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THE SOVIET SPHERE OF INFLUENCE IN THE
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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I investigate the large impact that Soviet occupation had on what was originally the Eastern Zone of Germany, and eventually, the German Democratic Republic. Given the number of individuals in leadership positions in the GDR who had spent significant time in the Soviet Union, it was inevitable that this Sovietized mindset would be spread to various sectors of society. The timeline for this thesis begins with the chaos that was rampant in East Germany in 1945, just after the conclusion of World War II. It ends in 1956, after the Twentieth Communist Party Congress, wherein Nikita Khrushchev gave his secret speech denouncing Stalin and his actions, and ushering in a wave of de-Stalinization policies that changed the political course of the Soviet Union. After this seminal event, the influence that the Soviets once had over the GDR began to steadily wane.

INTRODUCTION

After World War II, Germans entered a period of absolute uncertainty regarding their future. Adolf Hitler had promised to transform Germany into a reich that would last for one thousand years. Instead, it lasted for a mere twelve, and the German people were left without a direction in which to continue. For those living in the Eastern Zone--East Germany--the Soviets became their new masters. Even after the eventual establishment of the German Democratic Republic, it was democratic "only in the very specific, communist interpretation of that term."[1] After the Soviets took over, Stalinism became so pervasive that one form of dictatorship--the Third Reich--was being substituted for another.

More than anything, the GDR became a satellite state of Soviet influence, rather than an independent German state. However, the GDR was not exceptional in this sense, as the Soviet Union possessed divers satellite states, including the Polish People's Republic. The crucial difference between the two was the manner in which the Soviet Union governed them. With the GDR, Soviet officials inserted themselves into every facet of society, resulting in an overt Sovietizing influence on East Germans. Furthermore, the leadership of the GDR was more than willing to cooperate with their Soviet occupiers and implement the Soviet policies and procedures. However, while being a satellite state in and of itself is not exceptional, the manner in which the GDR was superintended by the Soviet Union certainly was. This type of oversight by the Soviets and reciprocal cooperation by the East Germans was not indicative of the Polish People's Republic, and there are numerous possible reasons for this. One explanation was the inherent "indomitability of the Polish nation," which had allowed the nation to survive previous colonization attempts in

[1] Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR, 1949-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 8.

the past.[2] Moreover, the Poles possessed a very ingrained "hatred of Russia," and this voracious disdain for the Soviets could have also acted as the catalyst for their resistance to Soviet rule.[3] Despite the Soviets having invaded Berlin at the end of World War II and subsequently becoming the occupying force of the Eastern Zone, many East Germans did not exhibit the same level of antipathy towards the Soviets that the Poles did.

It would be an overstatement to claim that *no* East Germans harbored feelings of acrimony for the occupying Soviets. Many Germans vividly remembered how the Soviet Red Army had treated the civilian population when they entered Berlin at the end of World War II. Thus, their outlook on the Soviet occupation was far bleaker than that of the "Red Germans" who had spent vast amounts of time in the Soviet Union and already had an established report with the Soviet authorities in Moscow. This brings me to my next point: the issue of creating a new Germany was a somewhat elitist affair, and the Germans who were the most compliant with the Soviets were the individuals who can be classified as the more privileged members of society. Often, these individual made regular "pilgrimages" to Moscow, wherein they enjoyed the trappings of the Muscovite lifestyle, and were undoubtedly treated far better than the Soviets would have treated the average East German citizen. This can easily be explained as a calculated effort by the Soviets to ingratiate themselves with their East German vassals, who would then, presumably, wax rhapsodic about their benevolent benefactors to the citizens back home. Ulbricht, Mielke, Pieck, and others were not subjected to the same Soviet abuses that much of society was, and thus, they viewed the GDR through a rather different lens than did the average citizen.

The meetings between East German leaders and their Soviet sponsors in Moscow were critical in further implementing Stalinistic policies in the GDR. Aside from receiving directions

[2] James Franklin Brown, "Poland," in *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1988), 158.
[3] Brown, *Eastern Europe and Communist Rule*, 158.

from Stalin, the emissaries also gained a certain sense of respect from being invited to the Soviet capital. These individuals were referred to as "Red Germans", and the guilt that they internalized over what the Nazis had done to the Soviets during World War II was combined with a sense of pride at being in the company of the Soviet Communist Party, an organization for which they possessed the utmost reverence. Oddly enough, one of the aspects of these trips that these men enjoyed was the ability to escape "the unpleasant realities of occupied Germany," especially the "sometimes overbearing interference of the Soviet political officers."[4] The first contingent of German leaders traveled to Moscow in June of 1945. This trip laid the groundwork for the legalization of the KPD. The second trip, which occurred in January and February of 1946, "cemented the procedures for the formation of the SED."[5]

Regarding the East Germans, this was not merely a case of the Soviet overseers compelling them to follow their methods blindly. Rather, there were a number of individuals who not only studiously obeyed the commands of the Soviet authorities, but also implemented these ideals into everyday life in the GDR and fully believed in the Soviet model of government. Without these willing participants, the Soviet occupying forces would not have been able to effectively Sovietize the GDR in the manner that they did.

Blindly following a dictatorial regime is exactly how the Nazis ascended to and maintained power from 1933-1945, so one would have thought that these Germans--who were staunchly anti-Nazi--would have exercised a bit more caution in their dealings with the Soviet authorities. However, this may be explained by the fact that like the Germans, the Soviets possessed intense

[4] Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: a History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1997), 298.
[5] Ibid.

enmity for the Nazis, so the Germans may have been lured into a false sense of security, incorrectly assuming that the Soviets would not be replacing an authoritative regime with another one. The Soviet antipathy for Nazis was conveyed by their denazification procedures. Throughout the Soviet Occupation Zone, local chapters of the KPD established "joint efforts" with the Soviets to "purge the local administrative [apparatuses] of 'fascist elements'" and then replace these individuals with "politically reliable antifascists."[6]

In this paper, I analyze the various facets of East German life upon which the Soviet Union had a dramatic effect. This includes how Soviet influence dramatically affected the manner in which security services--such as the Stasi--were run; how many of the leaders of the German Democratic Republic had spent a significant amount of time in the Soviet Union, often in the intelligence service, and how this Soviet mindset trickled down to their subordinates; and how the death of Joseph Stalin and the subsequent implementation of de-Stalinization affected the GDR.

Please note that certain terms/acronyms are used interchangeably in order to avoid repetition, such as "the Stasi" being used in certain cases, and "*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*" or "MfS" in others. Also, although I attempt to include the original German for acronyms, there are some, such as the NKVD, that do not match up with their English translation, and this is because the acronym relates to Russian words, so I was unable to provide a German equivalent. Furthermore, some of the primary texts are from the German Historical Archive and are taken from an original text, usually in German. The texts that I viewed were presented as English translation PDFs, and the pagination always began on page one, so although the actual page range from the original text is cited in the bibliography, when cited in the body of this paper, I have provided the page number from the PDF.

[6] Andrew I. Port, "Creating a 'New Order'," in *Conflict and Stability in the German Democratic Republic* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 23.

CHAPTER 1: AFTER WORLD WAR II: THE SOVIET OCCUPATION ZONE

After a crushing defeat in World War II, Germany was thrown into chaos. More specifically, the Eastern Zone was the victim of tumultuous circumstances because the occupying force, the Soviet Red Army, had been ill-treated by the German Army during the war. As one can imagine, the Soviets vividly recalled the atrocities committed against them in recent years, and they were determined to make the Germans--even the civilians who had not been directly culpable--suffer for their dead comrades.

Disorganization

Between May and June 1945, the Soviet military governed Germany through a chaotic and uncoordinated system, in which a multitude of newly created administrative units shared authority without a clear sense of hierarchy."[7] This was easily one of the most problematic aspects of the Soviet occupation in East Germany. Commandants, who were an integral part of the administrative culture, were selected in regards to both their political and military background. Moscow wanted them to set up local administrations as expediently as possible, which often resulted in the selection of people who were ill-suited for their positions. The commandant was tasked with assuming "complete responsibility for the activities of the Germans," and each kommandantura (local headquarters of commandants) would be provided a deputy commandant, who would be assigned by the security services.[8] This deputy commandant was to command a People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) operations group (*opergruppa*), which consisted of 24 officers and men.

[7] Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 11-12.
[8] Ibid, 13.

Essentially, the commandants were responsible for "general policy," while the deputy commandants were tasked to deal with "terrorists, diversionaries, and other fascist elements."[9]

On 18 May 1945, at a meeting with 160 newly-appointed commandants in attendance, General Lavrenti Tsanava of the People's Commissariat for State Security (NKGB) stated that local German administrators should be vehemently antifascist, and more specifically, they should come from groups of people who experienced massive amounts of Nazi oppression. Furthermore, these individuals should be wholly supportive of the Soviet occupation. Moreover, the Seventh Section of the First Ukrainian Front simply ordered the commandants to "seek out well-known and popular local antifascists and opponents of Hitler and name them, regardless of party affiliation, as the mayors, *Landrats* (county commissioners), and police chiefs."[10]

The tasks that the commandants and deputy commandants were assigned were arduous enough, but further complicating matters, they were not provided with specially-trained staffs, and many of the Soviets were given jobs in areas in which they lacked sufficient knowledge. The confusion was so widespread that even the Americans were aware of it, as evidenced by the following report from the Office of Strategic Services (OSS):

> Under such circumstances, much of the actual administration of German territory is left to the German civil administrators. Soviet military interference, in short, is apparently at a minimum, as long as the German administrator [abides by] his general Russian directives. On the other hand, it is obvious that the german officials are not always certain of their own authority and not infrequently find themselves overridden by local Russian commanding officers.[11]

[9] Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 13.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 14.

Furthermore, some districts had multiple commandants who performed essentially the same tasks. In Dresden, there were four kommandanturas, "one for the city, one for the district, one for the headquarters of the provincial military administration, and one for the First Tank Regiment."[12]

Soviet meddling became more than just bothersome; it was downright detrimental to East German society. Even though local kommandanturas were only authorized to carry out SMAD (*Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland*) directives and to maintain public order, commandants frequently interfered with the rebuilding efforts in their districts. This was troublesome because the commandants regularly prioritized their soldiers' welfare over that of the East German civilians.

Looting and raping

The Soviet military invaded Germany in January of 1945. Over the years, Nazi propaganda had characterized the Soviets as savages, and this only served to make the retreating Germans flee even faster. However, there were numerous individuals--women, children, the elderly, the physically/mentally handicapped--who were not able to retreat and "it was left largely to those who could not flee in time to answer for the crimes of a nation."[13] In an indirect sense, the Nazis were responsible for the Soviet soldiers raping German women. During World War II, German forces had taken millions of Soviet women captive, some for slave labor and some for sex slaves. Because of this, the Soviet press began a propaganda campaign, often disseminating leaflets that

[12] Ibid.
[13] Filip Slaveski, *The Soviet Occupation of Germany: Hunger, Mass Violence and the Struggle for Peace, 1945-1947* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 5.

described the German rapes in vivid detail, both revolting and angering the whole of the USSR. It was these German actions against Soviet women that acted as a catalyst for the Soviet rapes of women in East Germany. It mattered not whether the women in question were young or old; the Red Army raped at will, often in public settings. Although some of these malicious acts were likely the cause of carnal urges, often, a Soviet soldier's pain regarding German occupation "could be channelled towards sexual violence."[14] Unsurprisingly, Stalin did nothing to stymy the soldiers' rapacious tendencies, instead stating that he "would not indict his soldiers for having 'fun with a woman or some trifle' when they had crossed Europe over the dead bodies of their comrades and dearest ones to liberate the continent."[15]

However, it was not merely the numerous sexual assaults that the Soviets unleashed on the Germans: looting was also a widespread problem. Soviet soldiers "simply smashed to pieces all the wonderful things they couldn't loot" and also "razed the mansions to the ground and killed the remaining rich landowners as their fathers had done to their own back in 1917 at the time of the revolution."[16] As one might reasonably surmise, the Soviet soldiers, left unchecked, eventually went too far with their extracurricular activities. At this point, Soviet command was wondering what to do once the war had reached its conclusion. Their plan was not simply to defeat the German forces, but to "pacify conquered areas to administer them better, even to feed the population, not evacuate them and make eastern Germany uninhabitable."[17] It would seem that this important memo did not reach the ears of the Soviet soldiers, however, as they were "burning towns to the ground for no apparent military reason, exacerbating housing shortages in eastern Germany, not only for the Germans but for their own liberated citizens as well."[18]

[14] Slaveski, *The Soviet Occupation of Germany*, 6.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Slaveski, *The Soviet Occupation of Germany*, 7.
[18] Ibid.

Establishment of the SMAD

On 9 June 1945, the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (*Sowjetische Militäradministration in Deutschland*, the SMAD) was established. Its primary function was to "assume the functions of military government previously exercised by the local Red Army commanders," which had been tumultuous, to say the very least.[19] Upon its founding, the SMAD was the "supreme Allied Authority" in the Soviet Occupation Zone (*Sowjetische Besatzungszone,* SBZ) as well as the cornerstone of Soviet control over the future of post-war Germany.[20] The SMAD was also responsible for delegating tasks to other organizations, such as the Communist Party of Germany (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, KPD) and ensuring that said organizations properly carried out its orders. Many of the orders that were delivered to the Soviet Military Administration were orders from Stalin himself, relayed "by wire or telephone before being passed on to the German comrades at high-level bilateral meetings."[21]

Although disorganization was present in certain facets of the SBZ, politics was something of an exception. Even before Germany capitulated at the end of the war, the Red Army had made preparations for a "step-by-step communist seizure of power in the territories it controlled."[22] The Soviets installed numerous loyal German communists--who had spent years in the USSR during WWII--into important political positions. The preferential treatment that the German communists received continued into June 1945, when SMAD created a Party system in the SBZ. This allowed

[19] Dirk Spilker, *The East German Leadership and the Division of Germany: Patriotism and Propaganda 1945-1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 33.
[20] Spilker, *The East German Leadership and the Division of Germany*, 33.
[21] Spilker, *The East German Leadership and the Division of Germany*, 33-34.
[22] Stefan Creuzberger, "The Soviet Military Administration and East German Elections, Autumn 1946," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 45, no. 1 (1999), http://libraries.ou.edu/access.aspx?url=http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.ou.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=4335088&site=ehost-live, 89.

the re-establishment of the four major political parties (KPD, SPD, LDP, and CDU[23]), but the Soviets were mostly interested in "endearing themselves to the Allies" through empty "gestures towards democratic pluralism."[24] Despite their theatrics, it was obvious to anyone living in the SBZ that the Soviets would only truly tolerate the KPD. The other parties in existence were encouraged to form "within the block so as to control their development better."[25] When meeting with leading SMAD officers in 1945, General Georgy Zhukov, the commander of the SBZ, declared:

> I am not at all in agreement with the idea that we should maintain an identical and equal relationship towards all parties of the block. We should comprehensively support one party [KPD] and enable it to increase its authority, while we should keep up the others with the aim of neutralising those strata of the population who support the two liberal bourgeois parties.[26]

Furthermore, Zhukov left it up to the SMAD and NKVD to decide how to police the other political groups. Their actions made it difficult for the more bourgeois parties to call meetings, or publish their own newspapers, which made it even more difficult to reach a broader audience. Entire party branches were also shut down, their members arrested for their "suspect" political activity.

The elections held in the SBZ in the autumn of 1946 were a part of the radical change that the Soviets were attempting to enact in the Eastern Zone. In fact, "Soviet military authorities had planned almost every detail of this campaign to ensure that the Socialist Unity Party of Germany

[23] *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, Communist Party of Germany; *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, Social Democratic Party of Germany; *Liberal-Demokratische Partei*, Liberal-Democratic Party; *Christlich Demokratische Union*, Christian Democratic Union.
[24] Slaveski, *The Soviet Occupation of Germany*, 119.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Slaveski, *The Soviet Occupation of Germany*, 119.

(SED) headed the poll."[27] This played a significant role in "Stalin's postwar plans" to establish a "predominantly communist Germany."[28] When the polls closed on 20 October 1946, "the first general elections in [the] region for thirteen years" had come to a conclusion.[29] There were three separate rounds, and each voter elected representatives at the communal, district, and regional levels. However, as can be expected, these results were dubious, to say the least. As early as June of 1946, Marshall Sokolovskii, who was the commander of the SMAD, privately told his subordinates that the only way the election could be considered a success was if the election results reflected the greatness of the SED as the party that would forge the future of Germany.

One of the other pressing issues involved some of the men in the SMAD dealing with "the psychological toll of the war," and often seeking solace in the "greater amount of alcohol available in Germany," with some even resorting to suicide.[30] Alcohol abuse had already been quite prevalent in the Red Army, but with better access to alcohol in Germany, binge drinking--both on duty and off--had become a more serious problem. There was also a further issue with trying to convince some of the men--who had lost much during the war, often attributed to the German occupation--that protecting the Germans and helping to establish an East German state was a worthwhile objective. This was no easy task, given the number of Soviet soldiers who blamed Germans for many of their war-related woes.

Russophobia

[27] Creuzberger, "The Soviet Military Administration and East German Elections, Autumn 1946," 89.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 90.
[30] Slaveski, *The Soviet Occupation of Germany*, 64.

Unsurprisingly, not everyone was as welcoming to the occupying Soviets as were some of the individuals in the upper echelon of the German hierarchy. The relations between the Germans and the Soviets were tenuous at best from the very beginning and had only deteriorated from 1946-1947. This anti-Soviet mood was not always conveyed solely by ordinary citizens. In some cases, members of the SED also acted as the impetus behind anti-Soviet sentiments. The main reasons for this "wave of German Russophobia" stem not only from Soviet occupation policy, but also from the behavior of Soviet troops.[31]

Anti-communist sentiments were also fueled by Germans who had been prisoners of war held captive by the Soviets during World War II. The former POWs told tales of the poor conditions in the Soviet POW camps, and there were still some prisoners who had not been returned to Germany, and the Soviets were not sharing news regarding these individuals' fates. Further fueling the anger and frustration felt by Germans over the POW issue was the fact that there had been a joint decision by the Allied foreign ministers to "release all POWs by December 1948."[32] As one can expect, the withholding of German POWs did nothing to calm the hatred felt for the occupying Soviets.

The Soviets were continuing to "strip the SBZ's economy bare," even though officials from the SMAD had made assurances that this would no longer be the case.[33] To make matters worse, this was all happening at a time when the economic situation in the SBZ was rather strained due to vast shortages of resources. Of course, having to relinquish many of the country's most valuable resources to Soviet forces at a time when the situation was so dire only served to further exacerbate tensions between the occupiers and the occupied.

[31] Spilker, *The East German Leadership and the Division of Germany*, 125.
[32] Spilker, *The East German Leadership and the Division of Germany*, 207.
[33] Ibid, 125.

There were calculated attempts made to stymy this rampant Russophobia, one of which was the German-Soviet Friendship Alliance [*Deutsch-sowjetische Freundschaftsgesellschaft*]. The society had 5,500,000 members, and its main objective was to facilitate a "love of Soviet culture to the Germans," mostly through films and learning the Russian language.[34] However, it does not appear that the society "impinged on the lives of many of its members," as many of them likely did no more than view a film from time to time.[35]

Education in the SBZ

One of the most effective methods of forcing the East Germans to adopt Soviet customs was through specialized education in the SBZ. The occupying Soviets knew that if they could indoctrinate children while they were still young and impressionable, the Soviets would have a much easier time molding these adolescents into Soviet-friendly puppets. However, this was not always *forced* upon the children; sometimes, they were quite adamant about forming their own organizations without the Soviets even needing to persuade them. On 26 February 1946, members from the Central Youth Committee for the Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany wanted to establish the Free German Youth (*Freie Deutsche Jugend*, FDJ). After receiving permission from the SMAD, the FDJ was officially founded on 7 March 1946. This group was aimed at young people ranging in age from 14-27, and its founding decree "embraced anti-Fascism, German unity, and reconstruction."[36] Eventually, the group began educating the young members in Marxism-

[34] Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 83.
[35] Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 83.
[36] "SAPMO-BArch, DY 24/796"; reprinted in Udo Wengst, *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland*. Bd. 2/2: 1945-1949: *Die Zeit der Besatzungszonen. Sozialpolitik zwischen Kriegsende und der Gründung zweier deutscher Staaten*. *Dokumente* [*The History of Social Policy in Germany*, Vol. 2/2: 1945-1949. *The Era of the Occupation Zones. Social Policy between the End of the War and the Founding of Two German States*. *Documents*]. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001, p. 139. Translation: Thomas Dunlap, 1.

Leninism, and although the FDJ was supposedly non-partisan, the communists ran it from the very beginning.

The boys and girls who were in the group were committed to rebuilding their homeland on an anti-fascist-democratic basis and they felt united by "the sacred desire to help overcome...the guilt of our nation caused by Nazism."[37] In order to achieve this, the FDJ demanded the following:

1. The preservation of Germany's unity.
2. To recruit the German youth for the great ideals of liberty, humanism, a proactive democracy, international peace, and friendship among nations.
3. The active participation of all boys and girls in the rebuilding of our fatherland.
4. The creation of a new Germany, one that accords the youth the right of co-determination through their active participation in the administration of public life.
5. Support for our youthful sense that we all belong together by developing all areas of interest in our life.[38]

In other cases, it was less a matter of individuals voluntarily establishing an organization than it was the government setting mandates for how school was to be run. On 24 August 1949, the SED published a set of guidelines for schools in the future GDR. According to the SED, schools were going to have an integral role in establishing a socialist society, and said schools were to "adhere strictly to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism."[39] Furthermore, the SED wanted to create a single state-mandated school (*Einheitsschule*) that was staffed with "politically and ideologically

[37] "SAPMO-BArch, DY 24/796," 1.
[38] Ibid., 1-2.
[39] "*Dokumente der SED* [*Documents of the SED*]", vol. 2. East Berlin: 1951, p. 324 ff.; reprinted in Christoph Kleßmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung. Deutsche Geschichte 1945-1955* [*The Founding of Two States. German History 1945-1955*]. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986, pp. 525-27. Translation: Thomas Dunlap, 1.

reliable teachers."[40] Private schools, especially parochial schools, were all abolished. It was also the SED's goal to mold these children into "fighters for the unity of Germany, for a just peace, and for a peaceful and amicable coexistence between nations, especially with the Soviet Union."[41] The teachers at these schools were expected to fight against not only fascist threats, but also against any "militaristic," "war-mongering," or anti-Soviet influences, as well as trying to stop all "religious, national, and racial hatred."[42] The teachers at these "German democratic comprehensive schools" were not traditional instructors, but were instead expected to combine their "pedagogical work with the struggle for the building of a new democratic society," and also needed to have "an objective knowledge of Marxism-Leninism" in addition to a good education.[43] The SED also assured their overseers that every attempt was being made to improve relations with the occupying forces. They insisted that every instructor at the schools be "a true friend of the Soviet Union" and attempt to develop a "genuine relationship of friendship" with the Soviets among their students, the parents, and the general public.[44]

Higher education was certainly not immune to these sweeping changes. In the early 1950s, after the founding of the GDR, higher education in the GDR was forged by the need for "scientific-technical experts to advance the goals of the Five-Year Plan," as well as by the desire to "reinforce a Marxist-Leninist approach to the social sciences."[45] In February 1951, a document was released by the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party that acted as an outline of what the current situation was, and what they wanted to transform it into.

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[40] *Dokumente der SED*, 1.
[41] *Dokumente der SED*, 1.
[42] *Ibid*.
[43] Ibid, 3.
[44] Ibid.
[45] H. Weber, *Von der SBZ zur DDR 1945-1968* [*From the Soviet Occupation Zone to the GDR 1945-1968*], (Hannover, 1968, pp. 286-87), trans. Adam Blauhut, 1.

In the document, the authors are staunchly against what the West is doing in regards to education, and they want their East German institutions to serve as "effective instruments in the struggle to secure peace and restore the democratic unity of Germany."[46] They also highlight how they can overcome what they consider "ideological backwardness:"

1. Wage a relentless battle against all reactionary ideologies, bourgeois objectivism, cosmopolitanism, and social democracy at universities and institutions of higher education so as to prevent any attempt to disseminate imperialistic ideologies.
2. Provide comradely support for progressive forces, leading them down the path to Marxism-Leninism through public scientific debate and private talks on all ideological issues.
3. Win over all highly trained experts who are loyal to our anti-fascist democratic order, convincing them of the need for the progressive development of science and the progressive education of the younger generation.[47]

They also believe it necessary to "implement a basic two-year study period in the social sciences," advocate for the study of natural sciences, and to share with both teachers and students the findings of "both Soviet science and the scientific disciplines in the people's democracies around the world."[48]

The authors of the document were also concerned with utilizing the texts that the Soviets were using, asserting that the "literature used at Soviet universities must be translated and published at a quicker pace," and composing new German university textbooks "must be tackled forthwith."[49] They also wanted to ensure that the FDJ study groups at universities focused more

[46] Weber, *Von der SBZ zur DDR 1945-1968*, 1.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid, 2.
[49] Weber, *Von der SBZ zur DDR 1945-1968*, 2.

on the social sciences, and the divisions of the SED active at academic institutions were to "operate under the direct political-ideological control of the Central Committee."[50]

Education seems to be one of the few issues on which the SPD and KPD agreed. In the Soviet Occupation Zone, the SPD and the KPD both favored a "thorough reconstruction of the school system," and both parties publicly attested to this fact in a joint appeal that they released on 18 October 1945.[51] The current school system was to be scrapped in favor of a single, comprehensive *Einheitsschule*. Furthermore, school and church were to be kept separate, and any instruction regarding religion was abrogated. School staff, curricula, textbooks, and teacher training were required to meet "democratic standards" and were ordered to be free of any and all "National Socialist influence."[52]

In their joint appeal, the two parties begin by stressing that the younger generations of Germans should be raised with absolutely no Nazi ideals or militaristic beliefs. Not only did they want Nazi elements to be completely eradicated from all school systems, but in order to democratize the school systems, there needed to be avid anti-Fascists on "school councils and positions of leadership" so that their positive influence could trickle down to the students, rather than hiring school staff who might possibly be tainted with remnants of Nazi instruction. The document further states that it is the parties' collective goal to eliminate educational privilege so that quality schooling will be available to all qualified individuals, "independent of their background, their position, or the wealth of their parents."[53]

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Siegfried Baske and Martha Engelbert, eds., "Joint Appeal by the KPD and the SPD for Democratic School Reform" (October 18, 1945) in *Zwei Jahrzehnte Bildungspolitik in der Sowjetzone Deutschlands* [*Two Decades of Educational Policy in the Soviet Zone of Germany*], vol. 1. Berlin: Osteuropa-Institut an der Freien Universität Berlin, 1966, p. 5 ff; reprinted in Christoph Kleßmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung. Deutsche Geschichte 1945-1955* [*The Founding of Two States. German History 1945-1955*]. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986, pp. 391-92, trans. Thomas Dunlap, 1.

[52] Baske and Engelbert, "Joint Appeal by the KPD and the SPD for Democratic School Reform," 1.

[53] Baske and Engelbert, "Joint Appeal by the KPD and the SPD for Democratic School Reform," 1.

The appeal mentions the need to train more teachers, as many of them are considered to be less than reliable, from an ideological standpoint. It also discusses needing to vet the textbooks already in circulation, especially if they are ones that date back to 1933, admitting that this is "necessary during the transition phase," but should only happen after "careful scrutiny," as many of these texts likely contain ideas that "are not in keeping with the goal of exterminating Fascism and militarism."[54] The appeal also mentions higher education, asserting that these policy changes must affect the college and university system as well. In order for this to occur, the "lecturers and professors" who were "expelled by the Hitler government" must be reinstated, and teaching certifications should be granted to prospective educators who have proven to be loyal and who possess ideals that align with the SPD and KPD.[55] Towards the end of the written appeal, it also asservates that in order to further open the path to colleges and universities, the existing admission requirements should be abolished.

Establishing the German Democratic Republic

On 15 November 1946, *Neues Deutschland* published a "draft constitution for a 'German Democratic Republic.'"[56] It was heavily influenced by the SED, and like the SED's "Basic Rights" document, this draft constitution "condemned all moves towards federalism" and also called for a German central government to be established within a "democratic people's regime."[57] *Neues Deutschland* even coordinated a debate regarding the draft constitution, which included fourteen

[54] Ibid., 2.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Spilker, *The East German Leadership and the Division of Germany*, 106.
[57] Ibid.

one-page articles discussing the constitution and also letters from readers who were in favor of the draft constitution.[58]

The GDR was creating a constitution right around the time that the FRG was crafting their own document, Basic Law in the Federal Land. Like the FRG's document, the GDR constitution "also established the political structure and basic operations of the country's constitutional organs."[59] However, there was a striking difference between the physical constitution and the actual constitution under which the East Germans were forced to live. Stalinism had been established in the SBZ in 1946 under Walter Ulbricht's SED, and as the ideal of Stalinization advanced further, "the principles of liberty, democracy, and equality enumerated in the constitution became a façade behind which party organs, censors, and police authorities maintained a dictatorship."[60]

The conditions under which East Germans were forced to live--meaning, under Soviet occupation--was highlighted in the beginning of the document. Although the constitution mentions the desire to "safeguard human liberty and rights" in the Preamble, the main body of the document starts with Section A: Fundamentals of State Authority. The rest of it breaks down as follows:

- Article 1 outlines the fact that the German Länder is the bedrock upon which the GDR stands. Furthermore, it states that the GDR "decides on all issues which are essential to the existence and development of the German people as a whole."[61] Here, it is difficult to tell whether the document is insinuating that their influence affects *all* Germans--meaning

[58] There is nothing mentioned about whether anyone even bothered to send in letters that were *against* the draft constitution, probably knowing that these concerns would not be shared with the general public anyway.
[59] "Constitution of the German Democratic Republic" (October 7, 1949), reprinted in Louis L. Snyder, ed., *Documents in German History.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 1958, pp. 540-41, 1.
[60] "Constitution of the German Democratic Republic," 1.
[61] "Constitution of the German Democratic Republic," 1.

those in the FRG as well--or if this statement is refusing to acknowledge the existence of the FRG.

- Article 2 is rather concise, and merely asserts that the capital of the GDR is Berlin, and the colors of the flag are black, red, and gold.
- Article 3 claims that "all state authority emanates from the people,"[62] which is certainly a laughable assertion. It goes on to make the GDR seem like a very democratic place, as it calls for the citizens to exercise their right to vote and to submit petitions to the various representative bodies.
- Article 4 proclaims that the representative body is responsible for deciding the constitutionality of any measures taken by the state authority.
- Finally, Article 5 professes that it is the duty of the state authority to "maintain and cultivate amicable relations with all peoples," which does not appear to be something that the state authority took to heart, judging by their actions throughout the history of the GDR.[63] It concludes with the statement that no citizen "may participate in belligerent actions designed to oppress any people."[64] The wording here is rather carefully selected, as it says that no *citizen* may do these things; it does not mention that the *government* cannot.

In October of 1949, the German People's Council (*Deutscher Volksrat*) ratified the constitution of the German Democratic Republic and renamed itself the Provisional People's Parliament (*Provisorische Volkskammer*). On 12 October, Otto Grotewohl was elected as the "minister president" and helped to form a government "with all the parties represented in the

[62] Ibid., 2.
[63] "Constitution of the German Democratic Republic," 2.
[64] Ibid.

People's Parliament."[65] Following this, SMAD was replaced by a Control Commission, whose job it was to "oversee adherence to the stipulations of the Potsdam Agreement and other allied treaties," but it also allowed the fledgling GDR to obtain its sovereign status. On 6 October 1949, the Main Administration for Information of the German Economic Commission released a statement regarding the Constitution of the GDR. It asserted that the Constitution would be "the basis of the impending establishment of state and government," and that with the Constitution, "Germany leaves a status of occupation and enters the status of sovereignty," which was clearly an important step for the young nation.[66] The members of the German People's Council were elected via secret ballot "by over 2,000 delegates of the Third German People's Congress," and the statement claimed that when they convene as the Provisional People's Parliament, "the German people will know that their cause is in good hands."[67]

[65] "Das deutsche Volk formt selbst sein Schicksal" ["The German People Shapes its Own Fate"], *Tägliche Rundschau* (October 7, 1949); reprinted in Beata Ruhm von Oppen, ed., *Documents on Germany under Occupation, 1945-1954*. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1955, pp. 420-21, 1.
[66] "Das deutsche Volk formt selbst sein Schicksal," 1.
[67] Ibid., 2.

CHAPTER 2: THE SPD, KPD, AND SED

The history of the Social Democrats and the German Communists is a rather tumultuous one. Given the communist beliefs of the occupying Soviets, it is not surprising that they favored the KPD over the SPD, and, after the merger of the two parties, the SED. Many prominent members of the KPD/SED spent significant time in the USSR, including Erich Mielke and Walter Ulbricht. Mielke joined the KPD, just as his father had before him, and in 1925, he began work as a reporter for the *Rote Fahne* (Red Flag), which was the KPD's main newspaper. Later, he joined the KPD's *Parteiselbstschutz* (Party Self-Defense), which was a "para-military force used for protection of meetings and demonstrations."[68] Ulbricht, for his part, was quite integral to the success of the KPD/SED. In the Spring of 1945, when he returned to Berlin from the Soviet Union, he was responsible for helping to re-establish the KPD, and although his leadership style is best described as "Stalinist, dictatorial, cold, overbearing, and rigid," he had renowned organizational skills and paid attention to details that others might be foolhardy enough to ignore.[69] With influential men such as these--who freely wielded vast amounts of power throughout the history of the GDR--it is easy to see why the KPD and SED were able to be so domineering and to persecute the SPD the way they did.

The SPD

Under the Soviet military administration, one of the grievances voiced by the SPD was the fact that preferential treatment was being extended to the KPD by SMAD. Even though Soviet authorities had supported the re-founding of the SPD after the ban on political parties had been

[68] "Das deutsche Volk formt selbst sein Schicksal," 2.
[69] Hope Millard Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 13.

lifted, the occupying Soviets were clearly biased towards the KPD. This allowed members of the KPD to occupy integral positions in the new administration, including the various anti-fascist organizations. Furthermore, there was "massive inequality" in how transportation and publishing facilities were allocated, with the KPD newspapers "leading those of the other parties in everything from size of format to circulation."[70] This resulted in growing resentment from the SPD, which they articulated in their complaint: "The KPD has pulled us over the barrel."[71]

Furthermore, the SPD eventually became vilified enough that K-5 was assigned to deal with rogue elements of the SPD. Mielke himself stressed K-5's role in "fighting the 'Schumacherites,'"[72] which was what the communists labeled the members of the SPD who were against the union of the SPD with the KPD.[73] Initially, the repression of the SPD was mainly against those who were avidly opposed to the merger of the two parties, but during the summer of 1947, it intensified, including not only "functionaries serving within the SED," but extending even to those who were retired from politics.[74] Finally, in 1950, the active repression of the SPD had subsided, but the damage had already been done, and thousands of its members were and former members were imprisoned.

The responsibility for assigning tasks to K-5 rested with the Soviet authorities, but it is clear that members of the KPD were active participants in organizing these purges in an effort to silence their opponents. The Central Control Commission was had "smaller branches in the provinces" that were responsible for "vetting SED members throughout the Eastern Zone."[75] The indelible link between K-5 and the SED was exposed in the SED's "torture chambers," where East

[70] Spilker, *The East German Leadership and the Division of Germany*, 43.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Named after Kurt Schumacher, leader of the Social Democrats in the Western Zones.
[73] David Childs and Richard J. Popplewell, *The Stasi: The East German Intelligence and Security Service* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1996), 38.
[74] Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 39.
[75] Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 39.

German Party members sometimes "took part in the interrogations of political opponents," including Social Democrats.[76]

The KPD

In the Soviet occupation zone, "'anti-Fascist' parties and unions were permitted again as early as June 10, 1945."[77] A group of pro-Soviet politicians, led by Wilhelm Pieck and Walter Ulbricht, helped to revive the German Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, KPD). Members of this group had only recently returned from their exile in the Soviet Union, and on 11 June 1945, they issued an appeal--some might consider it more akin to a manifesto--that "acknowledged the political mistakes in [sic.] had made in the past, emphatically opposed a transfer of the Soviet system to Germany, and advocated the introduction of a Western-style parliamentary democracy."[78] More to the point, the document essentially outlined the fact that the goal of the party was "to eradicate Nazism, not to establish socialism, and the best way to do this was for the occupiers to act together."[79] In this appeal, the KPD has a very clear idea of who is to blame for the economic strife that they are facing, and the pitiful state of German cities after being ravaged by artillery:

> And who is to blame for this?
>
> The blame and guilt rest with those unscrupulous exploiters and criminals who are responsible for the war. They are Hitler and Göring, Himmler and Goebbels, the

[76] Ibid.
[77] "Aufruf des Zentralkomitees vom 11. Juni 1945" ["Proclamation by the Central Committee, June 11, 1945"], reprinted in Ossip Kurt Flechtheim, *Die Parteien der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* [*The Parties of the Federal Republic of Germany*]. Hamburg, 1973, 1.
[78] "Aufruf des Zentralkomitees vom 11. Juni 1945," 1.
[79] Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 17.

> active followers and supporters of the Nazi party. They are the champions of reactionary militarism, the likes of Keitel, Jodl, and associates. They are the imperialistic sponsors of the Nazi party, the gentlemen of the large banks and concerns, Krupp and Röchling, Poensgen, and Siemens.[80]

One of the most interesting aspects of the appeal is the obvious Soviet influence, as the document states that "Hitler's greatest and most fateful war crime, however, was the perfidious, surprise attack on the Soviet Union," which broke their promise[81] to the USSR, "which never wanted a war with Germany and which had actually demonstrated its honest feelings of friendship toward the German people many times since 1917."[82]

The appeal is also quite clearly an attempt to win over the general populace and convince them that the Communists have been right about everything. They assert that it is not only the Nazis who must bear the blame for World War II, but *all* Germans. However, the communists also claim that before the elections in 1932, they warned, "Voting for Hitler means voting for war!"[83] Throughout the appeal, the KPD is basically asserting that they were the party of Nazi resistance. This is a calculated effort to bring the German people over to their side, which is a rather shrewd move, considering that they playing on the fears of the German people, who still vividly remember the terrors that the Nazi regime inflicted upon them. They not only attempt to make communism seem more palatable, but also the USSR in general. However, they stop just short of pushing Sovietization on the German people, claiming that it would be the wrong path given the current conditions, and they instead prefer to establish "an anti-fascist, democratic regime, a

[80] "Aufruf des Zentralkomitees vom 11. Juni 1945," 1.
[81] This is likely referencing the Nazi-Soviet Pact of non-aggression (1939) that was agreed upon between Germany and the Soviet Union.
[82] "Aufruf des Zentralkomitees vom 11. Juni 1945," 2.
[83] "Aufruf des Zentralkomitees vom 11. Juni 1945," 3.

parliamentary, democratic republic with all the democratic rights and liberties for the people."[84] They close the appeal by laying out a list of ten tasks that they believe should be top priority:

1. The complete elimination of all vestiges of the Hitler regime and of Hitler's party
2. The fight against hunger, unemployment, and homelessness
3. The establishment of democratic rights and liberties for our people.
4. The resurrection of democratic organs of self-government in communities and districts
5. The protection of workers against arbitrary measures by employers and against excessive exploitation
6. The expropriation of all property belonging to Nazi bigwigs [Nazibonzen] and war criminals
7. The liquidation of the large landholdings and large estates of the Junker, counts, and princes
8. The transfer of all enterprises that provide essential public needs (transportation, water, gas, electricity, etc.), as well as all enterprises abandoned by their owners, to the organs of selfgovernment [sic.] of the communities, provinces or states
9. Peaceful and neighborly coexistence with other nations
10. Acknowledgement of the duty we have to repair the damage done to other nations as a result of Hitler's aggression[85]

[84] Ibid., 4.
[85] "Aufruf des Zentralkomitees vom 11. Juni 1945," 4-6.

However, not all was well in the KPD, as there existed a divide between the "Muscovite" German communists and the "more radical, leftist 'native' (having remained in Germany during the war) German communists."[86] In the summer of 1945, Ulbricht further exacerbated the tumult by appointing many Muscovite Germans to important positions within the party. Moreover, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, he "purged many of the German communist 'natives.'"[87] Part of the reason for Ulbricht's actions was his derisive attitude towards the native communists and social democrats who stayed in Germany during the apogee of the Third Reich and did nothing to stop Hitler and the Nazi leadership. In Ulbricht's mind, he felt that ultimately, Hitler's downfall had been the result of "armies of the anti-Hitler coalition," and therefore, the German people were complicit in the "crimes of Hitlerite Germany."[88] Furthermore, Ulbricht was embittered over the fact that the native communists were critical of Soviet policies in Germany. Ulbricht was of the opinion that the Red Army had struck the decisive blow against the Nazis toward the end of World War II, and because of this, the German people should be more grateful towards them. This attitude also resulted in his ignoring the crimes that the Red Army had perpetrated against German civilians, including the rape of women.

The Parties Merge: the SED

The KPD called for a meeting consisting of 30 representatives from both parties to discuss their working with one another. From 20-21 December 1945, the "Conference of the Sixty" helped to pave the way "for the demise of the SPD in the SBZ."[89] On the first day of the conference, failure was already close at hand. Grotewohl presented the KPD leaders with a "catalogue of

[86] Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 17.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 17.
[89] Spilker, *The East German Leadership and the Division of Germany*, 47.

complaints," but his criticism was assuaged by a "firm commitment" to working-class unity.[90] The next day, the SPD delegates supported a draft of a program designed to unite the two parties, which made it obvious to most that the integration of the two parties was all but a foregone conclusion.

On 23 January 1946, SMAD proclaimed that the merging of the two parties needed to be expedited. This new deadline came straight from Moscow, which is where Ulbricht traveled at the end of the month to receive further instructions. It was here that the ultimate fate of the SPD in the SBZ was decided. At a meeting with Ulbricht on 6 February 1946, Stalin declared, "merger approved--line correct."[91] Around this time, Pieck learned that Red Army commanders had been instructed to "enforce organizational fusion at local level."[92] Following this, local SPD organizations were the objects of constant SMAD harassment. While this was materializing, the KPD was organizing hundreds of joint SPD-KPD rallies that demanded fusion at "the earliest possible date."[93]

On 21-22 April 1946, the KPD and the SPD merged to form the Socialist Unity Party of Germany [*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED], with Wilhelm Pieck of the KPD and Otto Grotewohl of the SPD becoming co-chairmen of the newly established party. Previously, in the summer of 1945, the KPD set up its own "party apparatus" in connection to the occupying Soviets, and because of this, the KPD initially felt no desire to unify with any other political group. However, it became apparent that there existed a lack of popular political support for the party, and in the autumn of 1945, "with massive Soviet support," the KPD initiated a "campaign to merge with the SPD."[94] Many supporters of the SPD did not want a full merger, but rather, merely

[90] Ibid.
[91] Spilker, *The East German Leadership and the Division of Germany*, 48. Although I did not see any indication from the source material, I am assuming that the reason for this quote being so stilted is that it came from the notes of Wilhelm Pieck.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] "Principles and Aims of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany" (April 21, 1946), in *Dokumente der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands* [*Documents of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany*], I. 5; reprinted in Beata Ruhm von

a “close cooperation” between the two parties. However, Grotewohl eventually relented under pressure from the KPD and agreed to a union of the two parties.

Once the two parties had officially become the SED, the new party released a document that outlined their “principles and aims,” as well as some of their demands for a better Germany. The new party was staunchly anti-fascist, claiming that fascism had “attained power by splitting the working class,” and took away democratic rights and liberties, thus transforming Germany into “a military prison.”[95] Due to this heartfelt disdain for fascism, the SED wanted to avoid the catastrophe that was World War II, and in the released document, they claimed that militarism and imperialism had forced Germany into two different World Wars, so in order to maintain peace, Germany had to “destroy the remnants of Hitler fascism and to liquidate militarism and imperialism.”[96]

The document also focuses heavily on the German working class. The SED claimed that the working class had suffered the most, and because they “constitute the vast majority of the people,” reconstruction of German society would rely upon them.[97] The document also lists fourteen separate “demands of the present,” but here are a few of the most critical:

1. Punishment of all those guilty of causing the war and of war criminals
2. Destruction of reactionary militarism
3. Democratic tax reform
4. Safeguarding of democratic people's rights
5. Legalization of the eight-hour working day as the normal working day

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Oppen, ed., *Documents on Germany under Occupation, 1945-1954*. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1955, 1.

[95] “Principles and Aims of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany,” 1.

[96] Ibid., 2.

[97] Ibid.

6. Democratic reform of the entire educational system[98]

The SED also stated that their long-term goal was to be free from exploitation, suppression, economic crises, poverty, unemployment, and imperialism, and these were all goals that could only be achieved through socialism. More specifically, the SED claimed that the "unity of the socialist movement" was the best chance that the German people had at unity, and socialism was the "banner of the future" under which they would triumph.[99]

[98] Ibid., 3-4.
[99] "Principles and Aims of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany," 6.

CHAPTER 3: SECURITY SERVICES OF THE GDR AND THE USSR

One of the most effective devices that the Soviets had at their disposal when attempting to bring the GDR to heel was the use of various security services. These security organs were utilized to make arrests and interrogate supposed enemies of the state, which in turn bred an atmosphere of paranoia and fear. Many of the individuals integral to these services, such as Erich Mielke, had prior Soviet training in these areas, and because of this, the Soviet influence in these services/ministries was palpable.

Kommissariat-5 (K-5)

In August of 1947, the Soviets further bolstered the powers of the *Volkspolizei* (People's Police) via SMAD's "order no. 201," which declared the intention of accelerating denazification in the Eastern Zone in an attempt to finally bring it to an end.[100] This order established a special department within the *Volkspolizei* known as *Kommissariat-5*, or K-5. Although K-5 was technically a part of the *Volkspolizei*, it was also somewhat autonomous. Basically, K-5 was "far more the agency of the Party[101] than of the State."[102] K-5 was also given powers above and beyond what it was originally intended to have, being granted the ability to "arrest suspects and seize their property," in addition to the "powers of the public prosecutor."[103] The only form of oversight on K-5 was from the occupying Soviets themselves. The Soviet authorities eventually expanded the purview of K-5, assigning it tasks that were completely unrelated to denazification. Instead, its

[100] Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 38.
[101] Meaning, the SED.
[102] Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 38.
[103] Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 38.

priorities became "the surveillance and crushing of all the opponents of the regime, against whom it was very convenient to level the accusation of National Socialism."[104]

Even though K-5 was given assistance from the SED, it was still merely an ancillary branch of Soviet intelligence. This is yet another facet of GDR totalitarianism that was adversely influenced by the Soviet overlords. Soviet officers "assisted at every level of the K-5 organization," and more importantly, they also "played a key role in training their German counterparts," further implanting Soviet ideals into yet another GDR organization, and further spreading Soviet influence.[105] To make matters worse, Soviet authorities "were present at all the most important interrogations," and in order to gain the confidence of the Soviets, K-5 trainees often attempted to "surpass their teachers in cruelty."[106] In so doing, K-5 gained a reputation that was as infamous as Stalin's secret police in the USSR and "worse than that of the Gestapo which they succeeded."[107]

Six years following the creation of K-5, the purges, which were previously only aimed at the communists' political opponents, extended its reach, as the SED's Central Committee decided to crack down on the Party itself. Specifically, this new crackdown was aimed at German communists who had looked for refuge somewhere other than the USSR during the Second World War. The authority with which East German communists ruled was "founded through terror" and always "rested upon the threat of terror."[108] The fact that they constantly incarcerated their outspoken opponents was well-known and certainly caused some of their would-be detractors to think twice before issuing a diatribe regarding all of the wrongs for which the Soviets and the KPD

[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid., 39.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.
[108] Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 43.

were guilty. Due to these tactics, the occupation and takeover of East Germany was strikingly similar to Soviet takeovers in other parts of Central and Eastern Europe.

NKVD and MGB

In 1945, Soviet security forces traveled with the Red Army to East Germany. Aside from providing troop support and the "administration of the occupation regime," the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) and the Ministry of State Security (MGB) also "directly assumed political functions in the Soviet Occupation Zone."[109] The primary task of both the NKVD and the MGB was "personal cleansing actions and political influence" in what would later become the GDR.[110] Both organizations were also actively engaged in military censorship and spy defense. Furthermore, SMAD--and later, the GDR--was highly dependent upon the various Soviet security forces. Said forces were directly involved in "the construction of the political police and the state security, which emerged as their direct auxiliary organs."[111] The Soviet security forces also "played a decisive role in the establishment of the political system of the GDR on the Soviet model."[112]

The NKVD was also the one organization that SMAD answered to, and the NKVD answered directly to Moscow. Furthermore, the NKVD was involved in establishing a security service in the Eastern Zone. Further adding to the general feeling of bitterness aimed at the Soviets was the "atmosphere of oppression" that characterized the operations of the NKVD.[113] This included lawlessness, random arrests, and overall persecution by officers of the NKVD.

[109] Jan Foitzik and Nikita V. Petrov, "Der Apparat des NKWD-MGB der UdSSR in Deutschland: Politische Repression und Herausbildung deutscher Staatssicherheitsorgane in der SBZ/DDR 1945-1953," in *Die Sowjetischen Geheimdienste in Der SBZ/DDR Von 1945 Bis 1953* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 1.
[110] Foitzik and Petrov, "Der Apparat des NKWD-MGB der UdSSR in Deutschland," 1.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Foitzik and Petrov, "Der Apparat des NKWD-MGB der UdSSR in Deutschland," 1.
[113] Spilker, *The East German Leadership and the Division of Germany*, 126.

From 1946, the Soviet Union's MGB "was in charge of secret-police investigations, arrests, interrogations, and the like, whereas the special camps and prisons themselves were subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior. Early on, Germans played a minor role in the Soviet system of persecution as the Soviet authorities recruited them to be undercover informers. In 1946, they numbered around 2300, but by 1949, their numbers had ballooned to approximately 3000. Small groups of KPD members had entered Germany with the Red Army and the "Soviet security organs."[114] These German Communists "supported the Soviets in making arrests and conducting investigations," but the formation of a German secret police was still approaching.[115]

Establishing the MfS

The very creation of the MfS was presented to East German citizens not as a secret police force, but rather, as a "defensive measure" that was being put into place due to the "mounting Cold War with the West."[116] On 26 January 1950, the East German government issued a public statement via *Neues Deutschland* regarding the "growth of Western subversion in East Germany," conveying how imperative it was for East German citizens to remain vigilant.[117] It was two days after this public statement that Erich Mielke issued a similar statement, issuing a warning of the "increasing danger of British and American covert action," and claiming that the Allies were utilizing "systematic terror" against leading members of the GDR, but was unable to cite any cases, given that in reality, none existed.[118] In other words, these two newspaper articles, both quite equivocal in nature, were the only official basis for the establishment of the Stasi.

[114] Jens Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi: East Germany's Secret Police, 1945-1990*, trans. David Burnett (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2015), 24.
[115] Gieseke, *History of the Stasi*, 24.
[116] Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 46.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.

On Wednesday, 8 February 1950, representatives from the Provisional Volkskammer of the GDR met in East Berlin. This was their tenth session since the establishment of the GDR in October 1949. Dr. Carl Steinhoff, the minister of the interior informed everyone present that there had been "repeated bombings of late," and "spies, subversives, and saboteurs were becoming ever more active."[119] The intent was for the Main Administration for the Protection of the National Economy (*Hauptverwaltung zum Schutz der Volkswirtschaft)*, which was in the Ministry of the Interior, to be converted into the Ministry for State Security "in order to put a stop to these criminal activities."[120] Dr. Steinhoff explained the new Ministry's duties to the *Volkskammer*:

> The most important tasks of this Ministry will be to protect the national enterprises and works, transport and national property from plots of criminal elements as well as against all attacks, to conduct a decisive fight against the activities of hostile agents networks, subversives, saboteurs and spies, to conduct an energetic fight against bandits, to protect our democratic development and to ensure an uninterrupted fulfilment of the economic plans of our democratic free economy.[121]

The Provisional Volkskammer reached their decision expediently and eagerly passed the law stating that "the government of the GDR had resolved to establish a Ministry for State Security to put a stop to the insidious activities of enemies of the republic."[122] The Provisional Volkskammer was not a parliament that was elected by free elections, but rather, it consisted of a group of sycophants whose main concern was the Soviet Union's *Deutschlandpolitik*, the Soviet policy for dealing with Germany.

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[119] Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 11.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 47.
[122] Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 13.

The appointments for the MfS were made on 16 February 1950. Walter Ulbricht, who was deputy minister-president of the GDR, appointed Wilhelm Zaisser as minister and Erich Mielke as state secretary of the MfS. These appointments became official on 24 February when East German President Wilhelm Pieck swore in the two men. The minds behind the founding of the Ministry for State Security attempted to make it appear as though its establishment had been solely for the purpose of defense against dissidents and saboteurs, but their endgame was clearly "the transformation of the GDR into a 'people's democracy' of the Stalinist type and alignment of its political system to the power structures of the Soviet Union," which only further exacerbated the Soviet hold on the GDR.[123] The "high phase of Stalinism" had begun in the GDR, and even the "highest Communist functionaries" could still be subjected to "purges" on falsified charges of being fascist or imperialist spies.[124]

The new ministry assumed control of the "secret political police" that had evolved from K-5 and worked closely with Soviet intelligence, essentially becoming an "SED-controlled domestic spying agency.[125] Furthermore, many of the leading figures in the MfS "had themselves been agents of Soviet intelligence and remained closely tied to it."[126] This was especially true for Erich Mielke. Mielke was in charge of the MfS for the majority of its existence, so naturally, he is one of the individuals who was responsible for its success--and, some would argue, culpable for some of the horrendous acts that the Stasi committed--and due to his history with the Soviet Union, he was the perfect man to lead this particular organization. Mielke's Soviet education continued in Moscow, where he attended the Comintern's International Lenin School, and in 1936, he fought in the Spanish Civil War alongside other German communists. It was also during this conflict that Mielke essentially laid the groundwork for his later exploits in the GDR. He served as an officer

[123] Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 14.
[124]Ibid., 15.
[125] Spilker, *The East German Leadership and the Division of Germany*, 204.
[126] Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 33.

in SIM (Servicio de Información Militar), which was the "secret security service," so it is rather obvious that this is how his life in secret security/state security began. After he returned to Berlin in 1945, "he was continuously involved with the police."[127]

It should be noted that "at the senior level," the establishment of the MfS "did not lead to major changes."[128] Rather, K-5 officers merely transferred to the newly-established organization. However, it is not clear how much East German intelligence expanded upon the founding of the GDR, since "the strength of K-5 is not known."[129]

The Structure/Composition of the MfS

The Ministry for State Security was technically a new institution of the GDR, but it was still closely controlled by the Soviet Union. The relationship between the Stasi and the Soviets existed on numerous levels, and many of the leaders had been trained in Soviet intelligence schools, and some of the lower-level employees were instructed by MGB officers when they were a part of K-5. Thus, the Soviet influence on the newly-founded organization was very palpable. The Ministry incorporated the functions of both a secret police and a foreign intelligence service, and like with the Soviet model, Stasi officers held military rank. Soviet instructors also worked in the Stasi "right down to the district (*Kreis*) level," both to "watch and control their German subordinates," and also to train them."[130] At the Stasi headquarters in Berlin, "there was at least one Soviet instructor in each MfS department;" at the provincial level, the head of each department (*Verwaltung*) was controlled by a "chief instructor;" and the work of operation departments was monitored and instructed by Soviet officers "even down to the details of daily work."[131]

[127]Ibid., 38.
[128] Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 48.
[129] Ibid.
[130]Ibid., 49.
[131] Ibid.

Apart from the minister of the MfS, almost no one had a detailed knowledge of its structure. This "need to know" policy was taken seriously, and even the conspiratorial nature of this point of view was learned behavior from the Soviets. With that said, many Stasi members worked in multiple departments during their career, and because of this, "they gained some insight into the shape and size of its operations."[132] The list of departments is rather long, but some of the notable ones include Department IX (prosecution of Nazi criminals), Department XIV (detention centers), Department N (government communications), Main Department I (military counterintelligence), Main Department II (counterespionage), Main Department VIII (observations, arrests), etc.[133]

Regarding number of employees, in the early days of the Stasi, up until the June Uprising of 1953, the Stasi employed "around 4,000 people," but given the "dismal failure of its intelligence gathering and intervention functions on this occasion," its numbers were bolstered, and by 1955, "its size had more than doubled to 9,000 employees."[134] This also led the Stasi to cast a wide net and establish a large network of informers. Some of the simple informers (*Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter*, IM) were under the direct supervision of a superior and acted in a mostly informative role. Others, such as the IMBs (*Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter Bearbeitung*), were "allocated more proactive roles in the penetration of opposition groups" or in the "effective demolition...of individual lives and careers."[135] Estimates for the numbers of Stasi informers who were active in the GDR vary from 109,000 to even 180,000, but one expert[136] asserts that even 180,000 "is probably too low."[137]

[132] Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 71.
[133] Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 257.
[134] Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, 47.
[135] Ibid., 49.
[136] The name was not provided.
[137] Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, 50.

Interrogations and torture

The Stasi learned numerous techniques from their Soviet masters, and various forms of interrogation and torture were among them. Although there were numerous methods, in the broadest terms, they used physical violence, isolation, and sleep deprivation in order to elicit a confession out of their prisoners.

As one can imagine, brute force was often used as a simple and effective method of coercion. In the earlier years, "manifest physical violence was an offensive instrument for shaping society in the period of Communist transformation," and was thus utilized by the Stasi.[138] In later years, prison terms were more brief and the implementation of physical violence during interrogations had decreased, although "pretrial custody and incarceration were still the most brutal experience in confronting state authorities."[139]

Sleep deprivation and isolation were the psychological approaches to torture. Depriving prisoners of sleep is a relatively simple method of torture, and on the surface, it may seem less inhumane when compared to other forms--such as physical torture--but the fact remains that lack of sleep, especially if carried on for an extended period of time, can have rather damaging effects on one's psyche. Isolation is similar to sleep deprivation in that although it is not utilizing brutal force, it is still an effective method of psychological torture. It may not appear torturous in and of itself, but it had a very adverse psychological effect on those who were subjected to it for extended periods of time. Since the 1950s, the Stasi had begun to use other methods of interrogation, rather than simply using outright violence. One of the tactics that they had turned to was the use of "total isolation of the detainee for weeks or months" at a time, wherein the interrogator "would thus become the prisoner's only contact to the outside world."[140] This is an important point, especially

[138] Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 8.
[139] Ibid., 140.
[140] Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 140.

if the detainee in question had a spouse and/or children, since the interrogator would be their only source of information regarding their loved ones. This would in turn facilitate a very real dependency on the interrogator, which could then make the detainee more malleable and more likely to provide the Stasi with information that they otherwise might not willingly give. The interrogator could also use other techniques to make the prisoner more cooperative, such as "deep understanding and tokens of sympathy followed by a sudden harshness and threats."[141]

Often, for those who were being imprisoned by the Stasi, the only way out seemed clear. Suicide, especially by political prisoners, was not uncommon in Stasi detention centers. There are numerous reports from before 1953 about deaths that were a direct result from torture. However, it was not merely torture that caused loss of life. Horrible prison conditions could breed fatal illnesses[142] that would often lead to the death of the diseased prisoners. Ernst Wollweber, Minister of State Security from 1953-1957, was responsible for interrogation methods slackening and prison conditions improving, at least slightly. Prior to this, "all-night interrogations, sleep deprivation, and solitary confinement were part of the standard repertoire of extracting forced confessions," and in general, "beatings and other torture methods" had been considered legitimate.[143]

Soviet Special Camps (internment camps)

Under the various "Soviet security organs" in the SBZ, numerous civilians were put into "special camps."[144] Not only were prisoners put into these camps, but often, they also had "a good chance of deportation to Soviet labor camps," and thousands of Germans were detained in these

[141] Ibid.
[142] The source did not give any specific illnesses.
[143] Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 46.
[144] Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 19.

camps until 1955 when Konrad Adenauer visited Moscow.[145] Sadly, this fate was only slightly worse than what they would be facing in the Eastern Zone, as the SED was "following the Soviet example by gaoling political prisoners in its own labour camps."[146] The number of social groups put into these camps eventually saw an increase, and it was not only Nazis or other miscellaneous criminals who were detained. Rather, the arrests also targeted the representatives of other political groups, which included "Social Democrats who opposed the fusion of the SPD and KPD into the SED; bourgeois politicians who refused to be coopted by the united-front tactics of the blocks parties; or entrepreneurs and tradesman who came into conflict with the policy of nationalism."[147] In later years, the arbitrariness of the sentencing of prisoners came to light after some prisoners were released. Out of those convicted by Soviet military tribunals, "more than 5,000 were released in 1950 when the camps were dissolved, whereas more than 10,000 had to continue serving their sentences in GDR prisons."[148] Furthermore, in the 1950s, the Soviet Ministry of the Interior eventually transferred German prisoners from Soviet gulags to prisons in the GDR. Although about half of the prisoners were released in 1954, some prisoners remained until 1956 when they were finally released as part of the de-Stalinization process. However, there were also numerous prisoners who were never granted the opportunity to be released, as they met their demise in prison due to the horrendous living conditions. In other cases, they were executed before they were given their freedom.

The process of arrest was also quite problematic, and certainly symptomatic of a totalitarian regime. The individuals who were arrested "generally just disappeared or were summoned to the local commander of the Soviet Military Administration under some pretext or another," and when family members asked after them, they were not told "whether their loved ones had been arrested,

[145] Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 39.
[146] Ibid., 40.
[147] Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 19.
[148] Ibid., 21.

where they were being held, and what was in store for them."[149] The SED was aware that the Soviet actions were harming their reputation with the German people. SMAD commanders even asked Soviet leaders if they could take a more lenient approach to the matter of how to treat internees. The head of SMAD in Thuringia, Ivan S. Kolesnichenko, reminded Soviet leaders that "even in the Third Reich relatives had been informed about arrests and that the latter required a court warrant."[150] Clearly, the fact that the Soviet occupiers seemed to lack some of the scruples that the Nazis did is a terrifying thought. However, the Nazi comparisons did not end there.

The new regime was essentially aided by the Nazis, "who bequeathed to it their concentration camps."[151] However, these did not meet Soviet and SED requirements, so new camps were established at Frankfurt-on-the-Oder, Lieberose, Forst, Bitterfeld, Mühlberg, Bantzau, Altenhain, Stern-Buchholz, Beeskow, and an area just north of Berlin. There was also an old prisoner of war camp located at Torgau which was converted into a prison that specifically housed political prisoners. Although it is not known exactly how many Germans were imprisoned at these camps, a US survey estimated the number of political prisoners in the Eastern zone at "25,000 for 1947."[152]

Eventually, the German labor camps were assigned to K-5 around the time of their creation in the summer of 1947. Two years later, on the eve of the creation of the GDR, all but one of the camps were closed. However, this did not mean that those interned their were free; instead, they were merely transferred to the GDR's "regular" prisons. The vast number of German political prisoners that existed at the end of the 1940s is proof that K-5 was overworked and understaffed, and the staff that they *were* given was poorly-trained, even with help from the Soviets. On the

[149] Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 21-22.
[150] Ibid., 22.
[151] Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 40.
[152] Childs and Popplewell, *The Stasi*, 40.

evening that the GDR was established, the leadership of the SED "concluded that its own political police were inadequate for social control."[153]

[153] Ibid.

CHAPTER 4: DE-STALINIZATION

After Stalin's death in 1953, the Soviet Union's influence over the German Democratic Republic threatened to wane for the first time in the short existence of the East German nation. At the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev gave his secret speech in which he denounced Stalin, specifically his cult of personality, thus politically altering the course of the Soviet Union and ushering in a policy of de-Stalinization.

Stalin's death

Towards the end of Stalin's life, he was spending much of his time in relative seclusion at his *dacha* in Kuntsevo. However, this did not mean that he was completely alone. He often had "comrades-in-arms" visit him there "for a movie and a meal."[154] These comrades included Georgy Malenkov, who was the deputy premier and was considered to be Stalin's likely successor; Lavrenti Beria, the chief of secret police, who, like the others, was also vying for power; Nikita Khrushchev, whom Stalin called to Moscow to "balance the power dynamics" of Malenkov and Beria;" and Nikolai Bulganin, who was Stalin's defense minister.[155] As Khrushchev would later recount, Stalin would summon the four of them and they would either watch a film or discuss a question that "could have been resolved in two minutes,"[156] In other words, the men's presence may have partially been for the sake of their company, but the most important purpose for having them there was so that Stalin could keep a close watch on them.

[154] Jackie Mansky, "The True Story of the Death of Stalin," Smithsonian.com, October 10, 2017, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/true-story-death-stalin-180965119/.
[155] Mansky, "The True Story of the Death of Stalin."
[156] Ibid.

At this point in February 1953, Stalin was 73 years old and towards the end of the war, he had suffered "either a heart attack or a series of strokes," so his health had been on the the decline ever since then.[157] One would think that with his health being what it was, Stalin would create an obvious line of succession, but in fact, he did the exact opposite, appointing a number of younger, unknown individuals to positions in a manner that was intended to confuse the line of succession, rather than make it more clear.

After a "routine night of heavy drinking into the early hours of March 1st," those at Stalin's residence became worried when they heard nothing from Stalin.[158] This silence reached all the way into the evening hours, until they finally became worried enough to check on him. In his bedroom, either a maid or a guard--there seem to be conflicting reports as to which it was--checked on him and found him on the floor of his bedroom in his pajamas, and it appeared that he urinated on himself. It was not until the next day that doctors were actually summoned. They announced that Stalin had "suffered a massive stroke."[159] In the evening of 5 March 1953, Joseph Stalin passed away.

Stalin's death marked a turning point in relations between the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic. Many of those in power were firm believers in Stalin's doctrines, but with his death and the eventual ascent of Nikita Khrushchev--who denounced both Stalinism and many of Stalin's previous actions--it was obvious to all that change was approaching, and it was doing so quite rapidly.

[157] Mansky, "The True Story of the Death of Stalin."
[158] Richard Cavendish, "Death of Joseph Stalin," History Today, March 3, 2003, https://www.historytoday.comd/richard-cavendish/death-joseph-stalin.
[159] Cavendish, "Death of Joseph Stalin."

June 1953 Uprising

On 28 May 1953, the GDR Council of Ministers ordered "at least a 10% increase in work quotas to overcome the economic crisis and meet the targets of the first Five Year-Plan."[160] This sort of action had been the impetus for conflict in the past, as increased work quotas translated to wage cuts for the workers unless higher yields could be managed. On 16 June 1953, the *Tribüne*, "the official organ of the Free German Trade Union Federation [*Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, or FDGB]" publicly supported the Council of Ministers' decision.[161] Taking such an action made it clear that the labor union did not have the the workers' best interest in mind, but rather, the SED's. These events eventually led to the first construction workers' protest in East Berlin.

The article that *Tribüne* released regarding the increase in work quota discusses how the resolution was passed by the Council of Ministers, and above all, "the improved organization of work, worker training, the use of new work methods, improved technical conditions, the elimination of down time, and greater worker discipline in factories" will ensure that the quotas will be met more effectively.[162] Every aspect of the article makes it abundantly clear that it is siding with union leaders, rather than the workers. It goes on to claim that both management and union leaders had acted "conscientiously" with the resolution, but many "enterprises" had either not implemented the resolution or were actively violating it due to a "dangerous, reactionary 'theory'" stating that "an increase in work quotas leads to lower wages."[163] The passage concludes with *Tribüne* once more claiming that work quotas are not being increased in an effort to lower workers' wages, but rather, to produce a larger number of goods "at lower cost and in better ways, as a result

[160] "Zu einigen schädlichen Erscheinungen bei der Erhöhung der Arbeitsnormen" ["Some Harmful Developments in Connection with the Increase in Work Quotas"], in *Tribüne* (June 16, 1953); reprinted in Ernst Deuerlein, ed., *DDR* [GDR], (Munich, 1966), p. 133, trans. Adam Blauhut, 1.
[161] "Zu einigen schädlichen Erscheinungen bei der Erhöhung der Arbeitsnormen," 1.
[162] Ibid.
[163] "Zu einigen schädlichen Erscheinungen bei der Erhöhung der Arbeitsnormen," 1.

of more efficient work that involves the same expenditure of effort."[164] According to the author, the "theory" regarding reduced wages as a result of increased work quotas must be eliminated. It is also inferred at the close of the article that the more quickly and efficiently this theory is disregarded, the sooner workers will embrace the 10% quota increase. In essence, the article is claiming that if workers "get with the program," so to speak, everything will be better for everyone.

The government of the GDR issued a statement on the construction workers' protest in East Berlin on 17 June 1953, claiming that the anarchy was "'fascist' provocation directed by West Germany."[165] In order to pacify the volatile situation, "the government emphasized that the compulsory increase in work quotas had been rescinded."[166] Although this was good new for the workers, it was too little, too late. The situation had escalated to the point where the protests were not simply aimed at the work quotas. Demonstrators were also "demanding the resignation of the government" and also calling for free elections to be held.[167] What had begun as a strike against increasing work quotas evolved into a small revolution.

The government of the GDR released a statement on the matter, asserting that measures had been taken to improve the lives of workers, and instead of gratitude, they were met with "fascist and other reactionary elements" in West Berlin.[168] The government asserted that these individuals were making a calculated effort to cause "serious disruptions to order in the democratic sector of Berlin," which acted as an impediment to German unification.[169]

The next day, demonstrations and riots manifested across the GDR, and in order to rein in the workers, the Soviet occupiers declared martial law and utilized military force to put down the

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[164] Ibid.
[165] "Statement by the Government of the GDR" (June 17, 1953), *Neues Deutschlan*d (June 18, 1953); reprinted in Beate Ruhm von Oppen, ed., *Documents on Germany under Occupation, 1945-1954* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 590, 1.
[166] "Statement by the Government of the GDR," 1.
[167] Ibid.
[168] "Statement by the Government of the GDR," 1.
[169] Ibid.

East German insurrection. The uprising was a disaster in the eyes of the GDR, as it revealed the fact that the police state did not have quite as much control over the citizens as was previously believed. However, this was not the only repercussion of the uprising. During the event, Ulbricht had to "appeal to Soviet tanks for help," in order to quash the uprising.[170] After the inadequacy of the police forces was exposed, the GDR became much more adept at "diverting, controlling, and suppressing most spontaneous popular unrest."[171]

Following the uprising, the leadership of the GDR "never again dared to risk quite such unpopularity on the economic front."[172] In the wake of the uprising, there were often unofficial work stoppages--usually small protests or walk-outs, but nothing on the level of 16 and 17 June 1953--that served as solid reminders of how critical it was for the regime to keep the workers "at least satisfied, if not happy."[173] The SED also attempted to keep their finger on the pulse of the civilian population. Part of this was accomplished via Stasi surveillance, but they also utilized "opinion poll surveys," which were carried out through "social research institutions," such as the SED's *Institut für Meinungsforschung beim ZK der SED* [Institute for Opinion Research at the Central Committee of the SED].[174]

The uprising also served as a catalyst for infighting within the SED. The political differences between Wilhelm Zaisser/Rudolf Herrnstadt and Walter Ulbricht only ended after the events of the June uprising, with Ulbricht as the victor. Previously, both Zaisser and Herrnstadt criticized Ulbricht's "dogmatism and leadership cult;" had made vociferous arguments in favor of collectivizing leadership and taking a more placatory stance on former Social Democrats; and felt the need to gain more popular support for the party's policies, even if that meant "reversing such

[170] Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, 31.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Fulbrook, *The Peoples State*, 7.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Fulbrook, *The People's State*, 7.

policies as enforced collectivization."[175] They were not alone in their castigation of Ulbricht. After the events of June 1953, many in the upper echelons of the SED leadership were echoing these sentiments, and on 7 July 1953, the majority of the members of the Politburo "revealed their lack of confidence in Ulbricht," but his detractors did not have a prospective candidate who could oust him. This, coupled with Ulbricht's trip to Moscow from 8-10 July, was enough to garner support and quash the "anti-Stalinist tide in the GDR leadership."[176]

Twentieth Party Congress

After Stalin's death in 1953, Nikita Khrushchev resigned his position as Moscow party chief in order to give his full attention to his position in the Central Committee Secretariat. During the three years after Stalin's death, Khrushchev consolidated his position as senior member of Stalin's successors in such a way that by 1956, he was able to form his own policy. This in turn led to him becoming the first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). One of his earliest decisions was to denounce "Stalin and his crimes" at the Twentieth Party Congress.[177] At the Congress, which lasted from 14 February until 25 February 1956, Khrushchev gave his "secret speech," which denounced Stalin's crimes, portraying him in a justifiably villainous light. In the speech, Khrushchev mentioned the innocent party members whom Stalin had killed as "enemies of the people," and also commented on Stalin's worrying cult of personality.[178] Furthermore, Khrushchev mentioned that Stalin had made numerous mistakes regarding both foreign and domestic policy, including disregarding accurate information regarding the German attack in June of 1941 and also forbidding the Soviet troops from retreating from said

[175] Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, 34.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 63.
[178] Ibid., 63-64.

attack. Rather than simply carrying on Stalin's legacy like other possible successors might have, Khrushchev claimed that he wanted to "dismantle the Stalinist system" and asserted that other communist countries should follow his lead.[179]

On the very first day of the Congress, Khrushchev presented his General Report of the Central Committee wherein he called on countries to coexist with one another peacefully, even if each country had implemented laws or social systems with which the other did not agree. He also had a desire to improve Soviet relations with other countries, rather than implementing Stalin's oppressive methods of dealing with other countries. Thus, he did not want other countries "to slavishly copy the Soviet model as Stalin had insisted," but instead preferred that they "adapt their socialist path to the circumstances of their own 'local conditions.'"[180] In regards to applying his principles to the GDR, Khrushchev had three ideas.

First, he wanted the East Germans to make an attempt at peacefully coexisting with the West Germans and also wanted them to expand ties with the Social Democratic Party. This improvement of relations could help to "stabilize the situation in the GDR" and increase the East German influence on the West Germans, which would hopefully "wean the West German regime away from the Western Powers."[181] Next, he had previously expressed concern about Stalin's cult of personality, and now, Ulbricht's personality cult was troubling him. Khrushchev also warned that autocratic rule "was detrimental to the long-term cause of socialism," and this "definitely applied to Ulbricht."[182] Finally, Khrushchev felt that Ulbricht and other socialist leaders should emulate his correction of Stalin's mistakes, as well as the mistakes made by other Stalinist leaders. He also wanted the East Germans to follow his example of "declaring an amnesty for people

[179] Ibid., 64.
[180] Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall*, 64.
[181] Ibid., 65.
[182] Ibid.

imprisoned or removed from power under false pretenses and rehabilitating them."[183] However, this also included "some of Ulbricht's old opposition," so it is easy to see why Ulbricht fought back against these policies.[184]

It should be noted that since the delegates from the GDR were from a foreign delegation, they only attended the main events of the Twentieth Congress, which did not include Khrushchev's secret speech, which was given on the final night of the Congress. Instead, Karl Schirdewan, one of the delegates from the GDR, was chosen to hear a report on the speech and take minutes. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee deputy spoke proficient German, and thus, Schirdewan was able to take copious notes. Ulbricht attempted to delay discussion of the Twentieth Congress for as long as he could, given that he felt that it would lead to criticism of his policies, as well as his overall character. However, after 17 March, newspapers in London and West Berlin began publishing certain parts of the not-so-secret "secret speech," which compelled Ulbricht to consider how it should eventually be disseminated to the public. Ulbricht claimed that part of the delay was because East German officials had yet to receive an official Soviet version that was approved to be circulated amongst East German citizens. However, after the Western media outlets had begun publishing portions of the speech, the Politburo decided that Ulbricht had no choice but to "address some of the issues of the speech," and the Soviets finally sent "a text of the secret speech to be distributed," which was translated into German on 21 March, merely one day before the 26th plenum gathered, and almost one full month after Nikita Khrushchev had delivered the secret speech at the Twentieth Congress.

After the contents of the secret speech were made public, Ulbricht made attempts to "limit the damaging effects of the speech," claiming that "the excesses described by Khrushchev had

[183] Ibid., 66.
[184] Ibid.

never existed in the GDR," and that the MfS had already "corrected its course back in 1953."[185] After Schirdewan presented Khrushchev's speech at the Third Party Conference, word spread to other Party organizations, and from this came the Commission of the Central Committee for the Inspection of Affairs of Party Members. This particular body concerned itself with "inner-Party purges" and also "other political prisoners," ordering that many of them be released.[186] During 1956, about 25,000 prisoners were freed, which included 400 "functionaries of the bloc parties," nearly 700 SPD supporters, and several hundred individuals who had previously been convicted by Soviet military tribunals.[187]

The experiences of the last decade, from the end of the Third Reich to the "brief period of thaw in 1956," had "left their mark on a whole generation."[188] There had been "imprisonment and conviction" by the Soviet occupying forces, the complete reorganization of society via "secret-police executive powers," expropriation, expulsion, and "hundreds of thousands of individuals ended up in prison for short or long periods."[189] Although Soviet forces remained in the GDR until the very end of its existence, after 1956, Soviet influence began to steadily decline.

[185] Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 45.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 45.
[188] Ibid., 47.
[189] Ibid.

CONCLUSION

The German Democratic Republic is often remembered as a Soviet satellite state or a puppet regime operating under the Soviet authorities. For numerous reasons, neither of these two designations is necessarily incorrect. However, defaulting to this is also a disservice to all of the complexities that were characteristic of the GDR. It is certainly true that the USSR ruled the GDR very similarly to the manner in which a conquering power rules one of its colonies with an iron fist, but there were also various individuals--*German* individuals--who were complicit in both establishing and preserving the Soviet ideals that were implemented into daily life in the GDR. This trickle-down effect of influence started with members of the upper echelons of GDR leadership--such as Mielke and Ulbricht--and spread from there. The Soviet authorities were able to police the East German populace with the willing help of numerous like-minded individuals who were more than happy to proliferate the Soviet ideals in their communist state.

Through the use of organizations such as the Stasi, NKVD, K-5, and others, both the Soviet authorities and the leaders of the GDR were able to effectively spy on and control the civilian populace. Although this was supposedly done to ensure order and keep the GDR from falling into chaos, for the most part, it only bred fear, insecurity, and resentment in people who were forced to constantly worry that their homes might be under surveillance.

One of the major turning points came in 1953 with the death of Joseph Stalin. Without his influence, the Stalinization and Sovietization of the GDR was quite decisively stymied. In 1956, at the Twentieth Party Congress, Nikita Khrushchev held a secret meeting wherein he denounced Stalinism and Stalin's crimes, ushering in a new era for both the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic. The GDR remained in existence for 33 more years after the Twentieth Congress, but after the death of Stalin and following Khrushchev's de-Stalinization policies, the

Soviet Union never possessed quite the same hold over the German Democratic Republic that it had in the early years of occupation.

With this thesis, I initially intended to investigate the time period stretching from 1945, just after the Second World War had concluded, to 1961, when the Berlin Wall was erected, acting as a physical barrier separating two German states that were already incredibly divided. However, I felt that this conclusion to my paper would prove to be somewhat perplexing, and would do a disservice to the work as a whole, as this felt far too abrupt. Additionally, considering that the crux of my argument is contingent upon the Soviet influence on the German Democratic Republic, ending my narrative in 1961 did not seem pragmatic, as the Soviet influence began to wane after Stalin's death in 1953, and still more after the Twentieth Congress in 1956, when Nikita Khrushchev began implementing de-Stalinization policies. With this in mind, it seemed far more logical to conclude the paper in 1956, since 1961 onward could easily prove to be a completely separate research project on its own.

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