

largely ceremonial role following election for a term of four years by a joint session of the People's Chamber and the Chamber of States.

The constitution adopted for the German Democratic Republic in October 1949 would have made possible a democratic, parliamentary government quite compatible with that of the Federal Republic. But as events were soon to demonstrate, the decisive political force in the new GDR—the SED—had very different intentions as well as the means to put them into effect.

3 The Ulbricht Era in East Germany

The Communist Regime and Its Leader

Throughout the first twenty-two years of the German Democratic Republic, its policies were dominated by veteran Communist functionary Walter Ulbricht. Never an absolute dictator, he skillfully maintained his primacy within the leadership of the East German state during its formative period and left an indelible imprint upon it.

Born in 1893, the son of an impecunious tailor in Saxon central Germany, Ulbricht grew up in a socialist environment, completed an apprenticeship as a cabinetmaker, and joined the SPD at the age of nineteen. Following service in the army in the First World War, he joined the Communist Party shortly after its formation at the end of 1918. Unswerving in his belief in a simplistic Marxist view of the world and unfailingly subservient to the Soviet Union, Ulbricht rose in the KPD's ranks as a full-time functionary and sat as one of the party's deputies in the Reichstag of the Weimar Republic from 1928 until 1933. After exile in the Soviet Union during the Third Reich, he returned to

Berlin under Russian auspices in the spring of 1945 to oversee reestablishment of the party in Germany.

Ulbricht's success did not result from popularity. Never a colorful or personable figure, he was an inept orator who wrote and spoke in stilted party jargon. He excelled, however, at what many perceived as the dull work involved in overseeing personnel matters and bureaucratic procedures within the party. Following Stalin's example, he exploited that role to build a network of loyal followers by manipulating party patronage so as to reward those who backed him with desirable posts. His management of the central party bureaucracy enabled him to exercise influence over policy decisions by determining which matters were brought to the leadership's attention. His close ties to the Russian occupation authorities placed him in a position to impose his will at crucial junctures by calling upon them for backing. A secretive, mistrustful person, Ulbricht imbued the Socialist Unity Party and the regime it established in East Germany with a conspiratorial elitism similar to that of the Communist Party of the USSR.

When the SED was formed, Ulbricht quickly became the decisive figure in the new party, so that his reign over East Germany began well before the formation of the GDR. Upon establishment of the governmental apparatus in 1949 he assumed only an obscure post as one of several deputies to the minister-president. The modesty of that official post was, however, deceptive. As in the USSR, the government of the GDR was thoroughly subordinated to the ruling party, and Ulbricht's position atop the SED as its general secretary made him the key figure in the new regime. During the GDR's first decade Ulbricht's leadership position remained precarious. In order to retain the support of a majority in the party's decisive body, the Politburo, he repeatedly had to deal with rivals and sometimes had to moderate his course during those years. Only later did he come to wield virtually unchallenged authority.

From the outset, the new East German regime paid little heed to the constitution adopted in 1949. That document specified

election of the parliament, the People's Chamber, by proportional representation, a system which distributes seats among parties according to the percentage of the vote they tally. That provision was, however, systematically violated as a consequence of the compulsory coalition which the Soviets had imposed on all political parties in their zone after the war. When the GDR was formed, that coalition became known as the National Front. It encompassed not only the four political parties permitted to operate in the Soviet zone but also the so-called mass organizations subservient to the SED. Through control over composition of the unity lists of candidates on the ballots laid before the voters, this SED-dominated National Front in effect determined the outcome of elections in advance. Voters could choose only between approving the lists in entirety or rejecting them.

Under this system, the word *election* lost all meaning in the sense of voters' exercising a choice. Instead, elections in the GDR became, as in the Soviet Union, occasions when the regime elicited a ritualistic show of affirmation on the part of the population, with great stress placed upon achieving a maximum turnout at the polls. Participation was often less than voluntary, as many voters were marched in groups from their place of work to the polling places. There, public marking of ballots was encouraged and resort to the constitutionally guaranteed right to a secret ballot discouraged. Use of the secrecy of a voting booth soon became a rare exception that branded the individual as a deviant, a status that entailed heavy disadvantages in a society where all-powerful officials determined many aspects of the citizenry's life, such as who would get which jobs and who would be allotted an apartment or quarters at a vacation resort.

Beginning with the first balloting in 1950, parliamentary elections in the GDR invariably produced predictable outcomes. With monotonous regularity the regime proclaimed that turnouts of more than 98 percent of the eligible voters had by margins in excess of 99 percent endorsed the unity lists prepared by

the National Front. The distribution of seats in the People's Chamber remained essentially unaffected by the elections. The SED received only a modest minority of the seats. But when combined with those assigned to the mass organizations it dominated, the SED's seats ensured it a firm majority. After 1963 the composition of the People's Chamber froze according to a set formula. The SED occupied 127 seats, the four other parties, the CDU, the LDP, the NDPD, and the DBD, 52 each. The remaining 165 were assigned to the mass organizations. The same techniques produced similar results in local and regional elections.

Aside from this novel electoral system, the formalities of constitutional, parliamentary government were initially observed in the GDR. All legislation was duly enacted by votes in the People's Chamber, which after each election regularly went through the motions of reinstalling Otto Grotewohl as minister-president at the head of nominal coalition cabinets that included ministers from the non-Communist parties. From the outset, however, the Soviet system of "democratic centralism" prevailed behind the scenes. All important policy decisions were made by the SED's Politburo and then effected by the parliament and government. No dissent was tolerated. The parliament met for only a few days each year, not to debate and test the strength of varying viewpoints but rather to transform Politburo policies into law by unanimous vote.

By 1954 the formalities of parliamentary rule were relaxed so as to allow the cabinet, now called the Council of Ministers, to enact laws by decree without approval by the People's Chamber when it was not in session. In the same year the authority of the Council of Ministers was, between its increasingly infrequent full meetings, assigned to an inner circle of ministers, designated as the Presidium and not provided for by the constitution. Two years earlier, in 1952, the federal component was eliminated when the People's Chamber enacted a law replacing the five states of the GDR with fourteen district administrative units thoroughly subordinated to the central government. It was a measure of the regime's indifference to constitutionality that the

Chamber of States remained nominally in existence until 1958, although the states themselves had disappeared six years earlier.

The regime showed scant respect for the rights guaranteed to citizens of the GDR by its constitution of 1949. Although the constitution assured freedom of expression and ruled out censorship, dissenting opinion was suppressed by a variety of methods. The government-controlled radio stations served as propaganda organs of the regime. Theaters and movie houses, all of which depended upon the regime for financial support, were brought into conformity as well. The regime's control over all publishing houses enabled it to determine which books would be printed and which would not be. Newspapers and magazines posed more complicated problems, but they, too, were brought into line. Those which failed to comply found it impossible to obtain adequate allotments of paper from the state monopoly that controlled its distribution. Organizations critical of the regime or out of step with its policies were denied the use of halls for meetings. Whereas the constitution contained extensive guarantees of religious freedom, in practice the regime harassed the churches in countless ways, banning the customary religious instruction from primary schools and imprisoning clergymen who criticized official policies. At the same time, the regime provoked such criticism by seeking to indoctrinate children with atheism at school and through the sole officially approved youth organization, the SED-controlled Free German Youth.

Although the constitution assured citizens equal rights, practice departed sharply from that principle. Children whose parents were classified by the regime as other than workers and farmers were discriminated against by the admissions policies of the state-run universities and other institutions of higher education. In other respects, too, citizens of "bourgeois" background encountered difficulties. Those who sought to flee to the West made themselves vulnerable to prosecution in the GDR, despite the constitutionally guaranteed right of emigration. The

regime charged them with “flight from the Republic,” a crime for which lengthy imprisonment could be imposed.

The increasingly repressive methods of the SED regime had a stifling effect on cultural life and artistic creativity. At the end of the war many talented intellectuals, writers, and artists had settled in Berlin, the former cultural capital of the country, and applied their energies there and in the surrounding Russian zone. With great idealism they hoped to help create a new and more humane Germany, freed from the reactionary influences that had played such a baneful role in their country’s past. Initially the Soviet occupation authorities displayed liberality in cultural matters, tolerating a wide variety of plays, books, and other forms of expression. But with the onset of the Cold War at the time of the Berlin blockade, the Soviets and the SED imposed tight controls on cultural life in the East. Books and plays by Western authors ceased to be sold or staged there; translations of Russian literature flooded the bookstores while Soviet plays received lavish and protracted productions. Organizations of writers, artists, and musicians established after the war, ostensibly to foster their creative efforts, became repressive organs of thought control under a regime-directed League of Culture. Censure—or worse, expulsion—from those organizations curtailed or eliminated the access of offending individuals to galleries, concert halls, or publishing houses, thus making it difficult or impossible for them to find audiences for their work or to make a living through it.

The SED regime did not content itself with punishing deviants in the cultural sphere. Increasingly it emulated the Soviet practice of telling creative people not only what they must not do but also what they must do with regard to both the content and the form of their work. In architecture the heavy, ornate “wedding-cake” style developed in Stalin’s USSR became obligatory, and the regime launched construction of a showpiece in East Berlin in the form of a huge housing and shopping project on a major boulevard renamed Stalinallee. Artists and writers were instructed to produce works of “socialist realism.” This

entailed abandonment of timeless human themes, introspection, and experimental forms in favor of depicting contemporary experiences of the working class in an idealized, optimistic light and in uncomplicated language and simple literary forms. Such works were intended to hold up to millions of readers positive socialist heroes, each totally loyal to the leadership of the SED and the Soviet Union, who would serve as models for emulation. Only through such works, the regime proclaimed, could artists and writers become productive members of a progressive society bent on creating “a new human being.”

These strictures, which in practice entailed conformity to shifts in the current party line, made it increasingly difficult for creative persons to continue their work with intellectual honesty. Some gave up and fled to the West. Others conformed readily and were handsomely rewarded by the regime. Still others paid lip service to the regime’s demands, producing some works that appeased its ideological watchmen but continuing to pursue in private genuinely creative endeavors in hopes of finding audiences for them in better times. Many incurred the disfavor of the regime for works that failed to measure up to its expectations. Among those who ran into difficulties was the foremost literary figure of the GDR, the poet and playwright Bertolt Brecht, who had with great fanfare chosen to settle in East Berlin (equipped with an Austrian passport and a West German publisher) after his wartime exile in the United States.

Little danger of any organized political opposition existed. Two of the non-Communist parties, the NDPD and the DBD, were from the outset creations and tools of the SED. Although initially independent, the remaining two, the CDU and LDP, quickly fell into the hands of compliant spokesmen. Well before formal creation of the GDR, those of their leaders who displayed independent-mindedness in the Soviet zone found that they risked imprisonment, so that many chose to flee to the West. The formation of the East German state was followed by the arrest or flight of additional leaders of those parties, including some who held ministerial posts in state governments as a result of Soviet-

imposed compulsory coalitions. Talk of free elections or criticism of authoritarian methods of rule called forth accusations of conspiracy with an unspecified "enemy" which for some resulted in long prison terms. Those persons who subsequently took over leading positions in the CDU and LDP had to be willing to accept an acquiescent role and to ingratiate themselves with the SED and the regime it dominated. In return, they were well paid for undemanding, secure party jobs.

Increasingly, individual resistance to official policies became criminalized. Those who dissented found themselves accused of participation in counter-revolutionary, imperialistic plots on the part of an allegedly aggressive Federal Republic bent on revenge and renewed war. Since the GDR claimed to be "the first workers' and farmers' state on German soil," any criticism of its policies or methods became subject to denunciation as an attack on those social groups, which comprised a majority of the population. While well-known persons so accused sometimes received show trials staged for propaganda effect, most victims of political repression in the GDR were tried in secret and quietly spirited away to serve lengthy prison sentences without the publication of any specific grounds for their conviction. The arbitrary and coercive system of Stalinist terror that had so long ravaged Soviet society had been transplanted to East Germany in the name of democracy.

The SED, like the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, became itself a prime target of these Stalinist methods. At the time of the new party's formation, Social Democrats had comprised the larger part of its rank-and-file membership, but they soon made themselves suspect in the eyes of the SED's dominant Communist leadership. Their scruples were offended by breaches of constitutionality and police-state methods, and they saw no reason why they should not maintain contact with Social Democrats in West Germany. The latter were, however, anathema in the eyes of the SED leadership, which made *Sozialdemokratismus*, or democratic socialist attitudes, a deviation meriting expulsion. An estimated 200,000 former SPD members

were purged from the SED in the years 1948–50 on such grounds. More than 5,000 landed in GDR prisons or Soviet labor camps, and at least 400 died while incarcerated. During 1951 membership in the SED, by both former Communists and former Social Democrats, underwent further reduction when members had to turn in their old party documents and apply for new ones, which were issued only to those who passed close scrutiny for loyalty. Whereas overall membership in the SED had stood at about 2 million in 1948, it had dropped to around 1.2 million by 1952 as a result of these measures.

Through such purges and through restrictive admission policies, the SED ceased to bear the characteristics of a mass party, open to anyone who wished to join, which it had initially inherited from the SPD. Under the direction of Ulbricht and his adherents it became, like the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, an organization reserved for those judged suitable for admission to its ranks after having petitioned for membership and successfully completed a probationary period. After admission, for which membership in the party youth organization would become a prerequisite for younger generations, members would henceforth enjoy good standing only by maintaining a prescribed level of party activity. Those admitted to full membership, about 12 percent of the adult population, could no longer withdraw voluntarily without special reasons. An inner circle of members, the so-called cadre, held the key jobs in the party and the upper levels of the government. A broader circle comprising those known as "activists" assumed more exacting obligations than did ordinary members. The distribution of rewards conformed to this hierarchical pattern.

Only a few years after formation of the SED, little remained of the open, democratic, united working-class party for which so many Social Democrats in East Germany had hoped at the time of the merger with the Communists in 1946. Those who survived the purges found themselves subjugated to an authoritarian Stalinist Apparatus, a party machine designed to convey orders from top to bottom, ensure conformity, and impose

punishment when compliance did not follow. For their part, the members of the SED cadre had become a privileged elite whose dominant status and material rewards depended upon preservation of the regime.

A younger generation of Communists accustomed only to the authoritarianism of the Third Reich and the GDR soon augmented the ranks of those who had experienced democracy during the Weimar Republic. Drawn from underprivileged backgrounds, exposed to higher education in many cases by doctrinaire workers' and peasants' faculties set up by the regime at universities, and shielded from exposure to outside influences by rigid censorship, this second generation of GDR officials was very much the creation of the SED. Its members received advancement as much according to obedience as to ability. With rare exceptions, they unquestioningly accepted policies dictated by the top leadership. As a result, the GDR became a society administered by a small army of subservient functionaries executing decisions reached by remote, self-appointed power-holders.

The SED leadership displayed little commitment to the pledge, set forth in the constitution of the GDR, to move toward the reunification of Germany. To be sure, the regime repeatedly proposed steps it characterized as prerequisites for reunification in extensively publicized open communications directed at Bonn. Its proposals always contained provisos, however, which ensured that they would go unaccepted by the West Germans. The most fundamental of these provisos, repeated over and over again, called for an all-German conference that would draw up plans for reuniting the two parts of the country. While that made good propaganda, these proposals specified that at such a conference the two German governments must have equal voices in determining the country's future, an arrangement that would, in effect, grant the GDR veto power. The same proviso lay at the core of East Berlin's proposals for formation of a confederation of East and West Germany. Granting that sort of parity to the SED regime was wholly unacceptable to Bonn, since the regime in

the GDR enjoyed no democratic legitimacy and could in any case speak, even if it somehow became legitimized, for far fewer Germans than could the Federal Republic. Bonn countered by insisting upon free elections throughout both parts of the country in order to reestablish a democratically based political voice with which the German people as a whole could speak out on the terms of reunification and a new nation-wide government. But the regime in East Berlin ignored those appeals rather than face the possibility of competition from other parties in a free and open electoral contest.

Most observers agreed that the monotonous rhetoric of reunification employed by the leaders of the SED served mainly to mask an aversion to ending Germany's division, which had become the basis for their authority over that part of the country where the presence of the Red Army enabled them to rule without regard to the political preferences of the citizenry. In May 1952 the regime in the GDR deepened the division of the country by converting the demarcation line between East and West Germany into a fortified border and limiting passage between the two to a few closely controlled checkpoints. That left Berlin, where four-power occupation remained in effect, as the only place where East Germans could move westward unhindered. West Berliners could still visit East Berlin but were now denied access to the rest of the GDR. Telephone communications between the two parts of the former capital were drastically curtailed by the East German authorities.

Socialization and Industrial Expansion

Although the 1949 constitution of the GDR guaranteed property rights, private ownership of productive assets was from the outset precarious at best. Much property had already been expropriated by German Communist administrators under Soviet auspices during occupation rule. Initially, only the estates of great landowners and the businesses

of active Nazis were ordered seized, but "occupation socialism," as it came to be known, actually resulted in the expropriation of many others as well. Nearly half the total farmland in the Soviet zone was seized in the course of the postwar agrarian reform. Some two-thirds of the confiscated land was distributed among small farmers and the rest assigned to collective farms similar to those in the USSR.

Insofar as a socialist revolution occurred in East Germany, it came about at the order of the Soviet occupation authorities, not as a consequence of any popular upheaval. Most industries seized during the occupation became *Volkseigene Betriebe* ("people's plants" or VEB) and were operated initially by the SED-dominated zonal administration and later by the GDR. Special occupation decrees resulted in the blanket takeover of certain categories of enterprises, such as banks, energy-producing utilities, pharmacies, and motion picture theaters. Some industrial plants were seized and exploited for the extraction of reparations by the Soviet Union, which only later relinquished them to the GDR, for the most part years after the formation of the East German state.

After creation of the GDR, the SED regime continued the process of socializing the economy, but at a slower pace and usually by indirect means. The constitution of 1949 specified that expropriation must involve compensation for the former owners, but the regime could avoid such payment by bringing about the transfer of property to state ownership without resort to the formal procedure of expropriation. Since owners of private farms and businesses had to compete for labor and raw materials on unfavorable terms with government-owned enterprises and had to sell most of their products at prices controlled by the government, they were vulnerable to crippling harassment. They were also required to pay heavy taxes, and if they fell into arrears with payments, their property became subject to foreclosure. By 1952, the private sector of the economy had shrunk to the point where over three-quarters of the industrial workers in the GDR were employed by state-owned enterprises.

Also in 1952, despite disclaimers at the time of the postwar land reform of any intent to socialize agriculture, the SED regime began to exert pressure on private farmers to merge their land into collective farms, which then employed only about 15 percent of the rural population. Farmers proved reluctant, however, to surrender title to their land, which many had gained only as a result of the recent agrarian reform.

These and other policies led to a massive exodus from the GDR. Rather than lose their independence through collectivization, many farmers abandoned their farms and fled to the West, leaving uncultivated land behind them. The mounting difficulties encountered by proprietors of independent businesses led many of them to flee as well. Also departing were those East Germans who could not accept the increasingly stringent ideological constraints on intellectual and cultural activities, the harassment of the churches, or the discriminatory policies regarding admission to higher education. During the years 1949–52 over 675,000 persons from the GDR registered in the West as refugees in need of aid. Still others joined relatives there and did not register, so that the full extent of the exodus from the GDR went unrecorded. Those who did register amounted alone to more than 3.5 percent of the GDR's 1949 population. That represented the highest annual population loss in the world during that period. Since the exodus consisted mainly of young, able-bodied people, its economic consequences bulked even greater than the numbers of those leaving would suggest.

This sustained population drain posed a major handicap to the SED regime's attempt to make the economy of the GDR viable. Even without handicaps, that attempt posed a formidable task. The territory of the new East Germany had long been integrated into the larger economy of the Reich. The predominantly light industries located there had mainly manufactured finished goods made from raw and half-finished materials purchased largely in other parts of Germany or abroad. Those manufactured goods had in turn been sold throughout Germany and the world. Establishing a separate economy for the GDR

thus entailed extensive investment in heavy industry and in other essential sectors that had previously remained underdeveloped. Since the Soviet Union ruled out acceptance of Marshall Plan aid from the United States and offered little assistance itself, most of the capital for that investment had to be obtained through a bootstrap operation. That is, a considerable part of production was withheld from consumption so that it could be invested in the development of basic industries. These included steel plants and rolling mills, installations for extracting coke from lignite, and factories to manufacture items such as agricultural tractors, which had previously been mainly obtained from other parts of Germany. Another significant part of current production had to be withheld from consumption and exported to earn the foreign currency needed to purchase raw materials and technical equipment unavailable in the GDR.

From the outset, the economy of the GDR reflected the regime's dependence on the Soviet Union. Through 1953, the USSR exacted heavy reparation payments, placing still another drain on current production. During the GDR's first two years, no less than 25 percent of the gain realized by the regime from industrial production had to be earmarked to cover the costs of reparations and maintenance of Russian troops in East Germany. Trade, which had previously flowed predominantly westward, toward the rest of Germany and Europe, shifted eastward. Coal, for example, which the GDR lacked but could have purchased more cheaply from West Germany, was imported from Siberia at a much higher price. Much industrial production was geared to the needs of the Soviets and shipped eastward, often on terms disadvantageous to the GDR. By 1954 nearly three-quarters of its trade was with the Eastern bloc, which marked a profound redirection of the traditional flow of goods and commodities.

The economy was operated, as in the USSR, through centralized planning and administration. The governmental machinery of the GDR, which politically played only the limited role of enacting and enforcing the decisions of the SED, became

for the most part one great monopolistic economic enterprise. Through centralized planning, beginning with a two-year plan for 1949–50 and continuing with a five-year plan for 1951–55, the regime allocated investment capital, distributed scarce resources, administered trade, managed plants and mines, and set prices and wages. Since no constraints of a competitive nature restricted the resulting proliferation of administrative personnel, a luxuriant economic bureaucracy soon developed, imposing still further burdens on the productive parts of the economy.

Despite all these obstacles, the regime made remarkable progress toward realizing the first five-year plan's goal of increasing industrial production by 190 percent between 1951 and 1955. Annual output of steel, which in 1936 had amounted to 1.2 million tons in the parts of Germany that became the GDR but which had stood at only about 10 percent of that level in 1946, increased to 2.1 million tons by 1953. Similarly dramatic advances were achieved in other basic industries, such as chemicals and energy generation. At the end of 1952 the regime announced that overall production had reached 108 percent of the 1936 level. That figure lost some of its luster when compared with the level of 143 percent achieved by then in the Federal Republic. But the GDR's attainment was impressive by virtue of its having pulled its economy upward by its own bootstraps, whereas West Germany's economic miracle had been facilitated by American aid under the Marshall Plan.

The price for these accomplishments was a depressed standard of living for most East Germans, for the growth of heavy industry came at the cost of the wage-earning consumer. Despite the overall growth of the economy by 1953, the output of consumer goods had failed to reach prewar levels. Low wages held purchasing power down, and even where money became available for discretionary spending consumers could choose from only a very limited selection of goods. Housing remained an acute problem for many East Germans forced to continue living in crowded, outmoded dwellings by the regime's slowness in allocating resources and manpower to new construction. Eco-

conomic experts in the GDR itself estimated the purchasing power of workers' wages in 1950 variously between half and three-quarters of the prewar level. The dearth of consumer items was worsened by the inefficiencies of the centralized planning system, which frequently failed to produce what was planned. The system also proved sluggish in adjusting production to shifts in consumer tastes and needs, so that unwanted goods went on being produced while new needs went unmet. The cumbersome government distribution system repeatedly delivered goods where they were not needed or failed to provide them where they were.

Food became a chronic problem. Problems arising from the expansion of collective farming and from the abandonment of land by farmers who fled to the West rather than submit to collectivization resulted in repeated shortages of foodstuffs. Butter, cooking oil, meat, and sugar remained under rationing controls, as available supplies lagged far behind prewar levels. Imported foods, such as citrus fruits and chocolate, were rarely available, and then only at exorbitant prices, because the regime tightly controlled foreign currency to reserve it for purchases abroad essential to the expansion of industrial plant.

All these difficulties loomed larger when compared with the rapid emergence in the West of an affluent, consumer-oriented economy in which workers' purchasing power steadily increased, enabling them to choose from an expanding array of imported foodstuffs, automobiles, electrical appliances, fashionable clothing, and new, modern dwellings. Travel and correspondence between East and West, as well as Western broadcasts, made it difficult for East Germans not to notice the extent to which, for all the triumphs of the regime's five-year plan, their standard of living lagged far behind that of Germans in the Federal Republic.

Since the SED justified its rule on the grounds that it formed the vanguard of the proletariat, it placed great stress upon winning the loyalty of the GDR's workers. The importance and dignity of manual labor were celebrated ceaselessly in the regime's propaganda. Workers who set new production records

received awards and lavish publicity. Athletic organizations and recreational outings offered free leisure activities. Group transportation to Berlin and other cities enabled workers to attend plays and operas with subsidized tickets and take part in special educational tours of museums and art galleries. Free lending libraries and inexpensive, subsidized editions of literary classics promoted reading. A comprehensive welfare state relieved workers of concern about the cost of health care. Guaranteed employment banished the specter of joblessness that still haunted some West German workers during the 1950s. The cost of housing was held down by a government system of rental administration. The construction of new housing, although lagging far behind that in the West, enabled at least some workers who enjoyed good standing with the regime to move into modern quarters. Preferential admission of workers' children to higher education further underlined the GDR's social priorities.

Despite all these measures, worker morale remained a problem. The GDR's laggard standard of living and the chronic shortages of consumer goods and foodstuffs left many workers less than grateful to a regime that claimed to be theirs. Fundamental conflicts of interest also plagued relations between workers and the regime. Only by extracting a maximum of labor at the lowest cost in terms of consumer goods could the regime realize its goal of rapid, bootstrap industrialization. But after years of toil under spartan conditions, many workers felt entitled to immediate material rewards for their labor and became impatient with promises of a bounteous socialist future. Attempts to appease workers by appealing to their idealism and by pitting factories against each other in "socialist competitions" designed to raise production proved of only limited effectiveness.

The absence of any organizations that workers could regard as their own increased the alienation of many. In 1948, even before formation of the GDR, Communist administrators had abolished the elected factory councils spontaneously set up after the war to provide a representative voice with which workers could make their grievances known. Given the choice, workers had

tended to elect former Social Democrats or colleagues without party affiliation rather than Communists. As a result, the factory councils frequently proved troublesome obstacles to Communist administrators' efforts to accelerate production regardless of the burdens imposed upon those who provided the labor. The constitution of 1949 guaranteed workers the right to participate through trade unions in decisions regarding production, wages, and the conditions of work. But the unified labor union organization established after the war, the Free German Trade Union League, soon fell, like the SED itself, under Communist domination and became a mere organ of the regime rather than a genuine vehicle of the workers themselves.

Starting in 1951 officials of the SED-controlled trade unions began to present workers with Soviet-style plant contracts. By the terms of those contracts, the workers committed themselves "voluntarily" to increase output, often beyond even the level set by the five-year plan. Their pay was determined by production quotas set by the government, that is, by management. The quotas applied to groups of workers rather than individuals, with bonuses going to members of those groups that exceeded their quotas. This system was designed to provide workers with an incentive to spur on laggard colleagues.

So many workers protested vigorously—in some instances with work stoppages—against the rigorous production quotas set by the new plant contracts of 1951 that the regime had to revise many output schedules downward in order to reduce the labor requirements. In 1952 additional resistance from the workers brought still further concessions on quotas. Some quotas dropped below reasonable production expectations, enabling workers to augment their income substantially by routinely collecting the bonuses available for exceeding the prescribed levels of output. Instead of accurately reflecting the potentialities and limitations of production as originally intended by the planners, the quotas were being set by what amounted to informal bargaining between the regime and the workers in whose interest it claimed to rule.

Unwilling to accept the curtailment of rapid industrial growth which such concessions to workers entailed, Ulbricht and his associates embarked upon a hard-line course. At a party conference of the SED in July 1952 they arranged for adoption of a resolution proclaiming that conditions had reached a point that permitted the GDR to begin "the construction of socialism." In Communist terminology this meant more rapid development of basic industries at the expense of consumer-goods production and improvement in the standard of living. The conference also proclaimed that it was time to move ahead with the further collectivization of agriculture and the absorption of independent tradesmen, such as auto mechanics, plumbers, and other artisans, into cooperatives. In the coming phase of development, the conference warned, a heightening of class conflict would be unavoidable.

The Uprising of June 17, 1953

The course charted at the second party conference in July 1952 soon jeopardized the reign of Ulbricht and seems to have cast doubt, at least briefly, upon the viability of the GDR in the eyes of some of its Soviet patrons. Under heavy criticism from the SED for making too many concessions to workers in the past, the official labor union organization pressed for austerity in the operation of government-owned plants and for establishment of work quotas determined by the realities of productive capacity rather than by worker resistance. In practice, this meant a raising of quotas in the new plant contracts for 1953 and a resulting reduction of worker income. To enforce compliance, the regime instituted a number of show trials at which supervisory workers in government-owned plants were found guilty of sabotage for failing to meet the new production goals. In the countryside government officials exerted pressures designed to bring private farmers to turn their land over to collective farms. Some success was achieved, but the regime's harsh measures also accelerated the exodus to

the West. By the end of 1952, nearly 15,000 farmers and their families had fled, leaving about 13 percent of the GDR's arable land untended. As a consequence, food shortages developed.

The problems triggered by the regime's adoption of hard-line policies multiplied throughout late 1952 and early 1953. In attempting to cope with shortages of food, the authorities withdrew ration cards from those who earned their living independently, such as craftsmen, shopkeepers, repairmen, and other small businesspeople. To obtain vital foodstuffs such as butter, cooking oils, meat, and sugar they now had to pay the greatly inflated prices that prevailed outside the rationing system. By way of reducing demand for consumer goods and acquiring additional capital for acceleration of industrial investment, the regime raised prices and increased a number of taxes. A new wave of secret police arrests and political show trials, as well as a purge of Jews in the ranks of the SED on the charge of Zionist sympathies with Israel, added to the atmosphere of repression. The response of many was to flee. In the second half of 1952 some 110,000 East Germans registered as refugees in the West, whereas about 72,000 had done so during the first half, before adoption of the regime's new hard line. During the first half of 1953, some 225,000 followed, a figure that would swell to over 330,000—nearly 2 percent of the total population—by the end of the year. This loss of manpower led to a decline in tax revenues that added to the woes of the economy, and the regime fell behind its schedule for industrial growth.

This mounting crisis came to a head in the spring of 1953. At the time of Soviet dictator Stalin's funeral in March, Minister-President Otto Grotewohl sought to obtain aid from the USSR for the GDR's faltering economy, but in vain. Despite cautionary advice from the new leaders of the Kremlin, Ulbricht and his associates decided to toughen their already hard-line course, invoking Stalin's methods as justification. In mid-May the Central Committee of the SED denied any responsibility for the plight of the economy, blaming instead such "class enemies" as Trotskyites, Zionists, Free Masons, traitors, and morally degen-

erate individuals. By way of remedy, the Central Committee proposed an increase in work quotas on the average of 10 percent, which amounted to a wage cut of the same extent. At the end of May the Council of Ministers adopted the new quotas and scheduled them to take effect at the end of June, when festivities to celebrate Ulbricht's sixtieth birthday were planned.

Upon learning of these actions, the cautious new collective leadership in the Kremlin intervened and forced the SED regime to beat a retreat. Embarking in early June upon what became known as the New Course, the East Berlin regime rescinded many of the harsh measures of the previous year and promised to improve the living standard of the population. Investments in basic industrial projects were scaled back. Additional funds and resources were allocated to production of consumer goods. Foreclosures on farmland and other private property for delinquent taxes were halted. Credit, seeds, and farm machinery were offered as inducements to attract back farmers who had abandoned their land and fled to the West. Similar enticements were held out to owners who had been forced to close private businesses. Ration cards for foodstuffs once more became available to all citizens. Schools were again opened to students who had been expelled because of their families' political or religious views. Many of those imprisoned in the recent crackdowns were accorded amnesty. New and vigorous efforts to establish ties with West Germany and bring about reunification were pledged. In the course of announcing these measures in early June 1953, the regime confessed to having committed many "errors" in the past.

As did not go unnoticed by many workers in the GDR, the increase in work quotas scheduled to take effect at the end of June remained unaffected by the New Course. Any hope that this might have been an oversight seemed dashed on June 16, when the newspaper of the SED-controlled labor union organization published an editorial stating that the quotas must remain in effect. Despite pressure from Moscow for more moderate policies, the East Berlin regime thus stubbornly upheld the

one measure which more than any other had aroused the ire of the very workers whose interests it claimed to place above all else. The result was the uprising of June 17, 1953, the first attempt at revolt within the postwar Soviet bloc.

On the morning of June 16, members of the construction crews at work on the Soviet-style buildings going up along the boulevard Stalinallee in East Berlin laid down their tools. Joined by other workers along the way, they marched to the headquarters of the official labor union organization in the center of the city to protest against the regime's failure to rescind the new, higher work quotas. Finding the union headquarters tightly locked up, the procession of workers, which had by then grown to about 10,000, proceeded to the Council of Ministers building. When they discovered that its doors, too, were barred to them, the swelling crowd of workers stood outside and demanded in chants to speak with Ulbricht and Minister-President Otto Grotewohl.

As the situation grew increasingly tense during the early afternoon, the minister for heavy industry emerged from the beleaguered government building to announce that the new work quotas had been rescinded. The initially calming effect of that announcement was, however, dispelled when trucks bearing loudspeakers moved through the streets of East Berlin during the afternoon, broadcasting the text of an obscurely worded Politburo resolution that seemed to leave in question whether the quotas had in fact been rescinded. One of these trucks was commandeered by some of the demonstrators, who used its loudspeaker as the crowd dispersed to issue a call for a general strike the next morning. News of that development reached others in East Berlin that evening through a radio news broadcast from the American sector of the city.

On the morning of June 17, many workers in East Berlin declined to take up their tools. Instead, they gathered at their places of employment, elected strike committees, and marched to the government district, where they took over the city hall and surrounded the headquarters of the regime with a mass of

humanity. On the way into the city, they tore down the regime's ubiquitous propaganda posters and billboards. Through Western news broadcasts, workers elsewhere in the GDR learned of developments in East Berlin and joined the strike, which quickly spread to over 200 localities throughout the GDR, especially those where industrial workers were numerous.

Encountering no resistance, the demonstrators in East Berlin began to add political demands to the economic ones that had given rise to the strike. Some shouted that Ulbricht and Grotewohl must step down. Others called for free elections. As the day wore on with no resolution in sight, the crowds, swollen by spectators, some from West Berlin, grew increasingly unruly. The headquarters of the political police in East Berlin was ransacked and then burned. Still other buildings were seized and plundered. Fire was set to kiosks where regime-controlled newspapers and magazines were displayed for sale. Prisoners, including some common criminals, were released from jails. Police agents of the regime were mishandled and, in a few cases, killed. Elsewhere in the GDR similar incidents took place.

From the outset, the crowds lacked any coordinated leadership or practical goals. The demonstrators merely vented their anger on whatever representative or symbol of the regime they found at hand. As a consequence, the uprising had already begun to disintegrate when Russian troops and tanks appeared in East Berlin and other cities throughout the GDR during the afternoon of the seventeenth and dispersed the crowds, in some places forcibly. The next day, the SED regime found itself back in control, thanks to its Soviet patrons. According to official GDR statistics, 21 persons had died, but other evidence suggests a considerably higher toll of fatalities. Afterward, severe retribution followed from the side of the GDR, whose courts sentenced at least 18 persons to death and more than 1300 East Germans to prison terms, some for life.

The uprising dealt the Ulbricht regime a staggering moral and political blow. Officially, East Berlin portrayed the events of June 17 as the result of a fascist, imperialist plot on the part of

Washington and Bonn to overthrow the GDR and subjugate East German workers to capitalist exploitation. But the absurdity of that explanation was obvious to those in the GDR who had observed the uprising's spontaneous origins and the lack of any coordinated leadership. Also, the official version failed to explain the inactivity of the West during the uprising and the absence of any Western attempt to interfere with the suppression of the demonstrations by Red Army divisions stationed in the GDR. The official version omitted as well any explanation for the lack of resistance to the uprising among the East German workers who purportedly made up the backbone of the regime. Shortly after the event, the foremost Communist literary figure of East Germany, Bertolt Brecht, gave expression to the sentiments of many in a poem he secretly circulated among his acquaintances after publicly endorsing the regime's suppression of the uprising:

After the uprising of the 17th June
The Secretary of the Writers' Union
Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee
Stating that the people
Had forfeited the confidence of the government
And could win it back only
By redoubled efforts. Would it not be easier
In that case for the government
To dissolve the people
And elect another?

Paradoxically, the uprising of June 17, 1953, had the effect of strengthening the position of Walter Ulbricht and ensuring the survival of the GDR. On the eve of the event, there had been signs that the new leadership in Moscow was considering Ulbricht's replacement, since he had been the main source of resistance to Soviet pressure to modify the harsh policies adopted by the SED in 1952. During the uprising Ulbricht had proved indecisive and ineffectual. Afterward, however, the Russians apparently concluded that removal of the central figure in

the East German regime would be viewed as a sign of weakness. Ulbricht was therefore allowed to retain his dominant position.

Prior to the uprising, there had also been intimations that at least some of Stalin's successors in the Kremlin were giving consideration to sacrificing the GDR altogether in exchange for the neutralization and disarmament of Germany as a whole. After nearly five years, grounds certainly existed for doubting the viability of the East German regime and its economy. The danger must have seemed real that the GDR might become a burden instead of an asset for the USSR. But the decision to blame the mass upheaval of June 1953 on a Western plot made it difficult, if not impossible, for Moscow to open negotiations with the West over a new status for all of Germany. The purge, shortly after the uprising, of Lavrenti Beria, the member of the collective leadership in the Kremlin widely believed most inclined to abandonment of the GDR, further reduced the threat to its preservation. In the wake of that development, Ulbricht felt sufficiently emboldened to purge some of his leading critics from the Politburo of the SED. The justice minister, a former SPD member who had, just after the uprising, reaffirmed the constitutional right of workers to strike, was removed from office, expelled from the SED, and imprisoned. Just days after he had seemed doomed, Walter Ulbricht had emerged more fully in command than ever.

The New Course Gives Way to Renewed Repression

Although he remained skeptical about the New Course adopted at the prodding of Moscow's new leadership, Ulbricht upheld that policy line after suppression of the uprising. As a result, the GDR felt some of the effects of what came to be known as the post-Stalin thaw in the USSR. The non-Marxist political parties were allowed greater leeway, at least in their internal affairs. The campaign to dissuade people from attending church and enrolling their children for re-

ligious instruction was eased. Ideological constraints were somewhat relaxed so that artists and writers felt less pressure to conform to the formulas of "socialist realism." Despite his sometimes irreverent political utterances and his deviant views on drama, Brecht was assigned a theater in East Berlin for his repertory company and given considerable liberty in its direction. Other Communist intellectuals, among them the young social theorist Wolfgang Harich, began to ask whether the institutions and methods the GDR had taken over from the Stalinist USSR were suitable for realization of a society both socialist and democratic. Hopes for a more humane future that had been dashed a half decade earlier were rekindled.

The New Course also made itself felt in the economic sphere, as the regime recognized the unavailability of at least some material concessions to the inhabitants of the GDR in the wake of the uprising. Accordingly, priorities were altered to give greater attention to consumer goods, which resulted in a slowdown of investment in basic industries. Measures to force private farmers to join collectivized farms were suspended. So were efforts to force small private firms out of business. Many of the goals of the first five-year plan were in effect abandoned, although the regime would claim fulfillment of the plan in 1955.

The Russians, whose commitment to the GDR had been strengthened by the uprising, came to the aid of Ulbricht and his shaken regime. Previously, the Soviets had contributed to the economic problems of East Germany by extracting heavy reparations. Now they agreed to end all reparations by the beginning of 1954. For the first time, they wrote off debts and extended large-scale credit to East Germany, some of it in convertible currencies usable for purchases of needed resources and machines from the West. They also handed over 33 major industrial plants confiscated after the war and operated by the USSR since then to produce, by way of reparations, goods amounting to about 12 percent of the GDR's overall industrial output. Finally, Moscow reduced the payments imposed upon East Germany to cover the cost of the hundreds of thousands of Soviet troops stationed there.

In addition to this material aid, the USSR upgraded the GDR within the Soviet sphere of influence so as to make its international status appear comparable to that of the Federal Republic. Previously, as a part of the Germany which had invaded and devastated the USSR, the GDR had been relegated to a tightly circumscribed secondary status within the emergent Soviet bloc, so that the SED regime was denied the sort of recognition Moscow extended to its other satellites. Now, in the wake of the regime's survival of the 1953 uprising, that began to change. In March 1954 the USSR proclaimed the GDR a sovereign state. In May 1955 East Germany was included as a charter member in the Warsaw Pact, the Eastern alliance that linked the countries of the Soviet bloc under Russian leadership and subordinated their armed forces to Moscow. A National People's Army, a professional military force whose nucleus was provided by already armed People's Police units, officially came into being in March 1956. The GDR had become an integral part of the Eastern bloc's military system. Since 1950 East Germany had been integrated as well into that bloc's economic system through its trading organization, the Council for Mutual Economic Aid or Comecon. The adoption in 1959 of a new flag that differed from that of the Federal Republic through the superimposition of an emblem consisting of a hammer and draftsman's compass on the black, red, and gold stripes added symbolic emphasis to the regime's efforts to promote a sense of separate identity among the population.

The New Course did not last long in the economic sphere. Less than a year after the uprising, the regime began to shift its economic priorities once again toward rapid industrialization at the expense of wage-earning consumers. A second five-year plan, covering 1956–60, closely resembled the first plan in its overall thrust. Independent farmers once more came under pressure to turn over their land to agricultural collectives. Plumbers, mechanics, and other craftsmen found it increasingly difficult to maintain their independence, so that many joined the artisan cooperatives sponsored by the regime. Private businessmen encountered similar difficulties, with the result that increasing

numbers abandoned their businesses while others entered into joint ventures with government enterprises that put an end to their independence.

The regime also soon resumed its attacks on the churches. Beginning in 1954, membership in the official young people's organization became contingent upon participation in a secular "youth consecration" ceremony that amounted to a negation of religious values. The Protestant church, to which the vast majority of religious East Germans belonged, objected to the atheistic content of this ceremony, which the regime sought to make obligatory for all, and withheld religious confirmation from youths who participated. When the regime retaliated by denying admission to higher education to those who received religious confirmation, the church had to back down, however. In 1955 the educational authorities sought to diminish the influence of religion by banning Christian student groups from the universities. The SED regime also objected to the organizational links between the Protestant churches in the two Germanies, which served as a reminder of the country's past unity. The religious authorities resisted pressures to sever that link until 1969, when they finally gave in on that point and constituted the Eastern church as a separate body. But the quiet struggle of will between churchmen and the atheistic regime would continue throughout the duration of the GDR.

Ulbricht's stock soared in Moscow when the GDR proved impervious to the wave of rebelliousness that shook much of the Soviet bloc during 1956 and culminated in the bloody, unsuccessful Hungarian revolution that autumn. Thus strengthened, he settled scores with critics in the leadership of the SED who objected to his doctrinaire imposition of Soviet patterns on the GDR. Branding them as an "anti-party group," he succeeded in stripping those critics of their government and party offices and relegated them to insignificant positions. His dominance received formal expression in 1960 when he became chairman of a newly created National Defense Council. Later that year, following the death of President Wilhelm Pieck, he assumed chairman-

ship of a newly created State Council elected by, and responsible to, the People's Chamber. Through constitutional amendment, the presidency was abolished and its functions, along with others, were assigned to the State Council, making it the nerve center of the government apparatus that carried out the policies of the SED. After a decade of sometimes precarious dominance, Walter Ulbricht had secured for himself a position of what seemed unsailable paramountcy atop both party and government.

Repression also increased in the cultural and intellectual spheres. The campaign of de-Stalinization launched by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev had never appreciably curtailed the police-state apparatus of the SED regime, so that the crackdown amounted to only an intensification of standard practices. Still, heavy blows fell upon the intellectual community in the GDR. The social theorist Wolfgang Harich, who had become an admirer of Tito's heterodox Communist regime in Yugoslavia, was arrested in November 1956 and sentenced to ten years' imprisonment the following year for allegedly conspiring to alter the social order of the GDR by threat of force. Numerous less well known persons also went behind bars. For many artists and writers the regime's heightened insistence on conformity to the party line meant the end of hopes raised by the New Course. Some chose to stay on, even if, as in the case of writers, they could hope to make their works known only by smuggling them to the West. Some gave up and migrated westward, so that much promising creative talent was lost. Engineers, physicians, and scientists along with other highly skilled professionals also left as the migration of hundreds of thousands of East Germans to the Federal Republic via the open borders of Berlin continued throughout the latter part of the 1950s.

Despite the repressive methods of the Ulbricht regime, the GDR made notable progress economically. Sustained investment in basic industries began to yield results. Industrial and hand-craft production, which had accounted for 43.7 percent of the total in 1950, rose to 53 percent by 1960. Agricultural output, which had stood at 30.8 percent of the whole in 1950, shrank to

18 percent in the expanded economy of 1960. By 1958 the regime was able to end the last remnants of food rationing, but only by depressing demand through higher prices. Consumer goods became less difficult to find, although those available still often failed to please the public. By the latter part of the decade, the 45-hour workweek had become general in state industries, an achievement that paled only slightly in view of the fact that West German industrial workers had, with rare exceptions, already achieved the 40-hour workweek and enjoyed significantly greater purchasing power with which to choose from a larger selection of higher-quality goods. Such knowledge, along with antireligious measures and ideological repression, continued to feed the yearly exodus of thousands upon thousands of GDR residents to the West via the open borders in Berlin. During 1960 nearly 200,000 persons from East Germany officially registered with West German authorities as refugees, while an unknown number of others settled in the West without claiming that status.

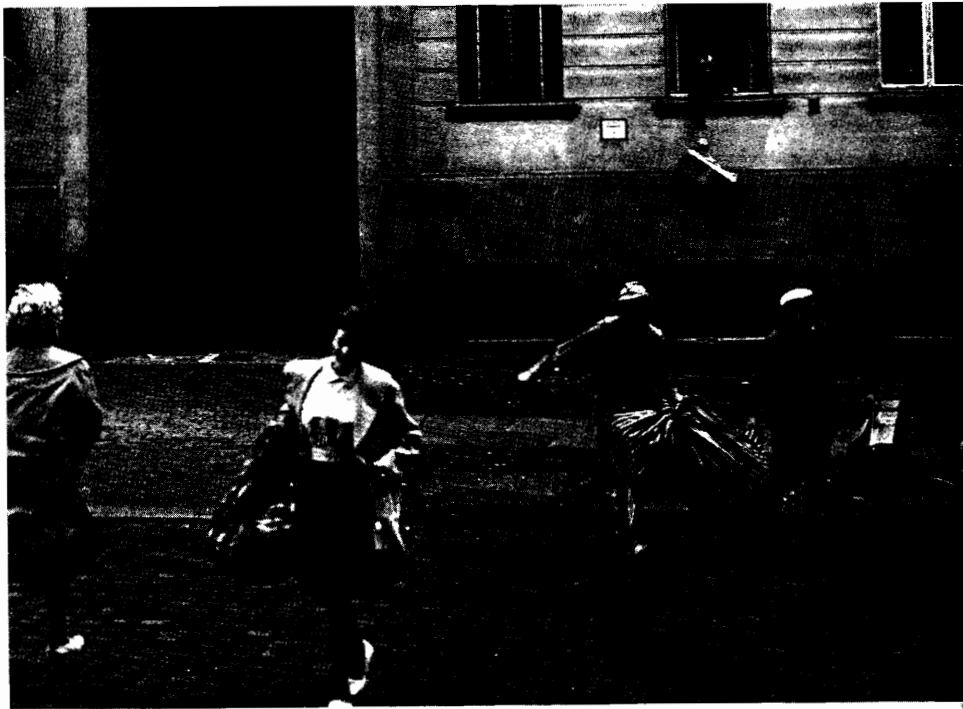
Increasingly, the ire of the Ulbricht regime focused on West Berlin. Simply by arriving there on foot or by public transportation from East Berlin, residents of the GDR could gain immediate recognition as West German citizens and fly to the Federal Republic, where a new life awaited them. This exodus imposed a costly drain on the Eastern economy, since most of those who left were young, skilled people. It also imposed limits on how much the regime could require of those who remained but had the ready option of leaving. For many years the regime appears to have seriously hoped to end the flow to the West by realizing its promises to provide a higher standard of living and a more just society than could be found in the Federal Republic. But by the late 1950s that goal seemed as remote as ever. The regime and its patrons in Moscow therefore focused their attention on Berlin in the knowledge that so long as the four-power status of the old German capital kept the border between East and West open, there would be no way to halt the outward flow of humanity that had become so damaging and embarrassing.

In November 1958 Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev issued an

ultimatum to Britain, France, the United States, and the Federal Republic: Unless the Berlin problem were solved within six months, the USSR would sign a peace treaty with the GDR and transfer to it responsibility for West Berlin, which Khrushchev claimed lay on the territory of the GDR. Surrounded by Soviet and East German troops, West Berlin would become a demilitarized "free city," emptied of occupying powers, and the West Germans would have to negotiate with the GDR (the existence of which Bonn did not recognize) for access to it. Conflict, possibly even war, between the USSR and the Western powers over Berlin seemed imminent. But when the West ignored Khrushchev's ultimatum, it proved a bluff, for the Soviets took no action against West Berlin. Instead, the Berlin crisis flared and subsided repeatedly at the verbal level over the next three years as the Russians issued new threats, each time occasioning concern about a great-power conflict over the former German capital.

The Berlin Wall

Within the GDR developments were taking shape that contributed to the climax of this second postwar Berlin crisis. Beginning in late 1959 the regime launched a massive drive to collectivize the remainder of privately owned farmland. By mid-1960 only a small fraction of those who had been independent farmers only months earlier retained title to their land. At least 15,000 deserted their farms and fled to the West rather than submit to collectivization. Their departure, along with the dislocations occasioned by a wholesale reorganization of much of the GDR's already collectivized agriculture, led to another major food shortage when the 1960 crops fell far short of expectations. That, in combination with another escalation of Khrushchev's threatening rhetoric about West Berlin in the spring and summer of 1961, produced a panicky flight from the GDR of persons fearing that the option to leave would soon disappear. The exodus reached proportions not seen since 1953. By the second week of August, more than



Refugees fleeing East Berlin through an apartment house at the border to West Berlin at the time of the Berlin Wall's construction by the East German regime in August 1961

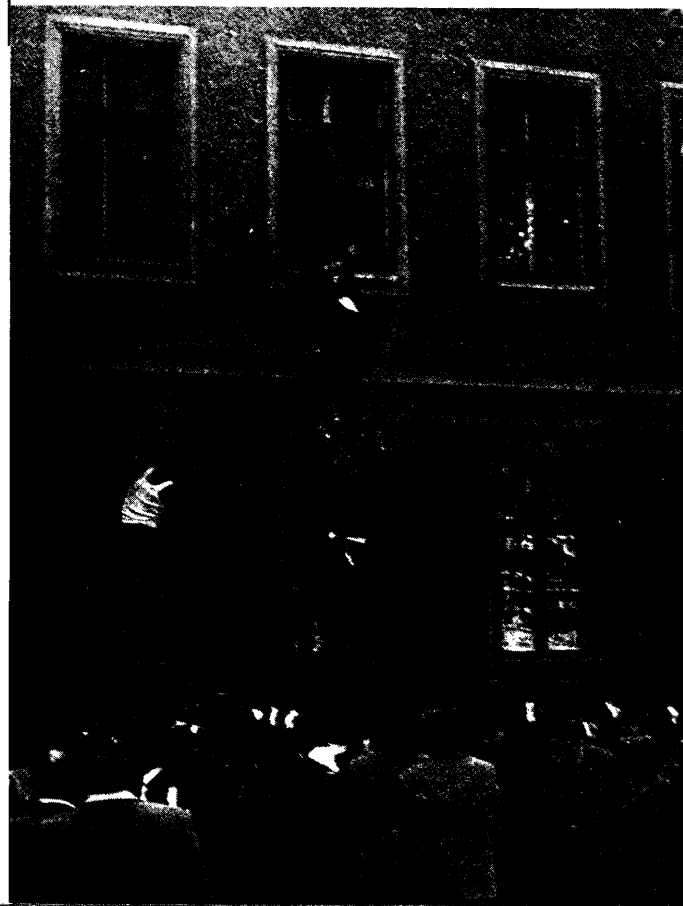
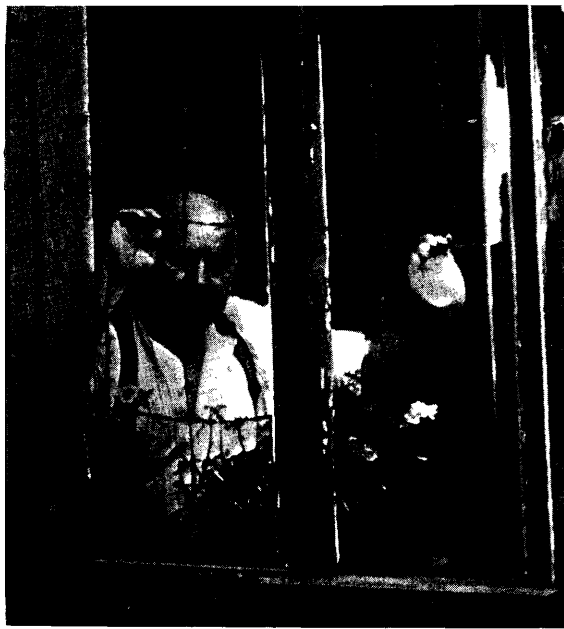
155,000 residents of the GDR had registered in the West as refugees since the beginning of 1961. That brought the total of those who had fled Communist rule since the end of the war to over three million, or one out of every six persons in the part of Germany occupied by the USSR in 1945.

At that point, in the early morning hours of August 13, 1961, the regime moved to stanch the population hemorrhage by sealing East Berlin off from West Berlin. Under the guns of the People's Police, workmen blocked with barbed wire entanglements the many street crossings between the two parts of the city. GDR guards permitted passage at only a handful of points, turning back all Germans from East and West who lacked the SED regime's permission to cross. The fortifications that would soon grow into the Berlin Wall went up all around West Berlin,

more than a hundred miles in length, sealing off access from the East. The few telephone lines in operation between East and West Berlin were severed. Transport between the two parts of the city by subway and elevated trains was closed down with the exception of one transit point, which was tightly policed by the East to prevent unauthorized departures to the West. In contrast to the blockade of 1948–49, no move was made to interfere with the overland transit routes or rail service between West Berlin and the Federal Republic. Military and civilian personnel of the occupying powers continued to pass between East and West Berlin, but only at a few crossing points.

During the weeks and months that followed erection of the wall the rest of the world was witness to numerous frantic escape attempts by East Germans. When buildings in East Berlin bordering on western parts of the city became escape routes, the doors and ground-floor windows were bricked up. Desperate East Germans then began leaping into West Berlin from upper-story windows and roofs, usually into nets held below by West Berlin firemen but sometimes to injury and even death. As a result, the buildings were sealed off entirely and then demolished. Soon the eastern side of the wall was rimmed by a desolate strip of land containing only multiple barbed wire fences, watchdog runs, searchlights, and towers manned by armed guards with instructions to shoot to kill anyone attempting to flee. Similar barriers were erected to bolster the GDR's border with the Federal Republic. Some East Germans managed to surmount these obstacles to reach the West, but others were shot by zealous border guards. Still others escaped through tunnels laboriously and secretly excavated beneath the wall in Berlin.

Escape became progressively more difficult and hazardous as the GDR authorities discovered gaps in their inward-facing fortifications and closed them. Desperate East Germans nevertheless continued to seek ways out. In 1962 West German authorities recorded 5,761 successful escapes, and in 1963 a high point of 6,692 was reached. Thereafter the number declined, reaching the level of a few hundred each year by the 1980s. The SED regime re-

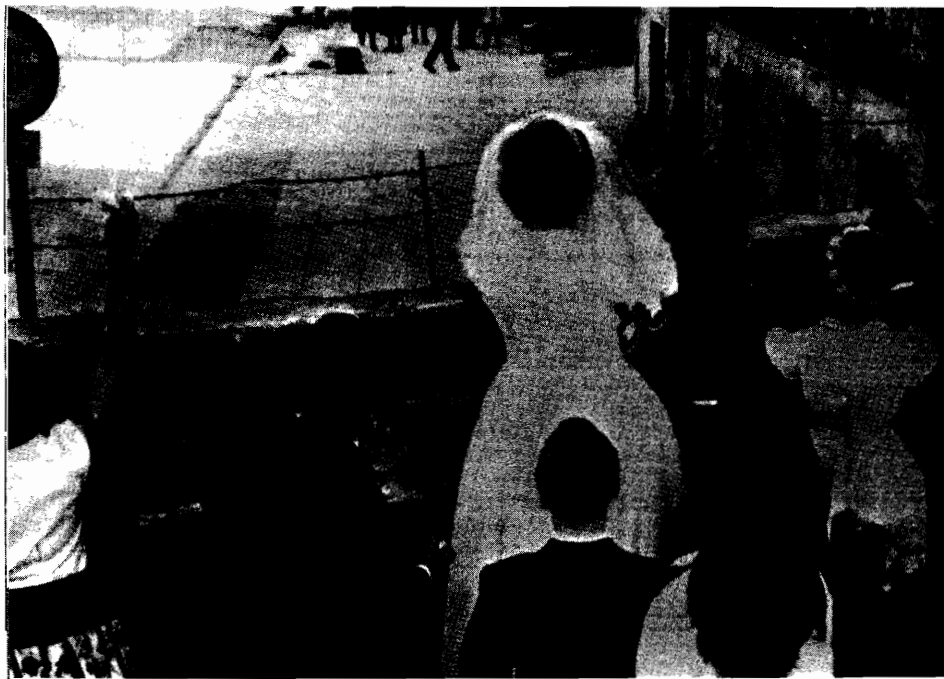


To thwart escape attempts after the closing of the border between East and West Berlin on August 13, 1961, the GDR authorities blocked with barbed wire the first-floor windows of apartment buildings in East Berlin that looked into West Berlin. When that failed to halt the flight, the windows were bricked up. Arbeitsgemeinschaft 13. August e.V.

In August 1961, after GDR authorities bricked up the first-floor windows of East Berlin buildings that looked into West Berlin, some East Berliners escaped through upper-floor windows by jumping into nets held, as here, by West Berlin firemen. The regime responded by sealing up the windows on all floors, but when would-be refugees continued to flee by jumping from the roofs—some to their deaths—the buildings were demolished altogether. Arbeitsgemeinschaft 13. August e.V.

Windows and doors of apartment houses at the border between East and West Berlin, bricked up by the East German regime to prevent their use by refugees as an escape route after construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961





A newly married couple waving to relatives across the Berlin Wall soon after its construction

leased no statistics on thwarted escapes, but gunfire as well as the explosion of land mines and other automatic explosive devices at the Berlin Wall and along the border with West Germany left little doubt that these were numerous. In all, more than two hundred East German citizens would die at the Berlin Wall and the fortifications along the GDR's border with the Federal Republic.

Construction of the Berlin Wall revealed that the Soviets had, at least for the time being, abandoned their designs on West Berlin and decided instead merely to allow the Ulbricht regime to contain the population of the GDR. In that, the move proved successful. When the Western powers failed to obstruct erection of the wall, the flood of refugees diminished to a trickle. The price was hardship for countless innocent persons. Thousands of fam-

ilies found themselves separated by an impassable barrier. Those with relatives on the opposite side could see them only by exchanging waves over the wall and across the no-man's-land on its eastern side that prevented approach by citizens of the GDR, now prisoners of their own government. By way of justifying its measures, the Ulbricht regime announced that construction of an "anti-fascist, protective wall" had proved necessary to halt infiltration by Western agents preparatory to a planned military assault on the GDR by West Germany. Observers noted, however, that the new fortifications were designed to thwart approach primarily from the East rather than from the West and that the Federal Republic had no troops in West Berlin.

The wall between East and West Berlin not only reduced the flood of refugees but also represented a step toward solution of another major problem of the Ulbricht regime. Previously, its capital in East Berlin lay, legally speaking, outside of the territory of the GDR, which comprised what had been the Soviet occupation zone. This anomalous situation existed because of the four-power status of the old German capital under the terms of the occupation agreements. The Russians had continued to respect at least some of those agreements in order to assert their occupation rights in West Berlin, which included providing military guards for a Soviet war memorial and a prison for Nazi war criminals, both in the British sector of the city. They had therefore hitherto restrained the GDR from incorporating East Berlin into its territory, even though in actuality the USSR had long since turned over administration of its sector of the city to the Ulbricht regime. With the construction of the wall, the regime could now, with the permission of the Soviets (who nevertheless continued to exercise their rights in West Berlin), lay claim to authority over its own capital city.

That claim was promptly recognized by the other Communist-ruled countries, but the Americans, British, and French refused to do so. They made a point of asserting their rights throughout the old capital by sending into East Berlin Western occupation personnel who refused to recognize the authority of



American tanks (foreground) confronting Soviet tanks (above) at Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin following the East German regime's erection of the wall separating the two parts of the former German capital in 1961

East German border officials and would deal only with Russians. When the Russians absented themselves at the border, the Western powers acquiesced to the extent of allowing their officials to show their credentials to GDR guards through closed car windows upon entering East Berlin. During the winter of 1961–62 this situation brought the world perilously close to a war between the superpowers when altercations at Checkpoint Charlie, the principal crossing point between the two parts of the city for western vehicles, led to a prolonged confrontation of American and Soviet tanks separated only by a few dozen yards of pavement. In the end, however, a modus vivendi was worked out, and the tension subsided. Henceforth the SED regime governed East Berlin as an integral part of the GDR, despite the

Western powers' continuing assertion that it legally remained under four-power occupation. The Berlin crisis, which originally had arisen with regard to the status of West Berlin, thus ended in at least partial alleviation of the handicap posed for the GDR by the special status of East Berlin.

While the Berlin Wall exacted a heavy toll in human misery and became the scene of numerous escape attempts that ended in death, its construction facilitated stabilization of the GDR. Previously, the regime had been forced, by its need for labor, to tolerate a great deal of complaining and malingering in order to minimize defections to the West. Now it could crack down on dissent without fear of such consequences. Slacking on the job in government-run enterprises became a punishable crime, and prison sentences were imposed upon some convicted of that offense, obviously as an example to others. In factories and other places of work throughout the GDR, the SED orchestrated "discussions" designed to identify malcontents and convince them of the error of their ways. Party activists began a campaign to effect "voluntary" increases in work quotas, which rose on the average of 5 percent within months. Brigades of Free German Youth groups identified television antennas aimed toward Western transmitters and put pressure on their owners to reorient them to receive only the programs of the SED-controlled channels. Ideological constraints on the arts and scholarship were again tightened. The wall also made it possible to strengthen the GDR militarily, for with the escape route through West Berlin sealed off, the regime could for the first time institute conscription for the National People's Army without fear that draftees would flee westward. A law to that effect, obliging all able-bodied young men to perform military service for eighteen months, took effect in January 1962. Beginning in 1964, those unwilling to bear arms for reasons of conscience were allowed to serve in army construction units. No alternative civilian service similar to that in the West was permitted, and those who refused to don a military uniform became subject to prosecution and imprisonment.



The Berlin Wall

The New Economic System and the Second Constitution

The effects of the wall soon became evident in the economic sphere. For the first time, the regime could make labor allocations for the economy without having to reckon with the constant, yet unpredictable, loss of skilled workers and supervisors. No longer would an appreciable part of its investment in education drain away, since the option for young people to leave for jobs in the West after completing their schooling in the East had, except for the most venturesome and determined few, disappeared.

After this stabilization of the labor force, the regime struggled with a succession of experiments in an effort to extract better performance from the economy. In 1962 it announced abandonment

of a seven-year plan which had been launched with great fanfare in 1959 with the goal of nearly doubling production in key sectors of industry but which had fallen far behind schedule. In an effort to eliminate the heavy-handed inflexibility of the central planning system, Ulbricht in 1963 proclaimed implementation of a New Economic System (which he renamed the Economic System of Socialism four years later). Far greater discretionary authority than ever before was assigned to individual productive plants, whose performance was now measured in terms of profitability rather than the mere quantity of goods produced. Managers of those plants no longer had to accept whatever materials and equipment the plan assigned to them but could shop for the best available quality and the most favorable terms. Plants in the same sectors of production were encouraged to join together to form "socialist concerns" that would cooperate to increase output. Market mechanisms such as interest rates and prices that at least partially reflected supply and demand were introduced in an effort to provide some self-regulation of the economy. The role of central planning was to be restricted, according to the new system, to establishment of overall goals and allocation of scarce materials. Individual managers whose plants registered profits received bonuses and extra vacations. The New Economic System proved difficult to manage, and the constant adjustments it required kept the administrative organs in turmoil. But it did loosen up the rigid bureaucratic structure of the East German economy somewhat and encourage individual initiative and innovation on the part of managers of state-owned plants.

The New Economic System never functioned as envisioned, but it did work well enough to produce what came to be known as the "other German economic miracle." During the 1960s the industrial economy of the GDR became, in terms of per capita productivity, the strongest in the Eastern bloc. The peak achievements came in the period 1964–67, when the regime claimed a growth rate in national income of 5 percent and in industrial output of 7 percent. Although those figures were regarded in the West as inflated, virtually all observers were im-

pressed at the performance of the GDR's economy. In terms of the standard of living, the GDR outstripped the USSR and its client states in Eastern Europe. Basic foods became available at prices wage-earners could afford, although the centralized distribution system still gave rise to annoying shortages from time to time.

Even though the GDR still lagged behind the Federal Republic in the production of consumer goods, it began to appease the hunger of its citizens for material conveniences. Whereas in the 1950s private automobiles had been virtually unknown, by 1969, when 47 percent of the households in the Federal Republic owned a car, 14 percent in the GDR had acquired a vehicle despite inflated prices and waiting periods of years for delivery. Only 6 percent of East German households had possessed refrigerators in 1960, but by 1969 the figure had risen to 48 percent, as compared to 84 percent in West Germany. Also by 1969, 48 percent of households in the GDR owned washing machines, whereas the figure for the Federal Republic was 61 percent. Two-thirds of East German households, as contrasted to nearly three-quarters in the West, had acquired television sets by that time.

Increased access to television created problems for the SED regime, as it brought with it in most parts of the GDR exposure to broadcasts from West Berlin and the Federal Republic. The attempts of the regime to discourage viewers from watching Western broadcasts soon proved in vain. In addition to giving East Germans an alternative source of information about the world, those broadcasts provided compelling visual reminders of the extent to which the economy of the GDR lagged behind that of the West in the production of affordable consumer goods. That in turn served as a goad to the SED regime to make more and better goods available.

East Germans also became better dressed and enjoyed more leisure time. More clothing than ever before was produced, and both the quality and the range of choice grew. With the workweek reduced to five days in state industries by 1967, people now had

more time to enjoy the fruits of their labors. In terms of the hours of work necessary to pay for consumer items, however, citizens of the GDR still had to toil considerably longer for what they acquired than did West Germans, who continued to enjoy a greater choice among better-quality goods. The length of vacations was also increased, but for citizens of the GDR vacation trips abroad still had to be limited to Soviet-bloc countries. The prohibition on travel to Western countries, including West Berlin and the Federal Republic, became a source of chronic discontent.

After a crackdown on dissenters and deviationists following the erection of the Berlin Wall, the regime somewhat relaxed its controls over artists and writers during the 1960s. The Stalinist style of architecture gave way to venturesome experiments with what was known in the West as "the international style." Abstract works of art and experimental theater found greater toleration. Some interesting books and plays came out of an undertaking endorsed by Ulbricht at a writers' gathering in the town of Bitterfeld in 1959. This "Bitterfeld movement" called upon writers to experience the lot of workers by laboring for a time in factories or on collective farms before writing about contemporary life. The movement also sought to encourage workers to take up writing themselves, but little came of that.

For a brief period, talented and serious writers in the GDR found the regime willing to allow them to deal with life there honestly. Symptomatic was the novel *Divided Heaven*, published in 1963 by Christa Wolf. It gave expression to the painful dilemmas that honest, hard-working East Germans faced in deciding whether or not to flee to the West, and also accurately depicted some of the shortcomings in the GDR that had led so many to leave. Wolf's book, along with some others by younger East German writers, quickly won acclaim in both parts of Germany. By late 1965, however, another of the recurrent ideological freezes began to set in. Venturesome writers again encountered difficulties in getting their works published in the GDR or ran afoul of the regime's ideological watchmen when they expressed themselves in heterodox fashion. Much of the best writ-

ing produced in East Germany could still be published only in the Federal Republic.

By the latter half of the 1960s Walter Ulbricht dominated the GDR as never before. As first secretary of the SED, chairman of the State Council and of the National Defense Council, he brought together in his hands the key posts in the one-party dictatorship. By using his control of personnel matters in the SED to reward those loyal to him, he ensured the subservience to him of the "nomenklatura," the privileged elite which filled the top party and government jobs.

Ulbricht also began to assert a claim to ideological leadership in the Communist world. In 1967 he formulated a new interpretation of what was known in Marxist-Leninist doctrine as "socialism." Soviet theoreticians had long held that socialism would prove a brief transitional phase between the class-conflict-ridden society of capitalism and the future classless society of communism, in which the state would wither away. Ulbricht challenged that position by contending that socialism—which the GDR claimed to be constructing—amounted to a distinct phase of history in its own right. It could be expected—along with a continuing role for the state—to last for some time, he asserted. His version had the virtue of providing an explanation for the persistence of socioeconomic inequalities and the continuing dominance of the bureaucracy. Not content with speaking out independently on doctrinal matters customarily left to Moscow, he also suggested that the GDR could serve as a model for other Communist-ruled countries, another role previously reserved for the USSR. In boasting that East Germany had achieved a "developed socialist society," Ulbricht seemed to infer that the GDR had surpassed the other countries in the Soviet bloc, including the "motherland of the revolution."

By 1968 Ulbricht felt sufficiently secure to seek institutionalization of his rule through adoption of a new constitution for the GDR. That document reflected the many changes in governmental structure that had taken place since 1949, when the first constitution had been put into effect. The new document aban-

doned the fiction that the GDR was a politically neutral, democratic entity. Instead, it proclaimed the GDR to be "a socialist state of the German nation." The SED-controlled National Front received constitutional recognition as the sole organ through which the political parties and so-called mass organizations shaped the development of socialist society. The parliament, the People's Chamber, remained, but the new document contained nothing that would enable it to function as anything other than the obedient rubber stamp of the SED it had always been. The provision in the 1949 constitution for elections by proportional representation disappeared, so that the unity list system of balloting no longer violated the constitution. The Council of Ministers, the cabinet installed by the People's Chamber, was downgraded, becoming an organ for the implementation of policy. The head of the cabinet no longer enjoyed the title minister-president, becoming merely chairman of the Council of Ministers. At the top of the government the new constitution placed the Council of State, the body which Ulbricht had chaired since its founding in 1960. Its chairman and his deputies were to be installed by vote of the People's Chamber. Policy-making authority resided with it rather than with the Council of Ministers. The Council of State was to represent the GDR internationally and nominate the chairman of the Council of Ministers. Between the infrequent and brief sessions of the People's Chamber, the Council of State was empowered to carry out "all fundamental tasks."

The most striking feature of the 1968 constitution lay in its elimination or diminution of the generous guarantees of citizens' rights contained in the old constitution. While the new document echoed the earlier assurances about freedom of speech, the press, peaceful assembly, and religious practice, it qualified those freedoms with the proviso that they must be exercised in harmony with the principles of the new constitution. In practice, that proviso enabled the regime to restrict freedom in those spheres whenever it chose. The right to emigrate disappeared altogether. So did the right to strike. Work now became not only a right but also a duty. The regime-con-

trolled trade unions achieved constitutional recognition as the sole permissible organs for representation of workers. In these and other provisions the realities of Walter Ulbricht's GDR found expression in the constitution of 1968. Put to the populace in a referendum, it received, according to official statistics, a surprisingly low affirmative vote by GDR standards: 94.5 percent. In East Berlin the figure was only 90.9 percent.

During the so-called Prague Spring of 1968, when Communist reformers in Czechoslovakia ended censorship and began to dismantle that country's system of closed bureaucratic rule, Ulbricht's regime consistently attacked the reformers across its southern border and cowed sympathizers at home. When, in August 1968, the USSR put an end to the Czech experiment by instigating a Warsaw Pact invasion, East German troops marched across that border and took part in the occupation alongside troops from the Soviet Union and its client states in Eastern Europe. Under Ulbricht's leadership the GDR seemed to have developed into a model "people's democracy," unshakably loyal to the USSR.

Despite the apparently unassailable position that Ulbricht had come to occupy atop the GDR by 1968, he fell from power only three years later. The grounds for his removal were shrouded in the secrecy with which the Communists of East Germany and the Soviet Union cloaked their political affairs, but a number of factors seem to have played a role. At home, Ulbricht's policies gave rise to uneasiness within the leadership of the SED. His increasing allocation of authority to the Council of State, an organ of the government, appears to have aroused apprehension among party officials, for whom that development represented a threat to the political paramountcy of the SED over the state. In the economic sphere Ulbricht's championship of greater autonomy for the technical managers who directed the factories and other units of the economy that actually produced goods seems to have produced similar dissatisfaction in the upper reaches of the SED, which had been accustomed to party control over economic policy. A different sort of concern

arose from Ulbricht's growing preoccupation with achieving a dramatic technological breakthrough that would permit the GDR to leapfrog beyond the Federal Republic economically. His pursuit of that goal involved the diversion of a mounting portion of the regime's investment capacity into ambitious research and development projects in new fields such as cybernetics, an undertaking which many in the SED hierarchy regarded as wasteful and unrealistic. Setbacks in other areas of the economy further heightened doubts about the party leader's judgment.

Although difficulties at home may have facilitated Ulbricht's removal, a great deal of evidence indicates that he ultimately fell because he had lost favor with his patrons in Moscow. His claim to originality in the sphere of ideology, as expressed in his theory of a distinctly socialist phase of history, seems to have proved offensive to some in the leadership of the USSR, which had grown accustomed to unchallenged ideological preeminence in the Soviet bloc. Ulbricht's attempts to present the GDR as a model for other Communist-ruled countries appears also to have encountered hostility in the ruling circles of the USSR. Still another factor in Moscow's disenchantment with Ulbricht apparently lay in his ill-concealed misgivings about the implications for the GDR of the thaw in relations between the USSR and the Federal Republic that set in at the end of the 1960s.

When the Soviet axe finally fell in the spring of 1971, the seventy-eight-year-old Ulbricht was permitted a dignified exit. In a speech before the Central Committee of the SED in May 1971 he requested to be relieved of his position as head of the party on grounds of failing health. Stripped of his power although allowed to retain the title of chairman of the Council of State, he died in obscurity in 1973. Only forty-eight days after his demise, following a period of conspicuous hesitancy, did the new regime in the GDR provide a state funeral for the man who, more than any other, had shaped East Germany and preserved it against the many perils that beset it during its early years. In the official announcements, no mention appeared of the presence at the funeral of a Soviet representative.

4 Two Decades of Christian Democratic Leadership in the Federal Republic

The Ascendancy of Konrad Adenauer

In contrast to the manipulated electoral process in the East, voters in the first election for a West German Bundestag could choose among an array of genuinely competing parties. On election day in August 1949, 78.5 percent of the eligible voters took part in the first fully free balloting beyond the regional level since 1932. When the results were tallied, close to a dozen political parties had gained representation in the new Bundestag. Only a few of these were strong enough to become politically significant. The largest bloc of seats, 139, went to the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian affiliate, the Christian Social Union (CSU). Next in strength came the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) with 131 seats. The Free Democratic Party (FDP) gained 52. Two regional parties, the Bavarian Party and the German Party (which found its principal support in the northern part of the country), captured 17 seats each. The Communists won 15 seats. The remaining 31 were scattered among splinter parties.

The central issue of this crucial election campaign was the economic system already established in Bizonia and then extended to Trizonia, which basically relied on free enterprise. The venerable SPD, the party with the largest membership and the most fully developed organization, criticized that system as a return to a discredited past and called for extensive socialization of the economy. At a time when the shock of the sweeping expropriations carried out in the Soviet zone in the name of socialism was still fresh, this stand proved a handicap to efforts by the Social Democrats to supplement their traditional blue-collar constituency with middle-class support. The young CDU/CSU, which had abandoned its early receptivity to at least some socialization, identified itself with the existing economic system, which its leadership had largely shaped. The CDU/CSU captured most Catholic voters, who made up roughly half of the electorate, including many wage-earners, but in parts of the country it also fared well with Protestants. With a following that spanned employees and employers, farmers and urban middle-class persons, the CDU/CSU had emerged as a "people's party" that transcended the barriers of class and religion that had traditionally fragmented the German party system. The third-strongest party, the FDP, held to classical liberal, laissez-faire economic principles, defended the rights of the individual in all spheres, and opposed the religious involvement in public education fostered by the CDU/CSU. The FDP's votes came mainly from middle-class Protestants, particularly from businessmen and professionals, for whose support it competed with the CDU/CSU.

The composition of the first cabinet of the Federal Republic proved of decisive importance for its formative years. As quickly became apparent, the SPD's socialistic economic program ruled out a coalition between that party and the FDP. The Social Democratic leadership therefore favored a cabinet based on a so-called grand coalition of SPD and CDU/CSU that would command an overwhelming majority in the Bundestag. A similar coalition had shaped the postwar Austrian republic, and some

Christian Democratic leaders favored such an arrangement in West Germany, too. Within the CDU/CSU, however, those prevailed who favored a narrower majority based on a coalition consisting of the CDU/CSU, the FDP, and the German Party. The SPD thus became the opposition. With the help of the CDU/CSU, the FDP's candidate, Theodor Heuss, who had sat as a liberal democratic deputy in the parliament of the Weimar Republic, was elected the first federal president. On Heuss's nomination, Konrad Adenauer of the CDU then received the absolute majority in the Bundestag necessary for election as chancellor on the first ballot by a margin of one vote—his own.

At the time of his election, the seventy-three-year-old Adenauer was widely expected to serve only as a stop-gap chancellor who would soon give way to a younger successor. Yet he was to execute that office vigorously for fourteen years, two years longer than Hitler had headed his Third Reich and as long as the entire duration of the Weimar Republic. A Rhineland, Adenauer was a product of the German Catholic political tradition and a veteran of the Catholic Center Party of the pre-Nazi period. He had become lord mayor of his hometown of Cologne during the last years of the Empire and held that post until the Nazis ousted him in 1933. Although he had occupied a seat in the Weimar Republic's Reichsrat (the precursor of the Bundesrat) and had briefly been considered for the chancellorship in 1926, he had remained a provincial politician. His career seemed terminated by the Third Reich, when he retired to his country home. But in 1945 the British, in whose occupation zone Cologne lay, reinstated him in the city hall, only to dismiss him within months because of insubordination. That dismissal freed Adenauer to play a key role in the formation of the CDU and enabled him to build a political following throughout the Western zones of occupation. He gained further recognition when he chaired, by virtue of his seniority, the Parliamentary Council that drew up the Basic Law. Once installed in the chancellorship, Adenauer assumed firm command and in countless ways influenced the formative stages of the new Western republic. A



Ludwig Erhard, West German economics minister (1949–63) and chancellor (1963–66), with Konrad Adenauer (chancellor, 1949–63)

shrewd but undramatic person, he provided an authoritative yet low-key leadership that corresponded to the needs of a people who had so recently experienced a disastrous regime that ceaselessly indulged in theatrics and sought in every conceivable way to whip up fanaticism. Most West Germans proved ready to rely upon the calm, grandfatherly figure who soon became popularly known as “the old man” (*der Alte*).

By appointing Ludwig Erhard as his economics minister, Adenauer set the course for the Federal Republic's economic and social development. As chief architect of the economic policies of Bizonia and, later, Trizonia, Erhard had rejected demands for a planned economy and a government takeover of basic industries put forward by the Social Democrats and echoed even by some Christian Democrats during the early postwar years. He insisted

that economic planning would inevitably spawn a crushing bureaucracy that would stifle individual initiative and impose, through its cost, a drain on resources better applied to productive purposes. Developments in East Germany, which was following just such a course at the expense of the population's standard of living, lent force to Erhard's analysis. Instead of a government-administered economy, he advocated what came to be known as *soziale Marktwirtschaft*, which can best be translated as welfare-state capitalism. His formula left the means of production in private hands and allowed market mechanisms to set price and wage levels. The prospect of profit, Erhard maintained, provided the best incentive for efficiency and productivity. He recognized, however, that not everyone had an equal opportunity to partake of profit. He therefore advocated governmental intervention through welfare-state measures to assure an equitable distribution of the productivity generated by the pursuit of profit. Otherwise, his formula called for government to limit itself to indirect influence on economic activity through the sort of monetary, taxation, and trade measures common to Western countries.

In line with Erhard's formula, the new government adhered to a policy of liberating private enterprise from most of the restrictions imposed upon it by the Third Reich and the occupation regime. Tax laws and other forms of legislation affecting business were rewritten to encourage investment and risk-taking. In an effort to assure open and fair competition, the Federal Republic departed from the practice of past German governments by attempting to combat cartels and other business combinations designed to limit production and manipulate prices. Direct government participation in the economy was kept to a minimum. Indirectly, government played a major role, however, through promotion of international competition by means of liberalized tariffs and other policies facilitating foreign trade.

Along with these steps to promote free enterprise came measures that soon made the Federal Republic into one of the world's most elaborate and encompassing welfare states. Build-

ing upon a tradition that reached back to Bismarck's time, government social insurance coverage was expanded for the elderly, the disabled, and the unemployed. A comprehensive system of government-regulated health insurance provided the ill with medical attention and hospitalization. Government subsidies helped with the cost of providing for children and supplemented the rental payments of those who could not otherwise afford decent housing. Generous public financing of privately built apartment buildings spurred the rapid construction of desperately needed dwellings to replace those destroyed or damaged by the war. To correct inequalities resulting from the war, inflation, and the takeover of eastern German territories by Poland and the Soviet Union, "burden-sharing" legislation enacted in 1952 transferred purchasing power from those who had emerged from the upheavals of the recent past economically unscathed to those who had suffered severe losses because of events beyond their control. In terms of the percentage of gross national product allocated by the government to such welfare-state measures, the Federal Republic ranked at the forefront internationally among the world's democracies, alongside the Scandinavian countries.

The Economic Miracle

The application of Erhard's formula of welfare-state capitalism produced such a rapid and sweeping recovery that it became known as the West German *Wirtschaftswunder* or economic miracle. The foundations had been laid during the interval of Bizonia and Trizonia, when Erhard had begun to shape the Western economy. The removal of most price controls after the monetary reform of 1948 brought a flood of goods onto the market, where long-deprived consumers eagerly sought them. The stability of the new currency, which was controlled by an autonomous central bank (soon to be named the Bundesbank) spurred saving and investment. Large-scale infusions of American aid under the Marshall Plan supple-

mented domestic capital formation. The flow of refugees from the East provided an abundant reservoir of labor to replace war-time losses. In a new spirit of cooperation, organized labor and management collaborated to reduce the loss of productivity through strikes to a level far below that of other West European countries. Restraint on the part of the trade unions with regard to wages helped to keep the price of German goods highly competitive in international markets. Added stimulation came from the so-called Korean War boom that began in 1950. To the astonishment of virtually everyone, a West Germany whose factories had sat idle only a few years earlier quickly emerged once more as a beehive of productive economic activity. Overall output (*Brutto-sozialprodukt*) leapt upward at an average annual rate of 8.2 percent in the years 1950–54 and 7.1 percent in the years 1955–58.

The economic miracle transformed the lives of the Federal Republic's citizens. West Germans again had enough to eat and could afford new clothes, shoes, and household goods. Millions of new housing units replaced those destroyed or damaged in the war and provided living quarters for the newcomers who had swelled the population as refugees from the East. Glittering new urban centers rose from the rubble of war. Labor-saving electrical household appliances became widely available. With a rush, Germany entered the automotive age. Before the war it had lagged behind other major industrial countries in that respect, as passenger cars had remained luxury items reserved for the well-to-do; now they became available to millions, in part as a result of the success of the mass-produced, low-cost Volkswagen. To facilitate auto travel, construction went forward on the system of divided highways begun during the late Weimar Republic and continued with great fanfare by the Third Reich. Between 1949 and 1966 production of passenger cars increased more than twenty-seven-fold, enabling the Federal Republic to produce annually over ten times as many vehicles as had the whole of Germany in 1937. During that same period, industrial production increased six times over, attaining a level well above that of 1937.

This startling increase in productivity resulted in part from the wholesale substitution of new and advanced industrial machinery for older equipment lost through bombing or seized as reparations. Paradoxically, whereas the victorious countries remained saddled with much outmoded industrial plant, the West Germans enjoyed the competitive advantages of standing at the technological forefront. Exports, encouraged by liberal trade policies and priced advantageously because of tight monetary practices that prevented inflation, skyrocketed during the 1950s. By the end of the decade, the Federal Republic ranked second only to the United States in world trade, with a share considerably exceeding that of the much larger interwar Reich. This enabled West Germany not only to pay for the imported food and raw material on which it was dependent but also to accumulate one of the world's largest currency reserves. The size of that reserve eventually occasioned complaints from other countries, which objected to the influx of inexpensive German imports, and in 1961 the Federal Republic revalued its currency upward by 5 percent, thus raising the price of German goods abroad.

Not all citizens of the Federal Republic benefited immediately from the economic miracle. The government's tight-money policies and its refusal to assume a direct role in the economy through large-scale expenditures on public works contributed, during the early years, to a high level of unemployment that was exacerbated by a continuing flow of refugees from the East. The Social Democratic opposition accused the Adenauer government of using joblessness to depress wages by keeping workers reluctant to strike for pay increases because of the risk of losing their jobs to unemployed persons. The government held to the position that large-scale intervention to create jobs would either give rise to ruinous inflation or impose such a heavy tax burden on the economy as to stifle recovery. The best cure for unemployment, Economics Minister Erhard insisted, lay in sound growth that would generate jobs for all. By the late 1950s Erhard was claiming vindication, for the Federal Republic was ap-



The Kurfurstendamm in West Berlin, with the ruins of a church preserved as a reminder of the devastation of war, reflected the prosperity of the West German "economic miracle"

proaching full employment. With demand for labor outstripping supply at home, West Germany began recruiting "guest workers," first from Southern Europe, later from Turkey. But for some West Germans, the rewards of recovery came slowly and late.

Other critics found additional grounds for misgivings about the economic miracle. The need to rebuild a devastated country seemed to some an opportunity to construct a new and more just economic and social order. They hoped to see reduced, if not eliminated, the inequalities which had in the past set Germans against each other and poisoned the political atmosphere. Those who harbored such hopes saw them dashed by the Adenauer government. By relying on free enterprise and abstaining from extensive direct participation in the economy, the government in effect reestablished the traditional relationship between

capital and labor. Only a few fundamental reforms were effected in the socioeconomic sphere.

One such reform, "codetermination," involved granting employees a voice in the management of private firms. Far-reaching steps in that direction were vigorously advocated by the German Trade Union League. That organization, which encompassed most organized wage-earners in the Federal Republic, had been formed after the war by a merger of the socialist, Christian, and liberal trade union movements which had competed with each other, sometimes acrimoniously, prior to their suppression by the Nazis. In 1951 the unions brought the Adenauer cabinet to abandon its opposition to codetermination by threatening a mass strike. The resulting Codetermination Law was patterned on arrangements earlier introduced into the steel industry of the Ruhr by the British occupation authorities at the direction of the postwar Labour government. By the terms of the 1951 law, representatives of workers in West German coal and steel companies with more than a thousand employees would henceforth hold a number of seats equivalent to those of stockholders' spokesmen on the supervisory boards which exercised ultimate corporate authority over those firms. An additional seat would be set aside for a supervisory board member acceptable to both sides. In addition, worker representatives would hold one seat on the managing boards that served as the executive bodies of firms in the coal and steel industries.

The adoption of the 1951 law did not resolve the question of codetermination. Strong forces within the German Trade Union League pressed for its extension to all industries, but, at the urging of the business community, the Adenauer government balked. In 1952 the government did, by supporting adoption of a Factory Constitution Law, require a measure of codetermination from all joint-stock corporations. By the terms of that law, however, labor was limited to a third of the seats on supervisory boards in industries other than coal and steel, which meant that representatives of stockholders could always outvote them. The

Factory Constitution Law established, in addition, works councils elected by employees of all but the smallest of firms. In consultation with management, these councils were to resolve problems affecting the workplace other than those covered by the basic terms of collective-bargaining contracts. As works councils received no direct voice in management, they were dismissed as a palliative by the frustrated advocates of thoroughgoing codetermination. The councils nevertheless often proved an effective device for reducing friction between management and labor.

While most West Germans were busy with material reconstruction, others worked to revive their country's rich cultural heritage. Almost as soon as the fighting ceased, orchestral concerts and theatrical productions resumed before packed houses in often damaged and unheated buildings. After twelve years of a dictatorship that had proscribed much fine music, art, and literature as racially tainted or politically subversive, a thirst for the forbidden became evident. Jazz was again performed and abstract art displayed. Plays and books by emigré German authors and translations of foreign works were in great demand. Distinguished exiles like the writer Thomas Mann were entreated to visit the homeland that had rejected them a decade earlier. Much of the reading public and many writers of the older generation hoped to reconnect with what they regarded as the noble traditions of German literature interrupted by the years of Nazi barbarism.

On the other hand, a younger generation of writers who had come to maturity under Nazi tyranny and experienced the horrors of what they saw as a senseless war called instead for a radical break with older literary traditions. They believed that these, like most aspects of the German past, had contributed to the country's calamity. In hopes of freeing the German language from what they saw as the corrupting influences of the past, they set out to create a new, fresh, humanistic literature. This involved for most a rejection of lofty themes and preciousness of expression in favor of directness, simplicity, and everyday as-

pects of individual experience. Typical of efforts in that direction was a poem by Günter Eich, a writer just returned home after six years as a conscripted soldier and prisoner of war:

Inventory

This is my cap,
this is my coat,
here's my shaving gear
in a linen sack.

A can of rations:
my plate, my cup,
I've scratched my name
in the tin.

Scratched it with this
valuable nail
which I bide
from avid eyes.

In the foodsack is
a pair of wool socks
and something else that I
show to no one,

it all serves as a pillow
for my head at night.
The cardboard here lies
between me and the earth.

The lead in my pencil
I love most of all:
in the daytime it writes down
the verses I make at night.

This is my notebook,
this is my tarpaulin,
this is my towel,
this is my thread.

In 1947 Eich joined with other younger writers in forming Group 47, a loose organization for the promotion of a new German literature. By awarding prizes for distinguished writing and by providing a forum at its annual gatherings to which aspiring authors could present their works, Group 47 became a dynamic and lasting force in West German literary life. By the latter part of the 1950s two of its members, Heinrich Böll and Günter Grass, had achieved international acclaim for novels and stories which breached the prevailing collective amnesia about the recent past by giving compelling literary expression to what they and others had experienced under the Nazi regime. Böll's work would in 1972 gain for him the honor of becoming the first German writer since Thomas Mann in 1929 to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. After a barren period, Germany was again producing writers of world stature.

By the mid-1950s most lingering reservations among West Germans about the formation of the Federal Republic had been swept away. More quickly than anyone had expected, Germans had been accepted back into the international community as a result of the political stability of the new democratic polity and the economic and cultural achievements of its citizens. West Germans found to their relief that they were no longer regarded abroad as pariahs but were once more welcomed as business associates, professional colleagues, and travelers. At home, the economic miracle had speeded consolidation of the new polity. Germany's first experiment with democracy, the Weimar Republic, had struggled throughout its existence with grave handicaps imposed by adverse economic conditions. Democracy became associated for much of that generation with hardship and anxiety. It seemed easy then to blame economic troubles on democratic institutions. In the Federal Republic, by contrast, Germans saw for the first time that democracy could be compatible with prosperity. Whereas during Weimar many had longingly looked back to the authoritarian but economically burgeoning Empire as a lost golden age, the Third Reich, which had restored prosperity but also plunged the country into a disas-

trous war and economic catastrophe, awakened no such nostalgia among those who found themselves beneficiaries of the economic miracle. For most West Germans the materially plentiful, democratic present came to seem the best of times.

Alignment with the Western Democracies

Next to fostering economic recovery, the greatest challenge that faced the Adenauer government lay in charting the Federal Republic's course in international affairs. The most pressing task lay in finding ways to remove the restrictions imposed by the Occupation Statute. Whereas the chancellor left economic policy largely to his minister of economics, he himself took on the determination of foreign policy. Not until 1955 did he appoint a foreign minister, and even after that he made all major decisions in that sphere. Unlike most postwar German leaders, Adenauer harbored no illusions about a speedy reunification. A highly realistic man, he concluded that once Soviet power had become established in Germany, dislodging it would be no simple task. In his judgment, the Germans in the West had no prospect of effecting Russian withdrawal by themselves. Nor did he envision the Western powers quickly repulsing the expansion of Soviet power brought about by the war. He therefore accepted the country's division as an unavoidable fact of life for an indefinite period of time.

In this acceptance, Adenauer's background played a role. As a Catholic Rhinelander, oriented toward Western Europe and unimpressed by the Prussian tradition, he found it easier to contemplate a lengthy separation from the territories to the east than did those whose backgrounds made reversal of the unification effected by Bismarck seem almost unthinkable. For the coolly calculating Adenauer, the only hope for eventual reunification lay in making the Federal Republic into a bastion of freedom and prosperity that would exercise a magnetic attrac-

tion for the Russian-dominated part of the country. Faced with what he perceived as a choice between self-rule for at least some Germans in association with the democracies and an uncertain prospect of reunification on terms set by the Russians, he opted for freedom over unity. This accorded with his personal values, which assigned the highest priority to restoring what he regarded as the moral, social, and political values of Western civilization in at least part of Germany following the country's descent into barbarism. To achieve that, he believed that the Federal Republic must be firmly linked with the Western democracies, even at the price of protracted national division.

The need for what Adenauer characterized as a "policy of strength" in the face of Soviet power also inclined him to a Western orientation. Only a united West, he argued, could marshal the strength necessary to deter the Russians from encroaching upon the young Federal Republic and, someday, prevail upon them to relinquish their hold over part of Germany. In order to survive politically, Adenauer joined with the other German politicians of the day in tirelessly pledging in public his determination to seek reunification. But in practice he set out to make the Federal Republic an integral part of the Western camp, fully aware that such an alignment might well rule out the possibility of reunification for the foreseeable future by leading the Soviets to tighten their control over the part of Germany they dominated.

Adenauer's acceptance of a lengthy period of division and his policy of tying the Federal Republic to the Western powers met with vehement resistance from his great adversary, Kurt Schumacher, who led the oppositional Social Democrats until his death in 1952. An heroic opponent of Nazism who had emerged from one of the Third Reich's concentration camps in 1945 with severe physical disabilities, Schumacher accorded priority to reunification. As a man who himself hailed from the Prussian East and whose political party had traditionally enjoyed strong backing in the industrial areas of what had become the Soviet zone, Schumacher remained reluctant to accept Germany's divi-



Social Democratic leader Kurt Schumacher (right) with party colleague and lord mayor of West Berlin, Ernst Reuter

sion. As a democrat, he balked at consigning the population of Germany's eastern regions to Communist rule. As a socialist, he was deeply suspicious of the capitalistic United States and its allies in Western Europe. To his mind, the primary task lay in restoring German control over the whole country. Viewing the defeat of the SPD at Hitler's hands as the result, in large measure, of his party's insufficient recognition of the factor of nationalism, he had resolved that the Social Democrats must never again appear to be indifferent to Germany's national interests. This, too, contributed to his resolute insistence on according priority to reunification and his resistance to integration into the Western camp.

Recognizing that Adenauer's policies would heighten the risk of a prolonged division, Schumacher advocated keeping the Federal Republic free of commitments to either side in the Cold War so as to keep open as many options as possible for restoration of German unity. While he believed that Germany belonged

to the West in terms of its fundamental values, he rejected Adenauer's policy of tying the Federal Republic to the Western democracies on the grounds that this would deepen the divide between the two parts of the country and erect insuperable obstacles to reunification. Unlike some other critics of the chancellor, Schumacher did not view neutralization as a desirable course for Germany, but he nevertheless favored keeping that option open if it should prove the only price acceptable to the Russians for ending the country's division. He and his party therefore opposed at every step Adenauer's policy of cooperation with the Western powers. Denouncing Adenauer as "the chancellor of the allies," Schumacher warned that his policies would make permanent the division of Germany and place the Federal Republic in servitude to foreigners.

Since Adenauer, rather than Schumacher, commanded the support of a majority in the democratically elected Bundestag, the Federal Republic adopted a strong Western orientation. This became manifest with its entry into the new institutions that linked the democracies of Western Europe. In October 1949 West Germany joined the Organization for European Economic Cooperation, which managed distribution of Marshall Plan aid and sought to lower economic barriers between the Western democracies. In June 1950, under the terms of the Petersberg Agreement of the previous November with the three allied high commissioners, West Germany became a non-voting, associate member of the Council of Europe, which, with its seat at Strasbourg, aimed at the political consolidation of Western Europe. In May 1951 the Federal Republic became a full member of the council. A month earlier, it had joined the European Coal and Steel Community, an organization proposed by French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman to rule out future wars among the states of Western Europe by fostering economic interdependence through a common market and unified tariff system for coal and steel.

At every stage in this process of integration into the West European alliance, the Federal Republic under Adenauer's lead-

ership patiently extracted concessions that enhanced its authority. As became increasingly clear, the chancellor strove to win sovereign rights for the new West German government as rapidly as possible. By the end of 1949 Bonn had gained from the Western occupying powers the right of consular, if not yet ambassadorial, representation abroad. Those powers also agreed to ease a number of economic restrictions imposed by the Occupation Statute, such as those limiting shipbuilding. In March 1951 the Occupation Statute was revised to allow West German legislation to take effect without a waiting period for scrutiny by the allied high commissioners, who nevertheless still retained authority to annul laws. At the same time, Bonn also won full authority over its own currency and expanded rights in the sphere of foreign policy. As a member of the Coal and Steel Community, the authority of which superseded the controls imposed on the Ruhr by the Western countries, the Federal Republic gained a major role in industrial policy not only in that key region of West Germany but also in the rest of Western Europe.

Rearmament and Sovereign Rights

This process of Western integration and expansion of Bonn's authority received added impetus from the war in Korea. Communist military aggression in that divided country awakened fears in Bonn, as in other Western capitals, of a similar conflict in Germany. The West German government viewed with mounting alarm the expansion of the so-called People's Police of East Germany to a level of 55,000 men, fitted out in military uniforms and including units equipped with artillery and tanks. By contrast, under the terms of the Occupation Statute the Federal Republic was permitted no military force at all, and the units posted there by the Western occupying powers lacked the capacity for large-scale combat. In the light of developments in Korea and the mounting tensions of the

Cold War in Europe, the West European governments became increasingly convinced of the need for a military force capable of deterring or repelling an attack from the East. When the Americans, heavily involved in Korea, indicated that they would retain troops in Europe only if the Europeans participated more fully in their own defense, the question took on added urgency.

This situation gave Adenauer a lever with which to pursue his goal of sovereignty for the Federal Republic. For without West German manpower, a Western European defense force could not hope to attain a level of strength sufficient to deter or withstand aggression from the Soviet bloc. With memories of Hitler's conquests still fresh, however, the Western countries were reluctant to authorize creation of a new German army. In October 1950 the French won wide support among the continental democracies for a plan that called for a West European army within the structure of the Council of Europe. Under this plan, which became known as the European Defense Community or EDC, German troops would be integrated into a supranational force along with those of other democracies of Western Europe.

Bonn responded positively to the EDC plan. Adenauer's government insisted, however, that West German soldiers could be assigned to the projected West European army only if the Federal Republic were accorded equal status with the other participating countries. That, Adenauer left no doubt, entailed granting sovereign status to the Federal Republic. Since West German troops would make up the largest component of the planned EDC army and since Bonn could not be compelled to join against its will, its claims could scarcely be ignored.

In protracted and often arduous negotiations over the EDC project, Adenauer patiently extracted concession after concession from his bargaining partners and won their increasing respect in the process. By July 1951 the Western democracies had agreed to declare the state of war with Germany at an end even though no peace treaty was in sight. By May 1952, when the EDC agreement was initiated by the projected participants, the Americans, British, and French had worked out with West Germany

the draft for a treaty which would greatly expand the sovereign rights of the Federal Republic and abolish the Occupation Statute. The Western allies reserved the right, however, to resume their occupation authority if an emergency should arise. Otherwise, their troops would remain in Germany not as occupying forces but as part of a mutual defense system. Berlin was not covered by the draft treaty, and the three Western powers retained their full occupation authority there. All four countries pledged themselves to seek the unification and democratization of Germany and stated that its frontiers could be determined only by a freely negotiated final peace settlement. The draft treaty which incorporated these provisions would, its signatories agreed, come into effect upon ratification of the treaty embodying the EDC.

When in the summer of 1954 the French parliament balked at integration of the army of France into the international force proposed under the EDC, the project died. This jeopardized the draft treaty concerning the authority of the Federal Republic, which had been tied to the EDC. A last-minute solution was provided by the British, whose earlier refusal to join the EDC had helped to undermine it. As a substitute security arrangement, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden proposed in the fall of 1954 formation of a West European Union which would link the United Kingdom with the continental democracies in a security system composed of national defense forces, including one from the Federal Republic, as opposed to the supranational force foreseen for the EDC.

Eden's plan provided for a West German defense force of half a million men but placed upon the Federal Republic certain restrictions not required of the others. The West Germans were to be prohibited from producing or possessing certain kinds of armaments, most notably those of a nuclear, bacteriological, or chemical nature. Bonn had further to agree not to use its defense force to seek German reunification or the alteration of existing frontiers by military means. The Federal Republic would become a full member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

(NATO), the defense system formed in 1949 to link Canada and the United States with the West European democracies. Unlike the other partners, however, Bonn would be required to subordinate all its forces to NATO, to retain none outside its structure, and to maintain no general staff of its own. Otherwise, West Germany would become an equal partner in the alliance. For their part, the West European countries undertook by the terms of the Eden plan to recognize the Federal Republic as the sole legitimate spokesman of the German people in the international sphere until a peace treaty resolved the issues left from the war, including that of Germany's frontiers.

The Eden plan was swiftly approved by all concerned in the autumn of 1954 by means of what came to be known as the Paris Treaties. Among these was a German Treaty, signed by the Federal Republic and the Western occupying powers, which incorporated the essential terms of the earlier draft treaty dealing with the relations between those powers and Bonn. The West European Union was approved by Britain and the continental democracies. When the Paris Treaties took effect in May 1955, the Federal Republic became a partner in the Union and a member of NATO. The Occupation Statute lapsed, and the West German state gained far-reaching sovereign rights. Having won acceptance by the Western democracies, Bonn promptly established full diplomatic relations with them and exchanged ambassadors. Soon thereafter the Adenauer government joined in negotiations that would lead in 1957 to the Treaties of Rome, which established a European Economic Community (EEC), also known as the Common Market, of which the Federal Republic's robust economy formed a key component.

As these developments made manifest, just a decade after the disappearance of the Reich a new German state had won acceptance as a respected member of the community of democratic countries. The Federal Republic's sovereignty remained subject to certain restrictions, and foreign troops still stood on its soil. But those restrictions did not impinge upon the authority of the new West German government within its boundaries so long as

there was no international emergency that would lead the Western powers to reactivate their occupation rights. American, British, and French troops were now stationed in Germany at the request of a democratically elected government, as part of an international defense alliance. Konrad Adenauer had achieved his goal of winning sovereign rights for the new Federal Republic and binding it firmly to the democratic West.

Establishing the West German military, the Bundeswehr, posed one of the most delicate tasks facing the government as a consequence of the recent war of aggression and Germany's long tradition of militarism. In order to exclude unsuitables, including veterans who had compromised themselves during the Third Reich, screening of candidates for posts in the Bundeswehr was turned over to a special board of civilians that included prominent surviving members of the opposition to Nazism. To prevent a predominance of professional military men, a conscription law adopted in 1956 obligated all able-bodied young men to a year's service upon their eighteenth birthday (the term was raised to eighteen months in 1962, then reduced to fifteen months in 1973). Since the Basic Law ruled out compulsory military service, conscientious objectors were permitted to perform corresponding terms of civilian service. From the outset, efforts were made to break with past practices, particularly the traditions of unchallengeable authority and unquestioning obedience. Both officers and enlisted men were taught to regard the Bundeswehr as a defense force composed of civilians in uniform. A special school was established to instruct officers about the place of the military in a democratic society. Civilian control, through the minister of defense, was emphasized, and parliamentary scrutiny facilitated. Within the Bundeswehr, ombudsmen were assigned the task of responding to grievances voiced by servicemen.

Originally, the size of the Bundeswehr had been projected at just short of half a million men, but that goal was temporarily scaled back. The end of the Korean War in 1953 reduced the sense of military urgency, and the labor shortage generated by

the economic miracle made it seem inadvisable to remove so many men from the workforce. Nevertheless, by 1961 the Bundeswehr, with some 350,000 men in uniform, had become the second strongest component of NATO command structure forces next to that of the United States. By the 1970s it would approach the half-million level, as originally foreseen. At home, the new defense force soon gained general acceptance despite the controversy that had surrounded the decision to launch it.

Adenauer followed up his option for what he called a "policy of strength" based on integration into the Western alliance with a regularization of relations with the Soviet Union. The Russians had long viewed with apprehension the emergence of a West Germany linked with the Western powers and had on several occasions held out the prospect of a reunified, neutral Germany. In the spring of 1952, in the midst of delicate negotiations over the terms of the Federal Republic's integration into the Western alliance, Stalin proposed such a formula to London, Paris, and Washington, conceding even the Western powers' demand for free, all-German elections. But when the Russians were pressed, it became clear that before such elections they wanted a peace treaty signed that would impose neutrality on a reunified Germany. The Western allies contended, in response, that only a democratically elected all-German government could accord binding status to a peace treaty. Such a government, they argued, must be left free to determine its own foreign policy, as did other sovereign states. As exchanges of views between Moscow and the Western capitals continued through the summer and into the autumn of 1952, the allied statesmen, seconded by the Bonn government, concluded that the Soviet offer was not seriously meant but instead represented an effort to derail the negotiations for inclusion of West Germany in the Western alliance.

When the Treaties of Paris went before the Bundestag for ratification in 1955, Moscow again held out the prospect of a reunified, neutral Germany, but that alternative had by then lost its credibility. After the Paris Treaties went into effect, the Soviet

Union reacted angrily, abrogating its wartime alliance treaties with Britain and France. Behind the scenes, however, the Russians soon began cultivating the Federal Republic, whose economic potency exercised a strong attraction. The resultant negotiations broke into public view in September 1955, when Adenauer journeyed, by invitation, to Moscow for a week of conferences with Stalin's successors. He returned, having achieved the release by the Soviets of some 10,000 German prisoners and having established full diplomatic relations with Moscow. His policy of strength was beginning to work, Adenauer announced upon his return.

In addition to joining the new institutions of the Western alliance and gaining recognition by all the major powers, including the Soviet Union, the Federal Republic further enhanced its standing by shouldering onerous burdens from the German past. Under the terms of the Luxemburg Agreement of 1952 the West German government volunteered to deliver 3 billion marks' worth of goods and services to the state of Israel by way of restitution for Nazi persecution and murder of Jews. Hundreds of millions of additional marks went to compensate individual Jews who had suffered at the hands of the Third Reich. In numerous other ways, too, West Germany extended help to Israel, and in 1965 formal diplomatic relations were established between the two governments. Still other burdens in the form of Germany's prewar foreign debts were assumed by the Federal Republic when it signed the London Debt Agreement of 1953 and began punctual interest and amortization payments on those debts as well as on postwar obligations, in all more than 15 billion marks.

The growing stature of the Federal Republic became apparent when a plebiscite revealed the determination of a sizable majority of the Saarland's population to sever that coal-rich region's postwar ties with neighboring France and join the new West German state. For a decade the German-speaking Saarlanders had lived under an autonomous government set up under sponsorship of the French occupation authorities. Paris made no

secret of its desire to see the Saarland permanently separated from Germany and tied to France, which had controlled it during the Napoleonic era and for most of the period between the world wars. Since 1946 a customs union had linked the Saar with the French economy, and when the West German currency was reformed in 1948 France insisted that the Saarland government establish separate money of its own. In 1947 an election for a regional representative assembly, from which the French authorities barred German-oriented parties, produced overwhelming support for separation from a Germany devastated by war and prostrate in defeat and disgrace. Nearly 90 percent of the votes went to parties favoring an independent Saarland in close association with France. The Federal Republic balked, however, at conceding the Saarland to France, and for years the issue caused friction. During the negotiations that produced the Paris Treaties of 1954 the two sides agreed to compromise by making the Saarland an autonomous entity and placing it under the authority of the new West European Union. But when the Saarlanders were asked to endorse that formula by plebiscite in October 1955, more than two-thirds rejected it. Clearly, they now preferred to join the prosperous West Germans. After lengthy negotiations between Paris and Bonn, the Saarland became a state of the Federal Republic in 1957.

With a few exceptions such as the Saarland issue, the policies of the Adenauer government at home and in the international sphere encountered stubborn opposition from the SPD. That party rejected the revival of private enterprise in the economic sphere as a reactionary step that would only perpetuate and deepen class conflict. The Social Democrats opposed as well Adenauer's foreign policy, contending that he had, in his single-minded determination to integrate West Germany into the Western alliance, squandered numerous opportunities for progress toward reunification through negotiations with the USSR. The SPD Bundestag deputies voted against most of the agreements that linked the Federal Republic to the West, and the party

joined in a campaign of marches and demonstrations against rearmament.

Most West Germans did not, however, heed warnings by the SPD that Adenauer was leading them down a false path. When 86 percent of the voters went to the polls to elect the second Bundestag in September 1953, the CDU/CSU scored sweeping gains, increasing its seats in the chamber from 139 to 243. Adenauer's party profited not only from the successes of his government but also from revulsion at developments in the GDR, the suppression of the uprising of June 17 in particular. That revulsion swept the Communist Party out of the parliament altogether. The failure of the KPD, as well as several other small parties represented in the first Bundestag, to gain the minimum votes necessary for representation enabled the SPD to increase its 131 seats to 151 despite receiving a smaller share of the vote than in 1949. The FDP, a junior partner in the Adenauer cabinet, lost votes and slipped from 52 to 48 seats. The other partner in the ruling coalition, the German Party, held on to 15 of the 17 seats it had won in 1949. A Refugee Party formed after the 1949 election appealed to the millions of Germans displaced from homes in eastern regions and gained a surprising 27 seats. It was included, along with the CDU/CSU, FDP, and German Party, in the second Adenauer cabinet formed after the 1953 election.

Four years later, in 1957, the election of the third Bundestag, in which 87.8 percent of the eligible voters took part, brought the CDU/CSU its greatest triumph. It became the first political party in German history to gain an absolute majority in a major election. The SPD made smaller gains and increased its seats in the Bundestag to 169. The CDU/CSU, with 270 of the 497 Bundestag seats, could have formed a cabinet by itself. Adenauer chose, however, to include the small German Party, which increased its representation from 15 to 17 seats. The FDP, which had left the coalition in 1956 because of various disputes with the chancellor and his party and had also lost part of its following from defections to the CDU/CSU, fell from 48 to 41 seats. It

remained in opposition. The Refugee Party failed altogether to gain representation, in part because of the success of the CDU/CSU in absorbing its followers. Whereas nearly a dozen parties had gained representation in the first Bundestag, a process of political consolidation left only four by 1957. The Constitutional Court, to be sure, had banned two parties as anti-democratic. One of these, the Socialist Reich Party, had been outlawed in 1952 because of its neo-Nazi orientation. In 1956 the ban fell on the Communist Party. Most observers agreed, however, that those parties represented no serious threat to the democratic institutions, as neither had commanded the allegiance of more than a tiny fraction of the public.

The SPD's Godesberg Program of 1959

The election outcomes of 1953 and 1957, which saw the SPD fall ever farther behind the CDU/CSU, gave rise to a change of course by the Social Democrats. Although the SPD had fared well at the regional level, dominating some state and many municipal governments, a sizable majority of West German voters remained unwilling to entrust control of the Bonn government to it. In the judgment of some of its leaders, the SPD stood in danger of remaining forever an oppositional party, prevented by its own policies from gaining the support of more than a third of the electorate. By 1959, however, reformers had gained the upper hand, and in November of that year they secured approval of a new program at a party congress held in Bad Godesberg, a suburb of Bonn. With the adoption of that Godesberg Program, as it came to be called, the SPD broke with its past as a working-class organization and became, like the CDU/CSU, a "people's party" that sought to appeal to a broad spectrum of voters.

The Godesberg Program marked a sharp departure from the traditions of German Social Democracy. The discrepancy between radical rhetoric and moderate practice that had character-

ized the SPD since the nineteenth century was finally eliminated. Gone was the Marxist theoretical framework and along with it the assumption that class conflict was unavoidable. The claim to scientific status for socialism gave way to the statement that democratic socialism in Europe had sprung from Christian ethics, humanism, and classical philosophy. In place of the SPD's traditional economic goals of socializing key industries and implementing governmental planning, the Godesberg Program announced acceptance of private enterprise as the basis of the economic order. As long as it did not interfere with social justice, private property would be entitled to governmental protection. Only where powerful special interests obstructed competition should the government intervene. "As much competition as possible—as much planning as necessary," became the SPD's operative slogan in the economic sphere. Recognizing that their party's anticlerical heritage hindered efforts to reach voters with strong church ties, the reformers wrote into the Godesberg Program a religious plank that accorded a legitimate and special social mission to the churches and disavowed the long-standing contention that socialism represented a replacement for religion. The new program also abandoned opposition to the rearmament so stubbornly resisted by the SPD earlier and committed the party to national defense. The program said little about foreign policy, but in June 1960 one of the reformers, Herbert Wehner, announced in a major speech before the Bundestag the SPD's acceptance of the Federal Republic's integration into the Western alliance.

In preparation for the Bundestag election of September 1961 the reformed leadership of the SPD set out to test the political viability of its new program. Abandoning its traditional red, the party campaigned under blue banners. As their chancellorship candidate the Social Democrats chose one of the reformers, Willy Brandt, the mayor of West Berlin. Born an illegitimate child with the name Herbert Frahm in the Baltic port city of Lübeck, he had devoted much of his youth to democratic socialist activities. While in exile in Norway and Sweden during the

Third Reich, he assumed the name Willy Brandt and retained it when he returned to Berlin after the war as a correspondent for Scandinavian newspapers. There he joined the SPD and rose within its ranks, becoming head of the city government in 1957. In 1961, ruggedly handsome and vigorous at age forty-seven, he imparted verve and dynamism to the SPD. He stood in marked contrast to the colorlessness of Erich Ollenhauer, the stodgy party functionary who had succeeded Kurt Schumacher as leader and gone down to defeat twice as the SPD's candidate for the chancellorship in 1953 and 1957. As challenger to the eighty-five-year-old Adenauer, Brandt could claim to be the candidate of youth and progress. Some Christian Democrats responded by insinuating that Brandt's illegitimate birth disqualified him for high office and by questioning his patriotism on the grounds that he had spent the war years abroad and had briefly worn a Norwegian army uniform to elude the Nazis.

Brandt's campaign benefited from his resoluteness in rallying the morale of West Berlin's shaken citizenry following the GDR's erection in August 1961 of the wall dividing the former capital city. The mayor's inspirational defiance in the face of that shattering development contrasted favorably with Adenauer's tardy and hesitant response. Moreover, the East German regime's success in closing the last remaining point of unobstructed interchange between the two parts of divided Germany cast doubt on the chancellor's predictions that his policy of aligning the Federal Republic with the Western democracies would inevitably result in reunification. For his part, Adenauer contended that the cruelty and disregard for human rights displayed by the Communists in sealing the East Germans off from their relatives and compatriots in the West only confirmed his westward-oriented "policy of strength."

The results of the 1961 election, in which 87.7 percent of the voters took part, did not give Brandt the chancellorship but did boost the strength of the SPD impressively. Whereas the party had held 169 seats in the old chamber, it captured 190 in the new one. The CDU/CSU, by contrast, suffered its first setback, drop-

ping from 270 seats to 242 and losing its absolute majority. The FDP, which campaigned against further welfare-state measures, made its strongest showing ever, raising the number of its seats from 41 to 67. The small German Party, which with a conservative following in northern parts of the republic had participated in the first three Adenauer cabinets, disappeared before the election, most of its leaders having defected to the CDU. That left only three parties in the new Bundestag.

A CDU/CSU-FDP coalition seemed the most likely result. The FDP called, however, for replacement of the eighty-five-year-old Adenauer. He countered by opening talks with the SPD, which raised the possibility of a CDU/CSU-SPD government that might revise the electoral law's requirements so as to exclude the FDP from future parliaments. After nearly two months of maneuvering, the FDP gave way and joined with the CDU/CSU in forming a new cabinet under Adenauer when he held out the prospect of retiring partway through the four-year legislative term.

From Adenauer to Erhard

The election setback of 1961 signaled the twilight of Adenauer's chancellorship. Always a strong-willed man, he had become increasingly overbearing after more than a decade in power. His authoritarian style might have seemed defensible during the first years of the West German government, when its institutions were new and their personnel often inexperienced. But as the government matured, his "chancellor democracy"—the label of critics for his often high-handed methods—encountered increasing resistance. His practice of using the cabinet as a rubber stamp for decisions which he and his inner circle of advisers had already reached became a particular target of criticism and made it increasingly difficult to maintain coalition cabinets.

The chancellor had diminished his own stature in 1959 when he engaged in what seemed to many observers cynical and self-serving political maneuvers demeaning to the institutions of the

young republic. With a presidential election due upon the expiration of Theodor Heuss's second term, Adenauer put himself forward as a candidate after unsuccessfully attempting to have Economics Minister Ludwig Erhard stand for the job. Only a short time later, however, he withdrew from consideration after realizing that the office of president offered little prospect of influencing government policy and after discovering that his party intended to name Erhard as his successor in the chancellorship despite his grave reservations about Erhard's political abilities. With Adenauer's backing, the undistinguished CDU minister of agriculture, Heinrich Lübke, was elected president by the Federal Assembly in July 1959. By his behavior, however, Adenauer aroused widespread skepticism about whether he could ever be expected to surrender his hold on the chancellorship voluntarily.

Behind the decline in Adenauer's popularity lay mounting dissatisfaction with what appeared to a growing number of West Germans, especially of the younger generation, as an entrenched, self-satisfied, conservative regime in Bonn. In too many respects, critics charged, the government had rested content with restoring an older order rather than strengthening the democratic organs of the Federal Republic by reforming social institutions whose structures had originated in Germany's authoritarian past. Critics took issue as well with what they saw as the Adenauer government's insensitivity about the crimes of the Nazi regime. Too little had been done, they charged, to track down and prosecute those responsible for the most horrendous atrocities of history, so that many criminals had been left free to enjoy the fruits of the economic miracle. This seeming indifference toward the recent past extended even to the personnel policies of the Adenauer government. Under the terms of a federal law passed in 1951 to regulate the status of former civil officials, many who had served under Hitler became eligible for jobs in the West German government. The judiciary in particular remained heavily staffed with judges who had administered what passed for justice in the Third Reich. Even some cabinet

ministers and members of the chancellor's staff had dubious pasts. No one seriously attributed pro-Nazi sympathies to Adenauer, but his readiness to make use of men with tainted careers raised doubts about his standards for others.

A year after Adenauer formed his fourth cabinet in November 1961 on the basis of a CDU/CSU-FDP coalition, his position was shaken by an affair that took its name from West Germany's most popular weekly news magazine, *Der Spiegel*. In October 1962 its publisher and its defense correspondent were arrested along with nine other persons and imprisoned under suspicion of treason. The defense correspondent was seized with the assistance of the police of rightist dictator Francisco Franco in Spain, where he was visiting, and flown to Germany under guard. Federal police agents ransacked private residences and offices of the magazine, confiscating copies of a forthcoming issue. For many observers, the brusque and overbearing fashion in which these actions were carried out called to mind disturbing memories of recent experiences with police-state methods. As justification for its actions the government alleged that an article in *Spiegel* casting doubt on the defense capability of the Bundeswehr derived in part from secret documents improperly removed from Defense Ministry files. Since *Spiegel* had for some time leveled sustained and pointed criticism at Defense Minister Franz Josef Strauss of the Bavarian CSU, however, suspicion immediately arose that ulterior motives had played a part. As a result, a wave of protest swept through the Federal Republic.

At first, both Strauss and Adenauer denied any part in the affair. But under searching interrogation by opposition deputies during the Bundestag's question hour, contradictions between their accounts and those of others involved began to emerge. Further investigations indicated that certainly Strauss and possibly Adenauer had been closely involved in the decisions that led to the arrests, searches, and confiscations. Worse, it soon became apparent that the FDP minister of justice, who was constitutionally responsible for federal indictments and for the federal police, had been left wholly uninformed about those

measures. Adenauer sought a way out of the affair by proposing to dismiss or suspend the second-level officials directly implicated. The crisis deepened, however, when the junior partner in the government coalition, the FDP, withdrew its ministers from the cabinet and announced its resolve to remain in opposition until Strauss was replaced. Adenauer, in turn, again began negotiating with the SPD. That once more brought into line the FDP, which agreed to revive the coalition with the CDU/CSU, enabling the chancellor to form his fifth cabinet in December 1962. To appease critics, he replaced the controversial Strauss and expressed his intent to give up the chancellorship within a year.

While the *Spiegel* affair brought discredit upon the Federal Republic in the eyes of many by revealing that some top officials had abused their authority, it also offered considerable encouragement to those concerned about the durability of democracy in West Germany. Most notably, the free press emerged unscathed and strengthened. All charges against the publisher of *Spiegel*, Rudolf Augstein, who spent fourteen weeks behind bars, as well as those against the magazine's defense correspondent, were eventually dismissed as groundless. No convictions resulted from the affair. Moreover, much of the West German press joined in the quest for truth that frustrated efforts on the part of high office-holders to cover up the facts. This was the case not only with newspapers and magazines but also with the public radio and television stations to which regional authorities had entrusted broadcasting after the war. When put to the test posed by the *Spiegel* affair, the broadly representative, non-partisan supervisory boards to which those stations were responsible proved an adequate safeguard against political manipulation of news and commentary. The affair thus demonstrated that the Federal Republic had developed mass media that were protected from governmental manipulation, open to a wide variety of viewpoints, and vigilant in their defense of democratic institutions. University students and faculties had also protested against the misuse of governmental authority. In sharp contrast to the Weimar Republic, when the intellectual commu-

nity had displayed indifference, if not outright hostility, toward its democratic institutions, the vast majority of West German intellectuals had rallied behind those of the Federal Republic.

Adenauer's remarkable career finally came to an end when he resigned in October 1963 at age eighty-seven after occupying the office of chancellor longer than anyone since Bismarck. He left a record of notable achievement. During his fourteen years in office, the new West German government established its legitimacy at home and gained sovereign rights sooner than anyone had expected. The Federal Republic became an integral part of the Western alliance. Its military, the Bundeswehr, established despite strong popular resistance at home and grave misgivings abroad, developed in such fashion as to represent a mainstay of the NATO security system and yet pose no militaristic threat to West German democracy. Put to the test during the *Spiegel* affair, the republic's institutions proved capable of coping even with misuse of authority by its highest officials. In his final years Adenauer achieved, through cordial personal relations with French president Charles de Gaulle, a reconciliation with Germany's most important continental neighbor to the west. At home, the West German economy continued throughout his chancellorship to recover with astonishing rapidity from the devastations of war and the disruptions of division. Some 12 million refugees had been provided with livelihoods and homes, as mass joblessness rapidly gave way to full employment. In the international economy, the Federal Republic had emerged as one of the leading industrial and trading countries of the world. By the end of Adenauer's chancellorship, however, he appeared to be a leader who, having accomplished his goals, rested content with maintaining the status quo.

In the foreign policy sphere, the status quo was proving increasingly inadequate. In all agreements with other countries even vaguely related to territorial questions, Bonn insisted upon clauses to the effect that the German frontiers of 1937—those prior to the expansion under Hitler—would remain legally unaltered until a peace conference. But as the passage of time and

the deepening Cold War made the convening of such a conference seem less and less probable, this position left the Federal Republic vulnerable to charges that it harbored aggressive designs on the former German territories to the east of the Oder-Neisse line, which had long since been incorporated into Poland and the Soviet Union and populated by their nationals. Suspensions on that count posed a formidable barrier between Bonn and the countries of the Soviet bloc.

Another barrier was the Hallstein doctrine, which took its name from Walter Hallstein, one of Adenauer's chief foreign policy aides. First enunciated in 1955, that doctrine sought to prevent international recognition of the German Democratic Republic by refusing to maintain diplomatic relations with countries that established relations with East Berlin. The sole exception was made for the Soviet Union itself when Moscow and Bonn exchanged ambassadors in 1955. Otherwise, the Federal Republic insisted that, as stated in the preamble to the Basic Law, it alone spoke for the German people until such time as a freely elected government for all of the country could be achieved. The Hallstein doctrine thus prevented Bonn from establishing formal diplomatic relations with the governments of Eastern Europe, all of which maintained ties to East Berlin. When non-aligned Yugoslavia recognized the GDR diplomatically in 1957, Bonn had to break off its relations with Belgrade. The Hallstein doctrine thus deprived the Federal Republic of any chance to wield diplomatic influence in Eastern Europe or to foster economic ties there with countries which had traditionally traded extensively with Germany. Critics further charged that the Hallstein doctrine served to consolidate the Eastern bloc and enabled Communist regimes to justify their rule by portraying the Federal Republic as a hostile and aggressive reincarnation of past German regimes.

The Hallstein doctrine worked much as intended, at least for a time. None of the countries of the Western bloc recognized the German Democratic Republic, despite its leaders' efforts to gain acceptance. West Germany's economic potency, in particular its

expanding foreign aid, also enabled it to prevent many developing countries of Africa and Asia from extending recognition to East Germany. But the Hallstein doctrine made Bonn vulnerable to extortion, since some countries quickly discovered they could exact economic favors from the Federal Republic by threatening to recognize East Germany. Both in political and in material terms, Adenauer's policy toward Eastern Europe thus became increasingly expensive while achieving no progress toward resolution of the problems created by Germany's postwar division. As a result, the chancellor's ritualistic public reaffirmations of his commitment to reunification came to seem increasingly empty, if not downright cynical.

When Adenauer finally resigned as chancellor in October 1963, the CDU/CSU ignored his reservations about Ludwig Erhard's political abilities and joined with the FDP to make the minister of economic affairs the second chancellor of the Federal Republic. As the phenomenally successful architect of the economic miracle, the rotund, cigar-puffing minister of economics enjoyed widespread popularity. In the international sphere, he and the foreign minister he inherited from Adenauer, Gerhard Schröder of the CDU, attempted to break the stalemate in relations with the countries of Eastern Europe to which Adenauer's policies had led. Without violating the letter of the Hallstein doctrine, they ignored its spirit by expanding trade relations with countries in the Soviet bloc. In the last months of Adenauer's cabinet, Schröder had arranged to exchange trade missions with Poland. In the first months of the new cabinet, Schröder reached similar arrangements with Bulgaria, Hungary, and Rumania. Among other advantages, these exchanges served to strengthen the Federal Republic's claim to represent West Berlin, which was covered in the new trading arrangements. Further progress toward expansion of relations with Eastern Europe remained blocked, however, by the Erhard cabinet's insistence upon the validity, pending a peace conference, of the German frontiers of 1937 and its continuing adherence to the letter of the Hallstein doctrine.



Charles de Gaulle, president of France, 1958–69, visiting Chancellor Konrad Adenauer in Bonn, 1961

In its Western policies, the Erhard cabinet distanced itself somewhat from Adenauer's alignment with the France of President de Gaulle and sought to improve relations with the United States. Because of de Gaulle's opposition to further integration of Western Europe and to admission of Great Britain to the Common Market and other European institutions, Bonn's close association with France had threatened to become an obstacle to the goal of a united Western Europe that Adenauer himself had earlier so vigorously promoted. As a consequence of de Gaulle's coolness toward the United States, the alignment with France also led to a deterioration in the Federal Republic's relations with Washington. Adenauer's ill-disguised disdain for the youthful and inexperienced President John F. Kennedy also

contributed to that deterioration. By cultivating close and cordial relations with Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, and by acceding to American requests for help in financing the American military forces stationed in West Germany, Erhard successfully set out to restore and strengthen the links between Bonn and Washington.

Despite Adenauer's doubts about Erhard's political abilities, he proved a capable vote-getter as his party's candidate for the chancellorship against the SPD's Willy Brandt in the Bundestag election of 1965, in which 86.8 percent of the voters participated. The CDU/CSU remained the largest bloc in the chamber with 245 seats, three more than it had amassed in 1961. The SPD added 12 seats, which brought it to 202, but fell considerably short of its aim of capturing, for the first time, more than 40 percent of the ballots. The junior coalition partner, the FDP, suffered a severe setback, losing 18 seats and retaining only 49. In part because the FDP's critics had accused it of becoming a mere satellite of the CDU/CSU, the smallest of the three major national parties began after the election to assert more forcefully its commitment to classical liberal, laissez-faire economic principles. It continued to insist upon curtailing taxes, governmental involvement in the economy, and growth of the welfare state.

That stand brought the FDP into collision with the chancellor in 1966, when a recession halted the boom of the economic miracle and reduced government revenues to a level that made it impossible to meet welfare-state obligations while conforming to the Basic Law's specification that the federal budget must be balanced. Erhard saw no alternative to increasing taxes, a policy the FDP rejected categorically. The resulting protracted crisis seemed to bear out the skepticism about Erhard's leadership abilities long voiced by Adenauer, who remained head of the CDU until he finally stepped down at age ninety in early 1966. From his semi-retirement the former chancellor contributed to his successor's declining prestige by publicly commenting condescendingly on his performance. At the end of October 1966 the FDP finally broke the stalemate by withdrawing its ministers

from the cabinet and depriving Erhard of his majority in the Bundestag. By that time, even the majority of CDU/CSU deputies had become convinced that the chancellor must be replaced. Ironically, Erhard, the architect of the economic miracle, had fallen because of failure to deal adequately with problems arising from a recession.

The Grand Coalition

The departure of Erhard led in November 1966 to the entry, for the first time, of the SPD into a cabinet of the Federal Republic. With the CDU/CSU and FDP at loggerheads, the Social Democrats could choose between a "little coalition" with the FDP, which would hold a narrow majority of three seats in the Bundestag, or a "grand coalition" with the CDU/CSU, which would command more than three-quarters of the chamber. The SPD chose the grand coalition. It conceded the chancellorship to the larger CDU/CSU, which assigned that office to Kurt Georg Kiesinger, the minister-president of Baden-Württemberg. Kiesinger had joined the Nazi Party at age twenty-nine in 1933 after Hitler came to power and had worked during the war in a subaltern position in the propaganda ministry. He had, however, repented and become a staunch defender of the Federal Republic's democratic institutions. The genuineness of his conversion seemed confirmed when SPD leader Willy Brandt, who had impeccable anti-Nazi credentials, agreed to serve in his cabinet as vice-chancellor and foreign minister. The leader of the Bavarian CSU, Franz Josef Strauss, who had been forced out of the cabinet four years earlier after the *Spiegel* affair, returned as finance minister.

The grand coalition gave the Federal Republic a stable government with which to move toward recovery from the economic recession, but deep differences between the CDU/CSU and SPD ruled out any far-reaching policy initiatives. The coalition did secure passage in 1967 of a law regulating the political parties and providing them with generous funding from the federal



CDU Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger (right) and SPD Foreign Minister Willy Brandt (left), leaders of the Grand Coalition cabinet, 1966–69

treasury as a means of diminishing their financial dependence on contributions from special-interest groups. Mainly at the insistence of the SPD, the cabinet suspended for ten years the statute of limitations with regard to atrocities committed during the Third Reich and facilitated indictment and prosecution of the perpetrators of such crimes. The Kiesinger cabinet also succeeded in resolving the ticklish question of emergency powers. Under the German Treaty of 1954 the Americans, British, and French had reserved to themselves the authority to resume their occupation rights in the event of an emergency situation resulting from an external threat. The West German government began in the early 1960s to assert a claim of its own to emergency authority, but the early drafts of such a constitutional amend-

ment encountered stubborn resistance from critics who believed they too closely paralleled the emergency powers provision which had proved a fatal flaw in the Weimar constitution. In 1968 the cabinet finally arrived at a set of carefully designed constitutional amendments that gained overwhelming endorsement. With their enactment, the former Western occupying powers allowed their residual emergency powers to lapse, so that the Federal Republic's sovereignty expanded significantly.

In the sphere of foreign policy the grand coalition cabinet's major move came with its abandonment of the Hallstein doctrine by establishing diplomatic relations with Rumania and Yugoslavia in 1967 despite their long-standing recognition of the GDR. Kiesinger also responded to letters from the SED leadership in East Berlin and showed interest in further contacts until the GDR's participation in the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968 put a halt to his soundings.

The political stability provided by the grand coalition helped the Federal Republic to weather the increasingly turbulent 1960s. Some of that turbulence resulted from the growing American involvement in the Vietnam War and from the United States' unresolved racial problems at home. Since many West Germans looked to the United States as the ultimate guarantor of their freedom and the inspiration for their own democracy, American failures produced widespread disillusionment and doubt, particularly among younger people, about the wisdom of the Federal Republic's close reliance on the United States. That disillusionment, together with dissatisfaction about the compromises struck by the SPD with the CDU/CSU on domestic issues within the grand coalition, gave rise on the left to what became known as "extraparliamentary opposition." Its advocates scorned what they dismissed as the mere "formal democracy" of the Federal Republic and rejected the established parties. They promoted what they envisaged as a truly democratic alternative outside the existing political system. For many, that increasingly meant the propagation of one Marxist formula or

another. For a fanatical few, it meant a resort to kidnapping, incendiarism, and political murder aimed at destroying the fabric of a society they regarded as hopelessly materialistic and corrupt. For the next decade, clandestine bands practicing various forms of terrorism would plague West Germany, claiming the lives of a number of prominent citizens.

Much of the dissatisfaction and unrest of the late 1960s surfaced in student protests at West German universities. Initially, those protests were inspired by the painfully apparent inadequacies of the postwar university system. Under pressure from the Western allies, admission policies had been liberalized, permitting for the first time large numbers of young Germans to attend what had traditionally been universities reserved for a small elite. But while enrollments ballooned, little or nothing was done to adjust faculties or facilities to the new conditions. Lecture halls became overcrowded, libraries and laboratories inadequate. Professorships remained strictly limited in number, and their holders retained the near dictatorial authority over both students and junior faculty traditional in the German system even before the Third Reich. When protests against these increasingly intolerable conditions produced little in the way of response from the state governments responsible for the universities, the protest movement grew and expanded in scope, soon incorporating student demonstrations against Bonn's acquiescence in America's Vietnam involvement. For the first time since the turbulent late years of the Weimar Republic, the streets of West German cities again became the scene of clashes between crowds of demonstrators and police.

While the student protest movement came to be aligned increasingly with the extreme left, another kind of protest developed on the extreme right. It found expression in a new political party, the National Democratic Party (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands or NPD). Beginning in late 1966, when the effects of the economic recession were being acutely felt and the stalemate within the Erhard cabinet seemed to reveal a failure of authority in Bonn, the NPD managed to secure enough votes to

gain representation in several state parliaments. Although the NPD avoided any overt endorsement of Nazi principles, many observers were disturbed by its emphasis on nationalism and its xenophobia, which was directed primarily at the more than a million "guest workers" who had come to West Germany from Southern Europe and Turkey with the blessing of the government to meet the heavy demand for labor generated by the economic miracle. When the economy faltered in the mid-1960s and competition for jobs became tighter, these foreigners made a ready target for nationalistic agitators such as the leaders of the NPD. The Nazi pasts of some NPD leaders also occasioned grave misgivings. Many observers denounced the new party as a neo-Nazi organization and called upon the government to ban it. But instead of invoking against the NPD the Basic Law's prohibition of antidemocratic political activity—as had been done with the neo-Nazi Socialist Reich Party in 1952—the grand coalition cabinet decided to place its trust in the good judgment of the electorate. Similarly, the cabinet took no measures against a new German Communist Party (Deutsche Kommunistische Partei or DKP), formed in 1968, even though the old Communist Party, the KPD, had been banned in 1956.

The presidential and Bundestag elections of 1969 vindicated both the SPD's decision to enter the grand coalition and the cabinet's toleration of extremist parties. The election of a new federal president took place in July, earlier than normal, when the lackluster CDU incumbent, Heinrich Lübke, announced that he would retire several months before completion of his second term so that the presidential election would not be overshadowed by that for the new parliament. His standing had been damaged by his inept response to East German disclosures that he had during the Third Reich worked for a construction firm that built barracks later assigned to slave laborers, including concentration camp inmates. As its presidential candidate, the SPD nominated Justice Minister Gustav Heinemann. A prominent Protestant layman who began his postwar political career as a Christian Democrat, Heinemann had resigned from the first

Adenauer cabinet in 1950 in protest against rearmament and later gravitated to the SPD after attempting unsuccessfully to form a pacifist party. With the help of votes from the FDP in the Federal Assembly, Heinemann narrowly defeated the CDU/CSU presidential candidate, former foreign minister Gerhard Schröder. In the Bundestag election of September 1969, participated in by 86.7 percent of the voters, neither the NPD nor the DKP managed to surmount the 5-percent barrier necessary for representation in the new chamber. The NPD, whose leaders had confidently expected the election to make their party a significant political force, never recovered from this setback. It soon lost its representation in state parliaments as well and ceased to be a serious factor. The CDU/CSU lost three seats but remained the largest bloc in the chamber with 242. The FDP, which had stood in opposition to the grand coalition, suffered a heavy setback, losing 19 of the 49 seats it had obtained in 1965 and only narrowly escaping exclusion under the 5-percent rule. Only the SPD, led by its candidate for the chancellorship, Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister Willy Brandt, could lay claim to victory. It gained 22 seats, emerging with a deputation of 224 and, for the first time, with more than 40 percent of the crucial second ballots which so largely shaped the outcome of elections.

Participation in the grand coalition had yielded an impressive harvest of votes for the Social Democrats. Clearly, their responsible role in the Kiesinger cabinet had rendered the Christian Democrats' long-standing contention that the SPD could not be entrusted with power implausible in the eyes of many voters who had not previously supported that party. With a Social Democrat as federal president and the SPD at its all-time high of strength in the parliament, the stage was set in the autumn of 1969 for the Federal Republic's first full-blown change of regime after twenty years of Christian Democratic leadership.