. Beide supermachten werden ertoe gedwongen de speelruimte van hun kleinere bondgenoten te vergroten om zo hun bondgenootschap overeind te houden.

Het is daarom niet verwonderlijk dat ook de kiem van de zogeheten 'multilateralisering van détente', waarbij détente ook een aangelegenheid van de kleinere Europese bondgenoten werd, in beide bondgenootschappen werd gelegd. Waar de NAVO met het 'Harmel Rapport' uit 1967 een verband legde tussen 'defence' en 'détente', gebeurde in het Warschaupact feitelijk hetzelfde, door in maart 1969 zowel de militaire hervormingen als het voorstel voor een Europese Veiligheidsconferentie te bezegelen. Het daaropvolgende Helsinki-proces vond daarom niet eenzijdig zijn oorsprong aan de westerse zijde van het IJzeren Gordijn, zoals vaak wordt gesuggereerd, maar werd juist aan de oostkant in gang gezet. Het voorstel, halverwege de jaren zestig, voor een Europese Veiligheidsconferentie was immers van Poolse origine en het Warschaupact deed het eerste concrete voorstel voor een dergelijke conferentie tijdens de PCC-vergadering in maart 1969. De multilateralisering van het Warschaupact was een noodzakelijke voorwaarde voor de multilateralisering van détente. Zonder de emancipatie van de NSWP-leden was een dergelijk multilateraal proces als het Helsinki-proces in de jaren zeventig nooit mogelijk geweest.

Dit proefschrift betoogt daarom dat óók het Warschaupact in de jaren zestig een transformatie heeft doorgemaakt: één die wellicht nog fundamentele was dan de transformatie in de NAVO, omdat het Warschaupact zich in die periode evolueerde van een 'cardboard castle' tot een multilateraal bondgenootschap. In dit proces emancipeerden de NSWP-leden zich tot bondgenoten, die de mogelijkheden hadden de buitenlandpolitiek van het Sovjetblok aanzienlijk te beïnvloeden. Dit werpt niet alleen een nieuw licht op het Warschaupact zelf, maar ook op de machtsverhoudingen binnen Oost-Europa. Om die recht te doen, dient het perspectief van de kleinere bondgenoten niet langer te worden veronachtzaamd. Dit proefschrift toont aan dat zij een grotere stempel op de Koude Oorlog drukten dan vooralsnog werd verondersteld.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Laurien Crump (Amsterdam, 1978) read Classics at Christ's College, Cambridge, where she graduated in Ancient Philosophy with a *First Class Honours* in June 2000. Laurien taught Latin, Greek, Classical Civilisation, and Critical Thinking at Wycombe Abbey School in the UK from 2001 to 2004, and at the Utrechts Stedelijk Gymnasium, where she also coordinated the international programme, from 2005 to 2010. Laurien started a History degree at Utrecht University in 2007, and obtained her M.A. in Comparative History in 2009 (*cum Laude*). Laurien was appointed Junior University Lecturer in the History of International Relations at Utrecht University in September 2010. She spent Hilary Term 2012 at St. Antony's College, Oxford, as a Senior Associate Member, and won Utrecht University's *Teaching Talent Prize* upon her return. While researching the Warsaw Pact (WP), Laurien travelled widely in Eastern Europe and Russia, learnt Romanian in the process, and presented her findings on the WP at conferences and seminars in eight different countries. Laurien has written several articles on the WP for *inter alia* the *Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security*, of which she is a member, and *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis*, and a chapter for a volume on *The Balkans and the Cold War* (Palgrave, forthcoming). A shortened version of her PhD thesis will be published by Routledge in November 2014. Since September 2013 Laurien is appointed as Assistant Professor at Utrecht University for a two-year period.

