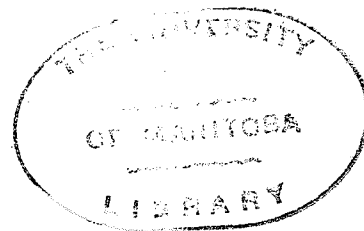


FLUCTUATIONS IN THE FLOW OF REFUGEES FROM THE SOVIET
ZONE OF GERMANY TO THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC
(OCTOBER, 1949 - JULY, 1957)

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ABSTRACT

Developments in the Soviet Zone of Germany depended to a great extent on the general considerations which influenced the world policy of the Soviet Union. In particular, the Soviet Union feared that Germany might rise again to a position where, in conjunction with the Western powers, it might threaten the Soviet Union. At the same time, Germany offered an opportunity for the Soviet leaders to round out their system of satellite states -- thus, East Germany was both a "bridgehead" for the attempt to secure the adherence of West Germany to the Soviet bloc (or, after 1953, the neutralization of Western Germany), and, at the same time, valuable in itself as an essential part of the Soviet orbit. But to secure these ends, the Soviet leaders had to implement a policy of Sovietization which, they hoped, would lead to the moulding of a Communist-inclined population, or, at least, a population which would be passive.

Soviet Occupation was based on the allied wartime agreement, which, by 1947, had broken down. Reparations

played a great part in the decline of allied cooperation; other reasons, however, were operative. Among these were the drive for Communist-dominated political gleichschaltung in the Zone. This began in 1945-1946 with the forced establishment of the Socialist Unity Party, the communist dominated party to whose development political life in the Zone was subordinated. Other political parties were subject to coercion, the Communists dominated all aspects of life through the mass organizations which were established, and, by 1949, they felt secure enough to direct the Volkskongress, a movement originally serving Communist propaganda for an all-German settlement, to establish the separate "German Democratic Republic" (October 1949).

The period 1949-1952 may be termed the period of "consolidation", during which political, economic and social Sovietization was introduced and carried out. The object of this was to crush all classes and social groups which might threaten the regime, and thus to have a clear title to the domination of youth, intellectual life, and economic activities -- the props for the totalitarian system. The refugee movement in these years is indicative of the negative attitude the population took towards such policies.

The refugee movement reached its highest peak in the months immediately preceding the June uprising of 1953. The

uprising and the refugee movements are linked together as evidence of the desperate situation of the population, especially after Sovietization was intensified in the autumn of 1952. At the same time, the weakness betrayed by the "New Course", the shift of policy inaugurated after Stalin's death, gave the workers the courage to demonstrate against new raises in the norms -- a move which sparked the uprising.

After the uprising, the regime turned definitely towards integration with the Soviet bloc as one method of achieving a certain degree of stability. This shift to the East was dictated in part by the failure of Communist efforts to subvert, or at least to neutralize, West Germany. However, closer ties with the Soviet bloc also meant that the regime felt the repercussions of events which took place elsewhere -- Khrushchev's speech to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU (February 1956) and the events of October and November, 1956, in Poland and Hungary. General dissatisfaction was indicated during this period by the fact that the monthly flood of refugees, which had fallen somewhat after the 1953 uprising, began to rise and, generally, surpassed the pre-1953 level.

This preliminary study of refugees, although restricted somewhat by certain limitations of material and method, has indicated that refugee study may be a profitable method of gauging public opinion with reference to regime policy in

Communist states. Above all, it has shown that although the Soviets have succeeded in maintaining their hold on East Germany, they have not thus far succeeded in forming a population which will acquiesce to this fact.

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CHAPTER I

THE ROLE OF GERMANY IN SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY

The bases of Soviet policy in Germany are to be found in the role which Germany plays in the strategic planning of Soviet foreign policy. In the minds of the Soviet leaders, in their public pronouncements, the German problem is not one which is considered in isolation; rather, Germany is seen as but one front in a never-ending struggle for supremacy between the "camp of Socialism" on the one hand and the "Western Imperialists" on the other. Out of this concept have sprung the particular policies which the Soviet leaders have developed with regard to Germany. It is within this framework that these policies are implemented, in their specific applications, by the ruling Communist regime in East Germany,¹ and it is against this background that the Western democracies must view the interplay between Communist policies, on the one hand, and the attitude of the population of East Germany, on the other.

The comprehensive world-outlook of Soviet foreign policy is illustrated best by contrast with the outlook of

¹See Appendix A, "Terminology".

the Western powers. Whereas the Western powers seemingly are intent on facing one problem at a time, defensively, -- as in the case of Germany, Iraq or Formosa -- Soviet policy seems to be one of constant irritation on a broad front. Utilizing the weapons of diplomacy, military strength and economic aid, Soviet policy has shifted its emphasis backward and forward from Europe to the Middle East to Asia in a rapid series of feints, jabs and offensive breakthroughs, with the objective of exploiting each crisis to the utmost and at the same time searching for new opportunities to keep the West off balance. Thus, each crisis is followed either by a new crisis in another area, or by a change of pace -- sabre-rattling followed by talk of peaceful coexistence. The strategy is one of total diplomatic warfare, aimed at consolidating one's own ranks while at the same time inducing weariness and collapse in the ranks of one's opponent and, thus, achieving victory by default, rather than by the more costly method of all-out war.

In the development of this strategic concept, emphasis has been placed on the role of the colonial or ex-colonial areas of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Priority, in the offensive stage of the struggle, follows the line laid down by Lenin, who wrote:

The outcome of the struggle depends in the end on the fact that Russia, India and China contain a mighty majority of the population and precisely this majority

is with unexpected rapidity in recent years being drawn into the fight for its own freedom. So there can be no doubt of the final outcome of the struggle. In this sense, the final victory of socialism /read: Communism/ is fully and unconditionally secured.²

Stalin reduced this to a strategic dictum when he stated that Leninism taught that victory over the West was to be achieved not, primarily, through direct action in the advanced states themselves but rather "through the revolutionary alliance with the liberation movement of the colonies and dependent countries against imperialism."³

Even though the main, long-range battle was to be in Asia and Africa, Europe was by no means neglected. Basic to the state-mentality of the Soviet Union was the belief, current at least up until the time of Stalin's death, that the Soviet Union was being persecuted and victimized by the developed capitalist states. This belief was exemplified by the theory of "capitalist encirclement"; its corollary was that the Soviet government, and Communist movements throughout the world, should use every possible opportunity to strengthen the defense of the "Socialist Motherland." Thus, although emphasis was placed on Asia and Africa so far as the long-

²Lenin, March 1923, cited in Chester Bowles, The New Dimensions of Peace, New York; Harpers and Brothers, 1955, p. 131.

³Stalin, cited Bowles, op. cit., p. 47.

range offensive was concerned, the defensive obverse of the Leninist-Stalinist strategic concept was one of neutralizing any enemies who might pose a danger to the security of the Soviet Union, and, especially, the security of European Russia, the center of the Communist system.

During the World War II period, the Soviet Union pursued a policy of territorial aggrandizement and expansion of her zone of influence, calculated at achieving security for her nerve-center in European Russia. This was manifested in the annexation of eastern Poland and the Baltic states (1939-1940) and in the post-war establishment of a system of satellite states stretching as far as possible to the West. Thus, by 1949, the western land frontiers of the pre-war U.S.S.R. were protected by a zone of annexed areas and satellite states extending over seven hundred miles westward into the heart of continental Europe.

At the western extremity of this zone was the Soviet-occupied zone of Germany, whose status as a satellite state was dignified in 1949 by the creation of the "German Democratic Republic." As a result of historical experience, the Russian rulers well appreciated the importance of Germany in the struggle for hegemony in Europe. Two World Wars, during both of which the Russians and Germans had engaged in bitter battles on the eastern front, had served to emphasize the formidable strength of the German war machine. Between the

wars, during the period of the Rapallo Treaty and subsequent agreements (1922- c. 1934), the Soviet Union had experienced the benefits of economic and diplomatic cooperation with Germany, thus continuing a policy which the Tsars had pursued in the nineteenth century. Further, concealed beneath typical inter-war Communist propaganda about Germany as an example of "decadent finance capitalism" there lurked a genuine admiration, similar to that shown towards the United States, for German progress in the development of modern industrial techniques which might be used as models in the drive to implement Stalin's ambitious series of Five Year Plans. Thus, from all three viewpoints -- military, diplomatic and economic -- the Soviet Union had reason to appreciate the opportunities which a share in the postwar occupation of Germany afforded her.

The use which the Soviet Union made of its opportunities in Germany was influenced both by hope and by fear. On the one hand, the Soviet Union feared that Germany might rise again to an economic and military position, where, possibly in conjunction with the Western powers, she might once more threaten the Soviet Union and the Communist system which was being built up, under Soviet auspices, in Eastern Europe. Therefore, as an occupying power, the Soviet Union used every opportunity to weaken Germany immediately after the war; in the years that followed, the Russians used both threats of reprisal and promises of eventual reunification in vain

efforts first to halt the creation of a West German state, and, later, to block the integration of this state into Western European defensive, economic and political systems.

Just as the Russians feared the rise of West Germany to a position of respectability and responsibility in the western alliance, so they had high hopes of the use to which they might put their own zone in East Germany. From the beginning, the Soviets hoped to exploit the chaotic postwar situation to secure the adherence of all of Germany to the Communist system. In pursuit of this objective, East Germany might be used as a "bridgehead" for political infiltration and for a campaign based on reviving German nationalism and on exploiting hopes for reunification, though keeping these ideas strictly subordinate to the dictates of Soviet realpolitik. Even after 1949, (and, especially, after c. 1953-1954), when the Soviets must have known that hopes, in the foreseeable future, for an all-German Communist state were slim indeed, East Germany and the reunification question were used as bait in the attempt to minimize the aid which the Federal Republic might be able to give to the Western Alliance.

Besides being useful as a "bridgehead," the Soviets had high hopes for East Germany's value in its own right. Even a separate East German satellite state would be most useful in rounding out, both politically and economically, the Communist system in Eastern Europe. Economically, East

Germany would bring to the Communist bloc a highly developed industry with a skilled working force. Politically, a separate East German state would ensure that on the Oder-Neisse boundary there would be a state which would not "upset the applecart" and thus start a series of tremors that might break up the Soviet empire. These two policies, -- on the one hand, the maintenance of East Germany's links with West Germany, so that the eastern zone might serve as a bridgehead for future expansion, and, on the other, the attempt to integrate East Germany as fully as possible into the satellite system -- were used, sometimes concurrently, generally in alternation, as the Soviet strategy in Europe and the postwar world unfolded.

Such a policy, however, could not be fully implemented unless the foundation were properly laid. In this case, in order to provide a firm foundation for Soviet plans, it was necessary to mould a population, which, at the least, would not dare oppose the policies of the regime, and which, preferably, would be in accord with the regime. Thus, as Raymond Aron has pointed out, "once the party has gained possession of the state," in East Germany, as throughout the Communist orbit, it becomes necessary

to create the new man, to accomplish the spiritual transformation that will render the ruling elite and the masses permanently loyal to the rules, conceptions and mode of living of the Communist society.⁴

⁴Raymond Aron, The Century of Total War, Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955, p. 142.

Thus, from a practical point of view, in terms of the judgments of the Soviet leaders themselves, the success or failure of Communist policy in Germany and of the Soviet use of East Germany in the fulfillment of Soviet plans must be assessed, ultimately, on the basis of how far the Soviet leaders, through the German Communist regime, succeed in implementing their policies while at the same time holding the loyalty, or at least the acquiescence, of the East German population. Indoctrination and control -- on these rest Communist hopes for success in East Germany, and further hopes for using East Germany to advance the Communist cause.

CHAPTER II

EAST GERMANY UNDER SOVIET MILITARY OCCUPATION (1945-1949)

Hitler's "Thousand Year Reich" outlived the German Fuehrer by only a week. With the unconditional surrender of Germany (May 8, 1945), the victorious Allies had time to look around and to survey their situation as occupiers of this once-dreaded country. For the Soviet Union, the situation was very good indeed. The defeat of Nazi Germany went far deeper than defeat purely on the military level. Heavy bombing, the victorious advance of the Allied armies from both the west and the east, and the utter collapse of a totalitarian regime which for years had held in its sway not only the captive peoples, but also the Germans themselves -- all these resulted in political vacuum, economic collapse, and social dislocation. As their world came apart around them, the majority of the German people were left in a state of shock, without bearings to steer by in pursuit of a future. For the Allies, this situation created vast social and political problems, since a primary job of Allied Military Government was, of necessity, the revival of ordinary civil government. But for the Soviet leaders the situation contained the seeds of future domination, since conditions in Germany at war's

end closely approximated that state of chaos which, as H. Seton-Watson has pointed out,¹ is conducive to the establishment of Communist rule.

The Soviet position at the end of World War II was enhanced by the substantial fund of goodwill which the Soviet Union, as an important wartime ally, had built up in the hearts of the Anglo-American peoples. Much bad feeling, particularly over the Nazi-Soviet accord of August 1939, was wiped away by the heroic stand of the Red Army at Stalingrad and countless other battles on the long road from the Volga to the Elbe. People tended to forget that the Soviet system was basically totalitarian and that it had sacrificed countless numbers of its own people, as well as Poles, people from the Baltic States, and members of other ethnic groups, in the pursuit of its own ends. A mood of optimism prevailed as to the possibility of cooperation between the western democracies and the Soviet Union, and this optimism was not confined to the soldiers who, in April, 1945, met the Russians at the Elbe; nor was it confined to the populations of such states as the United States, Great Britain and Canada. The prevalent mood, as it existed on the highest level of government, is well illustrated by a remark of President Roosevelt's:

¹H. Seton-Watson, The Pattern of Communist Revolution.