

Myth and Perceptions of Europe in the German Democratic Republic, 1975-1985: From Italian Eurocommunism to European Integration

Mythe et perceptions de l'Europe dans la République démocratique allemande, 1975-1985 : de l'eurocommunisme italien à l'intégration européenne

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Histoire Politique

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- 1 Between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s Europe went through some of its most significant and long-term changes since the end of the Second World War. Political, economic, cultural and social transformation involved both Eastern and Western Europe in very different, yet interrelated ways. In both regions, despite profoundly diverse contexts, communist parties reshaped their perception (understanding), image (representation) and vision (plans for the future) of Europe. This article looks at East Germany's perspective on both European integration and the Italian Communist Party's (PCI) European way, in the aftermath of the German Democratic Republic's international recognition and within the framework of its *Westpolitik*. Moving from the most recent scholarly literature on East-West relations, which reveals all the political and societal complexity of the Soviet bloc,¹ the article investigates the Socialist Unity Party's (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED), the East German Foreign Ministry's (MfAA) and the Ministry for Security's (MfS) records, with the aim of a deeper understanding of the meaning and implications of (Western) European integration in the GDR.² It further clarifies the East German angle on the PCI's Eurocommunist approach, in order to provide an original contribution to the history of Europe's Cold War dynamics, as well as the history of European Communism. Accordingly, the following related questions are raised: what did Europe represent for East German Communists? How different were the Eastern and Western Communists'

views on European integration? Was the European Community (EC) perceived as a threat, or rather as an opportunity, in the middle of the economic and energy crisis?

- 2 Three main assumptions seem relevant at the beginning of this analysis. First, in those years Communism in Western Europe was reinterpreted by the short-lived, but, in many ways, sensational phenomenon of Eurocommunism. Second, the EC went through a new phase of “completion” and “deepening”. Some of the initiatives taken in those years were successful, like institutional reforms, the beginnings of cooperation in foreign policy and, later on, the Single Market program; others, instead, did not achieve the expected results, even though they prepared the ground for future accomplishments, like the common currency. Yet, in general, the momentum of integration gathered pace. Third, the European socialist bloc, and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in particular, faced new and more complex challenges. They were damaged by the consequences of the international energy crisis and affected by slow development rates and inadequate modernization. Their attempts at realizing successful forms of economic integration within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) proved inconsistent,³ although historians have recently unveiled its political and strategic function:⁴ following this reading, the Comecon developed into a peculiar multilateral organization, where the socialist countries of Eastern Europe had a chance to enhance their legitimacy and powers against Moscow’s overwhelming role.⁵ More importantly, the GDR faced an internal demand for political and economic reforms, which became paramount to preserving domestic consensus and international legitimation.
- 3 This article argues that, in the face of those challenges, the SED essentially focused on handling change, by adapting East Germany’s politics accordingly. The Italian Communist Party, instead, engaged in an attempt at leading and steering change, domestically, as well as internationally.
- 4 The periodisation (1975-85) is a most significant one, both politically and economically. The following lines briefly describe some of the main aspects of the European puzzle in those years, whereas the other three sections go into, respectively, Eurocommunism in Eastern and Western views, the East German angle on the “European Union” and the developments of EC-Comecon relations. 1975 was a critical year for the revival of the “European Union” concept, broadly discussed in Western European capitals in the wake of the Tindemans Report. The failure of the 1970 Werner Plan for monetary integration and of the monetary “snake,” as well as the oil shock of 1973, had revealed the EC’s internal weakness, while the overlapping change of leadership in Britain, France and West Germany made the Western European political landscape exceptionally complex.⁶ At the same time, the Helsinki Final Act was signed in August 1975, an event which not only sealed East-West détente in Europe, but also showed the EC member states’ efforts to make their cooperation in foreign policy progress.⁷ In November, in the attempt to elaborate a Western strategy against the international economic crisis, while also relaunching transatlantic relations, the new French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing and West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt brought their joint initiative at the Rambouillet summit, which opened the path to the creation of the G7.⁸ Besides, between 1974 and 1975 the EC strengthened its commercial policy. The consequences of this event were neither localized, nor secondary: Common Commercial Policy, indeed, restricted the socialist countries’ chances to trade with EC member states on a bilateral basis, since now they had to negotiate with the European Community as a whole. East-

West tensions resumed in the wake of the Euromissiles crisis that culminated in NATO's "dual-track" decision in December 1979, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the same month and the rearmament policies of the Warsaw Pact and NATO through late 1970s and early 1980s. Such events would powerfully challenge the political and strategic balance of détente in the following years and revive fears of a nuclear war among the European people.⁹ This article, however, shares with a significant part of Cold War historiography the idea that international détente never came to a real end: it was rather a long-term process, with critical moments and diversified reactions in different countries.¹⁰

- 5 On a broader scale, the international energy crisis, after hitting Western Europe, started to harm the socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe as well. The GDR was especially damaged, as a net importer of energy products from the Soviet Union. Economic détente followed its own path, encouraged by a widening web of contacts and bilateral arrangements in which economic élites, business circles, as well as politicians from Western and Eastern Europe were involved. Yet, it was a path with numerous obstacles, both political and structural ones, until a decade later the political transition in Moscow and the European Community's internal stabilization created a favourable context for a relaunch of East-West economic and trade relations. 1975-85, therefore, were years of crisis, but they also unveiled the beneficial implications and lasting effects of détente in Europe. From 1985, the innovative course set by Mikhail Gorbachev would also mark the beginning of a "severe change of the Soviet position towards the EC."¹¹ In Western Europe, this change coincided with the designation of the new European Commission led by Jacques Delors in January 1985 and the opening of the Intergovernmental Conference that led to the Single European Act (SEA) in February 1986. The Single Market Program, the second enlargement and the SEA's endorsement of EC institutional reforms started a brand-new phase of European integration.

The European communists : handling change vs. steering it

- 6 In the 1970s the GDR achieved its long-awaited goal of being recognized as a sovereign state by Western countries, in the wake of West Germany's Ostpolitik and the bilateral agreement between the two German states, signed in December 1972, the so-called *Grundlagenvertrag*. Europe became a broader political arena in which the SED, expanding bilateral talks and arrangements, could now search for a new role. A network of relations with Western European governments and political parties that went beyond the once exclusive ties with communist parties in the West was therefore developed. The SED grasped the depth of the political and societal change ongoing in Western Europe, which inspired most of the ideas of Eurocommunists. To a certain extent, it also justified their search for national ways to socialism. Nevertheless, it remained a staunch defender of Soviet leadership within the International Communist Movement and opposed any move made by Western Communists that might directly or indirectly delegitimize the Socialist countries' ideological stance, domestic policies and foreign and security strategies.

Eurocommunism : a composite phenomenon

- 7 In the past twenty years Eurocommunism has been broadly investigated:¹² different kinds of archival sources have revealed the manifold implications of this short-lived phenomenon. The term “Eurocommunism,” invented by the press, in fact, roughly summarizes a composite trend in which Western communist parties explored different strategies to face distinct national challenges. Most of them, however, were related to the consequences of similar economic and social crises. Those parties also shared an interest in overcoming political isolation and becoming ruling parties. The Italian, French and Spanish Communists, followed by others, announced their common intents in the two joint Declarations of November 1975 (Italian Communist Party, PCI, and French Communist Party, PCF) and March 1977 (PCI, PCF and PCE)¹³ and on other occasions. One of them was the common Declaration of the Italian and French parties’ leaders, given in Rome in December 1978, where they overtly supported the democratic reform of the European Parliament.¹⁴ Eurocommunism advocated the autonomy and equality of all communist parties; the so-called “democratic way to Socialism” that included the renouncement to revolutionary strategies; the need to reconsider the dictatorship of the proletariat; the acknowledgement of parliamentary institutions and party pluralism, eventually leading to government alliances with capitalist political parties; and the defence of political liberties and human rights against restrictive policies perpetrated by socialist regimes. The Western Communists’ interpretation and implementation of those intents often differed in scope and coherence however. Those parties disagreed in particular on the endorsement of the European Community, as well as on the consistency of their criticism against the CPSU and other communist parties for their mismanagement of political rights and dissidence.¹⁵

The PCI’s European way

- 8 Eurocommunism marked a new beginning especially in the relations between the PCI and the European Community. With the EC Parliamentary Assembly turning into the directly elected European Parliament, and Enrico Berlinguer’s adamant support for European integration,¹⁶ a new constituency began to form before the elections of June 1979. This shift was neither sudden, nor merely instrumental to the PCI’s national agenda. Since the late 1960s Italian communists started to reconsider European integration and recognized that it fostered Italy’s economic development, while protecting Italian workers and industries. The first enlargement round, moreover, gave momentum to the EC’s regional development policy, encouraged by Italy and the UK. The PCI became confident that political integration was the key to building a more democratic Europe and implementing socialist reforms in the parliamentary democracies of Western Europe, a perspective later shared also by the PCE. They began to feel involved in that process and believed they had a responsibility in making it successful. Interestingly enough, when Leo Tindemans went to Italy to gain Rome’s backing to his European Union Report, he met delegations of all political parties, PCI included. The EC’s reform process, carried out through different steps until the Single European Act of 1986, gave Western communists a chance to express themselves, for the first time, on the conundrum of intergovernmental cooperation vs. supranational integration. By supporting the EC, the PCI had certainly in mind to enhance Italy’s position in Europe. The full meaning of its commitment to European integration,

however, cannot be understood without also referring to its Direction's broader vision of Europe. Probably not everyone inside the PCI saw the deep implications of that change. There was, however, a strong wing of pro-European communists, among them the future President of the Italian Republic Giorgio Napolitano, who was able to focus on this transition with political pragmatism, but also theoretical consistence and ensure its active participation to the life of the EC. As reported in a Stasi analysis of March 1979, "[t]he PCI leadership has set the goal of achieving a gradual democratic transformation of the EC from within, in close cooperation with other political and social forces and in agreement with a 'historic compromise' at European level."¹⁷

- 9 Enrico Berlinguer developed a perspective that went far beyond that. He espoused a wider and long-term vision, according to which he expected the two blocs to exhaust their *raison d'être*, the world to be soon exposed to severe global challenges, different from the ones that dominated the Cold War, and Europe to be called to play the role of a political model, a new system of values and an international player.¹⁸ His vision, then, implied an attempt at steering the ongoing change.
- 10 At the same time, Italy held a prominent position in the SED's *Westpolitik*.¹⁹ The fact that Italy hosted the largest and most independent communist party of Western Europe, a supporter of the GDR's international recognition in the past, but now also a promoter of Eurocommunist ideas, explains East Germany's special interest in this country. Berlinguer and the PCI, however, were not the only motives.

Old and new friends

- 11 Beyond the ups and downs of party relations, the SED saw in Italy a country holding, in the Western bloc, the same role that East Germany played in the socialist one. It was aware that both countries shared a primary concern for European *détente* and the stabilization of East-West relations: its expectations of improving friendly relations with Italy increased accordingly.²⁰ At the same time, East Berlin kept on asking the Italian government and entrepreneurs to play a mediating action in favour of an alleviation of EC quotas, even though on the Italian side it was made clear, on different occasions, that with the implementation of the Common Commercial Policy there were no more options for national initiatives of that sort.²¹ The essential question, however, became whether there was still any room for manoeuvre to foster bilateral trade: the East German authorities knew that the deepening of Western European economic integration had made East-West commerce subject to supranational rules, but they still believed that there were margins for negotiation and that, in a number of circumstances, EC rules were used by the Italians as a pretext to remain cautious.²² A good example of East Berlin's demands to its new Western partners, therefore, can be found precisely in the records of bilateral contacts with Italy's government and companies, in which the SED made all efforts to reach the goals of credit arrangements, increased imports of Western goods and better exports of East German products.
- 12 The SED's demands to the PCI, however, were not related to the European Community, but rather to the party's solidarity in ideological, political and defensive matters – a solidarity that the PCI proved increasingly reluctant to confirm due to East German repression of political opposition, Soviet rearmament policy and Moscow's intervention in Afghanistan in 1979. For the SED, the ideological question was not only a matter of theoretical coherence: it was mostly about preserving its own identity, its special

relationship with Moscow and its domestic security. When East Germany's international relations expanded, its alignment to the concepts and politics of Soviet Socialism were emphasised accordingly: détente was an opportunity only if the dividing line between the two systems of alliances of the Cold War remained clear. The ideological question was also a problem of international credibility: when the GDR faced criticism for its repressive methods in handling political dissent, it was actually its compliance to the provisions of the Helsinki Act – East Germany's first real achievement in foreign policy – that was questioned. Similarly, when the PCI criticized the Warsaw Pact's nuclear rearmament, or Soviet policy in Afghanistan, it was suggesting that capitalist countries were not the only ones holding responsibility for threatening peace on earth. Those were only some of the reasons why Eurocommunism represented a severe and long-lasting challenge from an East German perspective. Eurocommunism never turned into a well-organized political movement and remained incoherent in many ways. Its electoral success was short-lived and the domestic alliances it sealed proved inconsistent in the long term. Nevertheless, in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe eurocommunist ideas re-echoed all through the 1980s: initially as a challenge to the unity of the International Communist Movement and to the image of the Warsaw Pact; later, as an inspiration to Gorbachev and other young Soviet officials.²³

- 13 A number of long reports of the SED Department of International Relations, as well as the personal dossiers of *Politbüro* members, in particular Hermann Axen's and Kurt Hager's,²⁴ prove the East German party's close monitoring of the Italian, French and Spanish communist parties, its understanding of the differences existing between them – even in their interpretation of Eurocommunism – and its deep concern for their new course. The Eastern European communists, however, remained unwilling to issue any open condemnation of Eurocommunism and initially they even avoided to use this word.²⁵ In general, they preferred to downplay that phenomenon. Eurocommunism was carefully scrutinized, but rarely named as such, so as to prevent the recognition of an independent group inside the International Communist Movement. Accordingly, the SED increased bilateral initiatives and exchanges with the Western communists, while at the same time remaining cautious. In December 1976, a couple of months after the Conference of European communist parties held in East Berlin in June, it summarized its strategy as follows: “In our relations with sister parties [...] steadiness of principle on fundamental questions must combine with greatest patience and tact.”²⁶ An act of open censure was indeed averted even later on, in the early 1980s, when the PCI's and PCE's criticism against Moscow grew sharper and, from an East German perspective, increasingly dangerous, because it suggested that Soviet Socialism no longer was the natural defender of world peace.²⁷

The “European Union” : a powerful idea and a most powerful market

- 14 The SED records, the Foreign Ministry's (MfAA) and the Ministry for Security's (MfS) testify East Germany's consistent interest for the developments of European integration. Most information probably filtered through East German intelligence in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG): the overall account of that process is accurate, detailed and at times even closer to reality, than the image of the European Community

known at that time in Western Europe, where EC politics was often broadcast or explained through the lens of national politics.

“Two-speed Europe”?

- 15 The first interesting point in those records is the map of member states’ alliances. West Germany, after taking leadership of the monetary snake, seemed willing to guide the EC’s transition towards monetary integration and political union, in tandem with France and through the support of Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg and Denmark. Another line-up of states, the UK, Ireland and Italy, instead, were likely to remain isolated from the core group. The EC’s unequal economic development made its political environment unstable as well, torn between stronger and weaker countries. The economic and financial crisis was widening that gap, to the advantage of the most developed ones.²⁸ What would later be called the “two-speed Europe” already seems to emerge in East German records. Obviously, the SED looked with deep concern at West Germany’s rising role in the EC. Yet, the European Community’s partition implied also potential indirect advantages: beside the fact that those internal tensions affected the entire Western bloc, they also allowed the socialist countries to gain some additional leverage and gave them an opportunity to strengthen relations with the EC’s “peripheric” countries. As mentioned before, Italy was seen as a potential friend, that might be persuaded to put greater efforts into its Ostpolitik in order to counterbalance its weakness in the EC and in NATO.²⁹ Most importantly, beside their diverse political weight, size and power, EC member states (MSs) conveyed the impression that they were split on the overall direction they wished for the European Union.

Supranational vs. intergovernmental Europe

- 16 The second point worth mentioning is the East German Foreign Ministry’s careful scrutiny of the Tindemans Report and how the very idea of “European Union” was received.³⁰ As it looked into the debate over the Belgian prime minister’s initiative, the ministry noted divergences between pro-federalist countries, like Italy, and those which supported an intergovernmental framework, like West Germany, France and Britain. This, however, did not mean that the latter were ready to act in unison in other fields.³¹ Surprisingly enough, the East German view of the dilemma between supranational integration and intergovernmental cooperation was very thorough: it referred, for example, to the controversial implications of the ongoing reform which on the one hand legitimated the European Council, with its typical intergovernmental power, while on the other hand laid the ground for the European Parliament’s direct election.³² Furthermore, in the East German analysis, different national agendas played a divisive role in Community politics: France mainly focused on the Single Market and Common Agricultural Policy; Italy and the UK insisted on economic integration and on the implementation of regional policies, but diverged on the future of monetary policy; the Benelux countries and Ireland, finally, promoted those institutional reforms that would give more power to the European Commission and allow for a more extended use of majority voting in the Council of Ministers. Such supranational reforms were also strongly encouraged by Italy, whereas Denmark remained an exception among the small and medium-sized countries on this topic. Due to such different attitudes, the Tindemans Report spread considerable scepticism in Western Europe, where EC

member states were either reluctant to giving up their national sovereignty (France's main concern) or worried about the idea of harmonizing their national foreign policies, with a view to the creation of a common defence policy (Britain's and Denmark's main concern).³³ The overall assessment of this landscape in East German reports, then, was that EC governments were more likely to disagree, than to agree on institutional reforms and that they ultimately lacked a common vision.³⁴ Nevertheless, it was the East Germans' understanding that the potential of the Tindemans Report should not be underestimated either. The envisaged European Union could indeed become a threat to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in case a new and stronger political actor resulted from this controversial transition, eventually favoured by its economic leverage. It might also be able to implement a common foreign and security policy with unpredictable consequences. Further, and most of all, in case of success the Union would promote "a new kind of social order,"³⁵ a pattern for social development inspired by Western European social-democratic ideas and aligned with West German SPD's political agenda, a model which the SED was afraid might come to compete with Eastern European Socialism.

- 17 While collecting such information and early assessments as those mentioned here was paramount to the SED, in a state like the GDR, where most decision-making power was exercised by a centralized and pervasive ruling party, the task of processing their contents and applying them to foreign policy planning was mainly in the hands of that party and its Politbüro, rather than the Foreign Ministry's. In general, however, the image of the European Community pictured in those records affected the foreign policy of the SED, which tried to take advantage of domestic EC divisions and put a lot of effort into developing bilateral relations with Western countries.

Testing political independence

- 18 The third significant point to be found in East German records, finally, is one of the key themes of European integration: the initial assumption that economic integration would naturally result in a political one. Twenty years before, when the European Economic Community had been established, it was widely accepted that efficient and extended economic interdependence would lead, in due course, to political unification. That assumption had proved incorrect: the Tindemans Report, then, was drafted in order to fill that gap and accelerate political integration within the context of an enlarged Community. At the same time, following the East Germans' reading, that initiative came as a consequence of the critical economic and financial contingency, suggesting a step forward, to prevent the failure of both economic and political integration.³⁶
- 19 East German observers knew that the European Community was not only a phenomenon with its own dynamics: it was also a mirror of the evolution of transatlantic relations. Behind the Western countries' efforts to relaunch European integration there were also their declining understanding with the United States and their search for new ways to face competition with their main ally.³⁷ According to the MfAA, West Germany played a sort of mediating role between the Community and the United States.³⁸ In this changed European landscape, different issues crossed each other: economic Ostpolitik had the power to escalate competition between the EC member states; at the same time, however, it broadened the gap between these

countries and the United States.³⁹ In the East German interpretation, Western Europe was testing its capacity to take regional initiatives independently from the US, not only by moving forward with Community integration, but also by taking a more balanced attitude on the issue of the economic “war” between Washington and the socialist countries, that made the Cold War scenario of the early 1980s increasingly tense. In this respect, the Ministry for Security of the GDR was well aware that Western European states intended to preserve economic détente and were willing to assert their autonomy in trading with the socialist bloc against US demands. They would indeed confirm only those restrictions to commercial relations that were deemed necessary because there was evidence of the military implications of traded goods, but in general they were not inclined to extend those limitations according to Washington’s expectations.⁴⁰

The European Community and the Comecon in East Germany’s *Westpolitik*

- 20 In the early 1970s, the GDR went through an internal transition with the change of leadership from Walter Ulbricht to Erich Honecker, followed by a theoretical reflection on the goals and perspectives of Socialism in industrialized countries.⁴¹ Foreign policy became increasingly relevant to the GDR, first with its formal recognition by Western countries, second with its participation to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE),⁴² third with Honecker’s so-called *Friedenspolitik*, the “politics of peace” aiming at improving East Germany’s domestic and international legitimation.⁴³ The GDR identified itself with the ambitious task of championing peace, international détente and multilateral cooperation. Accordingly, its *Westpolitik* focused on strengthening ties with Western Europe, while at the same time enhancing the GDR’s influence in the socialist bloc and keeping its relationship with the USSR steady. Contrary to the traditional interpretation of East Germany’s foreign policy as entirely dependent on Soviet directives, we now know that in the 1970s it opened various bilateral channels and expanded its web of arrangements all over Europe.⁴⁴ In the 1980s, moreover, the GDR committed to “keeping détente alive”:⁴⁵ détente was indeed the necessary framework to develop its *Westpolitik*. The SED separated the sphere of ideological matters and theoretical reflection, which pertained to its activity in the International Communist Movement, the practice of economic and trade relations with the West and the realm of security issues. The latter remained an unquestionable expression of East German allegiance to the Soviet Union. In this respect, an interesting remark can be found in one of the analyses prepared by the office of the diplomatic advisor of the Italian Prime Minister, on the eve of Honecker’s visit in Rome in the Spring of 1985:

“In exchange for its absolute loyalty to the USSR in the field of security and power relations, Berlin demands a wider room of manoeuvre in foreign policy, in particular with regard to its relations with the FRG and the West.”⁴⁶

Why the EC and the Comecon failed to recognize each other

- 21 While the SED was deeply interested in the internal developments of the European Community, it was also averse to its formal recognition. East Berlin, in fact, remained loyal to Moscow’s line, according to which the EC should not be recognized as a

legitimate partner, unless it accepted to negotiate with the Comecon as a whole. The EC, however, refused to do so: its member states did not find it hard to agree that the trade negotiation between the two organizations that Moscow suggested was not an option, because this would further enhance Soviet power in the socialist bloc.⁴⁷ They did not intend to recognize the Comecon as an equal interlocutor for two main reasons: first, it was intrinsically different from the European Community and “lacked the competence to conclude a trade agreement on behalf of its members”;⁴⁸ second, it was an expression of Soviet dominance over its allies. West Germany’s Ostpolitik, launched by Willy Brandt in the mid-1960s, instead, aimed at broadening, strengthening and diversifying relations with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, without giving the Soviet Union any chance of increasing its strategic control on the region. The EC’s growing competence in commerce rules, however, objectively changed the context, opportunities and patterns of East-West trade. The issue of possible EC–Comecon talks, therefore, remained controversial in Eastern Europe. This was not only an economic question, but also a political one: it was an issue of legitimation, control and political balance in Europe’s détente. The East German Foreign Ministry’s analyses are full of references to the EC’s so-called “differentiation policy” (*Differenzierungspolitik*): a strategy of bilateral relations with socialist countries, by which it allegedly tried to diminish the Comecon’s cohesion. This interpretation was in part ideologically biased, but it was not entirely far from reality.

- 22 Following Angela Romano’s remarks, “the EEC’s Ostpolitik was at the same time defensive and assertive. It was defensive towards the (perceived) Soviet attempts at hampering future Western integration and diluting the Community into a wider pan-European system; it was assertive in promoting direct relations between the communist states and the EEC, which would advance the latter’s influence in the Continent, if not in the wider international arena.”⁴⁹ Over time, the GDR came to consider the EC’s *Differenzierungspolitik* as irreversible, due to the growing number of bilateral arrangements between the European Commission and single socialist countries. Besides, the GDR was itself an exception in East-West trade. The circumstance that inner-German exchanges were considered as internal trade since the Berlin Agreement of 1951 made the GDR a special case for the EC as well. When the Treaty of Rome was signed in 1957, a Protocol was added that ensured the continuity of that status, not without recurring complaints from other member states. Both direct and indirect advantages stemmed from this arrangement, which mostly favoured the GDR as a member of the Comecon.⁵⁰

The EC’s trade rules and the cost of energy divide the Comecon

- 23 In the mid-1970s, the Comecon countries grew uneasy about the expanded competences of the EC in the fields of foreign policy and trade. They reacted in different ways. Against Soviet, East German and Bulgarian opposition to the EC’s official recognition, primarily for political reasons, other countries, instead, saw the advantages of accepting the EC as a partner, essentially for economic motives. Romania, Poland and Hungary claimed that Comecon countries should be allowed more flexibility in their bilateral relations with the Community.⁵¹ As Romano suggests, “Most Eastern European countries had an urgent need to gain better access to the EEC market, and so became more inclined to recognize the Community.”⁵² The Council of Ministers decided to transfer the power to sign trade agreements with non-EC countries to Community

competence, starting from January 1975; at the same time, the European Commission offered to open new trade negotiations with socialist countries in November 1974. In the following years, while such domains as raw materials, technology transfers, credits and exports remained largely under member states' competence, the EC integration in import arrangements increased significantly.⁵³ Despite its special position with inner-German trade, then, the GDR's allegiance to the USSR was not without consequences, in particular as far as the steel sector was concerned: since late 1977, in fact, the EC decided that third countries exporting steel into the Common Market should sign bilateral arrangements only with the Community.⁵⁴

- 24 In 1976, moreover, the East German government issued its five-year plan (running until 1980), suggesting that foreign trade with Western Europe must be increased and diversified. It also set the goals of modernizing the industry, investing on the innovation of manufacturing processes, building new plants and expanding the existing ones, with a focus on such key sectors as electrical engineering, electronics and the production of machine tools and other recently grown fields like chemical and petrochemical industries. Finally, it promoted the expansion of other sectors, such as the production of scientific measurement instruments, typewriters and components for computing and telecommunications industry. Most significantly, the five-year plan of what was the most industrialized state of Eastern Europe recommended to invest on energy efficiency, labour productivity and increased exports.⁵⁵ Obviously, some of these goals were bound to encounter growing difficulties when meeting Common Market rules. Certain accords, however, were still possible on a bilateral basis. Credit agreements and clearing arrangements were repeatedly asked for by East German politicians and officials⁵⁶ in order to secure imports from Western Europe, despite the country's growing indebtedness, while at the same time increasing exports into the EC, when this was still allowed.
- 25 Over time, the East German stance towards the EC changed. In the wake of Soviet transition to Gorbachev's leadership, East Berlin turned to the Community, like all its Comecon partners, even though formal bilateral relations were not established until August 1988, after EC-Comecon mutual recognition in June, and with the Single Market program in progress, due in 1992.⁵⁷
- 26 The GDR, finally, was severely affected by the world energy crisis: highly dependent on Soviet energy supplies, until 1976 it used to pay the oil imported from the USSR at a price that was set around 50% of the price applied on the world market; in 1978, instead, the same resource was purchased at a price set around 80% of the world market one.⁵⁸ With the long and arduous transition from Brezhnev to Gorbachev, the Soviet Union proved less and less capable – or willing – to meet the economic needs of its European allies, most of all in the field of energy supplies. Soviet oil supply to the GDR was cut first in 1981, then again in 1984, at a time when the SED was in no position to face another reason for social discontent.⁵⁹ At the same time, Soviet exports of energy resources increased dramatically during the 1970s, to the advantage of the West: in 1970 such products covered less than 1/5 of total Soviet exports, whereas in 1980 they amounted to about 2/3 of them.⁶⁰

The internationalization of trade

- 27 Beside the energy shock, another critical factor affected the socialist economies of Eastern Europe. The Comecon countries were facing the consequences of the broader and long-lasting phenomenon of globalization and the internationalization of world trade. Gareth Dale has explored the impact of this process on the GDR, by analysing the dilemma between the globalization of trade and the socialist autarkic model.⁶¹ The changing landscape of world trade had raised special concern in the SED leadership since the 1960s: the GDR's lack of international competitiveness, in fact, went along with its political isolation. To bridge this gap, since the late years of Ulbricht's leadership, the SED tried to foster closer integration with the Comecon countries, a better exchange of know-how and research and an overall "socialist internationalization". But those attempts found weak participation and the end results were narrow. The GDR remained in an impasse between further socialist integration and its potential entry into the global market.⁶² According to Pavel Szobi, the improvement of economic cooperation among socialist countries was hampered by two main factors: first, the Comecon was basically a network of bilateral relations, not a supranational organization with its own powers; second, at least until the 1960s, those countries were supposed to follow the Soviet economic and development model, with high expenditure on the heavy industry, long-term investments and narrow space to foster "country specifics."⁶³
- 28 "Socialist integration," indeed, seemed to many economists in Eastern Europe as a non-promising path, as "coordination of national planning at the Comecon level [...] would reproduce and amplify most of the rigidities and shortcomings already afflicting the national level. [...] It was then easier and more rewarding to expand links with the West rather than within the bloc."⁶⁴ The failure of that experiment was actually recognized by SED Secretary General Erich Honecker himself, "Economic co-operation and specialization in the Western World made considerable progress while it did not work in the COMECON, surely absolutely not in the new issues related to the Scientific-Technical Revolution."⁶⁵ The GDR, therefore, faced the costs of trying to create its own national technology in such expanding industrial fields as computing and electronics, but remained unable to boost its competitiveness in the face of Western industrial products.⁶⁶ Its economic weakness was the result of slow technological development that prevented it from reaching the forefront of industrial competition, the structural obstacle of being an energy net-importing country and the growing pressure of social discontent, which the SED tried to control through the Ministry for Security, but was unable to eradicate. As André Steiner observes, from 1970-71 the GDR began to include in its economic planning such ideas as the enhancing of life and cultural standards of East German population, that should result from an increase in production, stronger economic efficiency and technological and scientific progress. In an attempt to appease social tensions, the 1976 *Einheit von Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik* tried to integrate those goals.⁶⁷
- 29 Looking at the broader Eastern European context, trade with Western Europe was also a way to overcome the failure of socialist integration.⁶⁸ Two remarks seem relevant in this respect. First, while the failure of Comecon integration and the lack of competitive technology and products revealed the socialist systems' deficiencies, the SED never gave up the idea of Socialism as a superior system. Second, in the 1970s, in the wake of

the GDR's international recognition, the East German party seems to have gone through a sort of adaptation process, in which ideological dogmas remained unquestioned, as well as socialist cohesion in fundamental political and security matters, while at the same time the East German government engaged in a constant search for political dialogue and trade arrangements with Western countries, where the SED did not look for local communist parties as their primary interlocutors anymore. This adaptation process left limited room to theoretical reflection on the future of Socialism: ideas, beliefs and ideological coherence became inconsistent with East Germany's need (and ambition) to find its own place in a changing Europe, a region where the EC had become able to set the rules of commerce.

Conclusive remarks

- 30 What were, in conclusion, East Germany's perception, image and vision of Europe? To the East Germans, the European Union was a powerful idea, with some good chances to be realized, despite the economic and development gaps that affected the EC and the divisive impact of its member states' national agendas. It was represented as a possible threat and an enemy entity, but it was treated as a potential trading partner, while the EC member states were repeatedly asked to mediate between their common institutions and the socialist countries. In its vision of Europe, the SED saw *détente* as an absolute priority: not only was it the key to the GDR's success, but it was also the only viable option for its very existence as a sovereign state. Despite an ambitious *Westpolitik*, however, East Germany appeared as a rather passive spectator: European integration was just happening; the EC was becoming a stronger and more complex agent to deal with; there were real chances that it might turn into a political union, with its own currency and foreign and defence policy. Yet, the growth of the EC was not a phenomenon that the GDR seemed really willing to challenge, nor that the Soviet Union would plausibly try to slow down. The USSR did not even look ready to reward the East German loyal opposition to the recognition of the EC with any real guarantee of a better economic treatment, for example in energy supplies. The pros and cons of the EC were well-known and thoroughly scrutinized, however the GDR remained rigidly aligned to Soviet positions and anchored to the same "differentiation policy" that it criticized in the West. While perfectly aware of the profound change that was happening in Europe, maybe more than one could expect from a closed political and social system, the SED did simply handle it. There were irreconcilable contradictions between its intention to play a dynamic role and its ability to do so. This was probably the result of that separation between the spheres of ideology, economy, politics and security.
- 31 European *détente* was the domain of ideological, political and societal comparison and of regional integration, in its different forms: economic, financial, scientific, technological, institutional, intergovernmental and supranational integration. Ideas, political gestures and speeches, economic theories, traded goods and resources, business contacts, transnational movements and projects went through and across the two blocs, flowing more easily and rapidly than in the past and creating new images of the "other" Europe. New forms of interdependence grew, together with a new awareness of the potential and risks of *Ost* and *Westpolitik*.

- 32 The vision of the future of Europe of the SED and the PCI in this context could not be more different. The SED hoped for the continuation of the existing order and balance of power, whereas a significant part of the PCI saw the natural breakdown of both, not only because the two blocs were experiencing a time of crisis, but also because the two defensive alliances were proving unable to ensure a peaceful continuation of that balance. Eurocommunism involved a dynamic conception of détente and a disruptive attitude towards the Cold War order. Despite its revolutionary legacy and its representation of the foreseeable fall of capitalism, the SED, instead, adapted itself to the new European context, to make sure East Germany could seize the chances it offered, while at the same time preventing a domestic breakdown.

NOTES

1. See for example, Angela Romano, Federico Romero (eds.), *European Socialist Regimes' Fateful Engagement with the West. National Strategies in the Long 1970s*, London, Routledge, 2021; Simon Godard, *Le laboratoire de l'internationalisme. Le CAEM et la construction du bloc socialiste (1949-1989)*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2021; Angela Romano, "Untying Cold War knots: The EEC and Eastern Europe in the long 1970s," *Cold War History*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2014, pp. 153-173; Suvi Kansikas, *Socialist Countries Face the European Community. Soviet Bloc Controversies over East West Trade*, Frankfurt-am-Main, Peter Lang, 2014.
2. On the history of the SED and the Stasi's, see for example Jens Gieseke, Hermann Wentker (eds.), *Die Geschichte der SED. Eine Bestandsaufnahme*, Berlin, Metropol Verlag, 2011; Hermann Weber, *Geschichte der DDR*, München, DTV, 1989; Jens Gieseke, *Die Stasi 1945-1990*, München, Pantheon Verlag, 2011; Hubertus Knabe, *Die unterwanderte Republik. Stasi im Westen*, Berlin, Propyläen, 1999. On the German Democratic Republic's foreign policy, see also Oliver Bange, *Sicherheit und Staat: die Bündnis- und Militärpolitik der DDR im internationalen Kontext 1969 bis 1990*, Berlin, Links Christoph Verlag, 2017; Hermann Wentker, *Aussenpolitik in engen Grenzen. Die DDR im internationalen System 1949-1989*, München, Oldenbourg Verlag, 2007; Joachim Scholtysek, *Die Aussenpolitik der DDR*, München, Oldenbourg, 2003; Heiner Timmermann (ed.), *Die DDR in Europa - Zwischen Isolation und Öffnung*, Münster, LIT, 2005; Oliver Bange, Bernd Lemke (eds.), *Wege zur Wiedervereinigung. Die beiden deutschen Staaten in ihren Bündnissen 1970 bis 1990*, München, Oldenbourg, 2013; Ingrid Muth, *Die DDR Aussenpolitik 1949-1972. Inhalte, Strukturen, Mechanismen*, Berlin, Links Verlag, 2000; Erhard Crome, Jochen Franzke, Raimund Kramer (eds.), *Die verschwundene Diplomatie. Beiträge zur Aussenpolitik der DDR*, Berlin, Berliner Debatte Wiss-Verl, 2003.
3. On this theme, see for example Maximilian Graf, "Die DDR und die EWG 1957-1990," *Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2019, pp. 21-35; Paul Szobi, "Between ideology and pragmatism: the CSSR, the GDR and West European companies in the 1970s and 1980s," *European Review of History*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2014, pp. 255-269; Suvi Kansikas, "Acknowledging economic realities. The CMEA policy change vis-à-vis the European Community, 1970-3," *European Review of History*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2014, pp. 311-328; André Steiner, *The Plans that Failed: An Economic History of the GDR*, New York and Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2010; Gareth Dale, *Between State Capitalism and Globalization: The Collapse of the East German Economy*, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2004.

4. See for example, Simon Godard, *Le laboratoire de l'internationalisme*, *op. cit.*; Angela Romano, Federico Romero (eds.), *European Socialist Regimes' Fateful Engagement with the West.*, *op. cit.*; of the same authors, "European Socialist regimes facing globalisation and European co-operation: dilemmas and responses – introduction," *European Review of History*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2014.
5. Laurien Crump, Simon Godard, "Reassessing Communist International Organisations: A Comparative Analysis of COMECON and the Warsaw Pact in relation to their Cold War Competitors," *Contemporary European History*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2018, pp. 85-109.
6. Antonio Varsori, *La Cenerentola d'Europa? L'Italia e l'integrazione europea dal 1947 a oggi*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2010, pp. 285-286.
7. See for example Angela Romano, *From Détente in Europe to European Détente. How the West Shaped the Helsinki CSCE*, Bruxelles, Peter Lang, 2009; Oliver Bange, Gottfried Niedhart (eds.), *Helsinki 1975 and the Transformation of Europe*, Oxford, Berghahn, 2008; Carla Meneguzzi Rostagni (eds.), *The Helsinki Process. A Historical Reappraisal*, Padova, CEDAM, 2005.
8. Antonio Varsori, *La Cenerentola d'Europa?*, *op. cit.*, pp. 286-287.
9. The different aspects of this crisis have been the object of Cold War history research in the past twenty years. They have been thoroughly analysed, among others, in Leopoldo Nuti (ed.), *The Crisis of Détente in Europe. From Helsinki to Gorbachev, 1975-1985*, London, Routledge, 2009. On international détente see also, for example, Jussi Hanhimäki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente: American Foreign Policy and the Transformation of the Cold War*, Lincoln (NE), Potomac Books, 2012; Poul Villaume, Odd Arne Westad, *Perforating the Iron Curtain: European Détente, Transatlantic Relations and the Cold War, 1965-1985*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanum, 2010; Wilfried Loth, Georges-Henri Soutou (eds.), *The Making of Détente: Eastern and Western Europe in the Cold War, 1965-75*, London, Routledge, 2008; Oliver Bange, Poul Villaume, *The Long Détente: Changing Concepts of Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1950s-1980s*, Budapest - New York, Central European University Press, 2016; Odd Arne Westad (ed.), *The Fall of Détente: Soviet-American Relations during the Carter Years*, Oslo, Scandinavian University Press, 1997.
10. See for example Oliver Bange, Poul Villaume (eds.), *The Long Détente*, *op. cit.*
11. Maximilian Graf, "Die DDR und die EWG 1957-1990", *art. cit.*, p. 28.
12. See for example, Ioannis Balampanidis, *Eurocommunism. From the Communist to the Radical European Left*, London, Routledge, 2019; Silvio Pons, "The Rise and Fall of Eurocommunism," in Melvyn Leffler, Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 45-65; of the same author, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo*, Turin, Einaudi, 2006 and *The Global Revolution: a History of International Communism, 1917-1991*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014; Frédéric Heurtebize, "Eurocommunism and the Contradictions of Superpower Détente," *Diplomatic History*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2017, pp. 747-771; of the same author, *Le péril rouge. Washington face à l'eurocommunisme*, Paris, PUF, 2014; Marc Lazar, *Maisons Rouges. Les partis communistes français et italien de la Libération à nos jours*, Paris, Aubiers, 1992; Irwin Wall, « L'amministrazione Carter e l'eurocomunismo », *Ricerche di storia politica*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2006, pp. 181-196; Laura Fasanaro, "The Eurocommunism Years: Italy's Political Puzzle and the Limits of the Atlantic Alliance," in Giles Scott-Smith, Valérie Aubourg, *Atlantic, Euratlantic or Europe-America? The Atlantic Community and the European Idea from Kennedy to Nixon*, Paris, Soleb, 2011, pp. 548-572; Francesco Di Palma, Wolfgang Mueller (eds.), *Kommunismus und Europa. Europapolitik und -vorstellungen europäischer kommunistischer Parteien im Kalten Krieg*, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 2016; Joane Barth Urban, *Moscow and the Italian Communist Party: From Togliatti to Berlinguer*, Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press, 1986.
13. PCI Archive at the Gramsci Foundation (Rome), Fondo Berlinguer, *Mov. op. int.*, 129, Dichiarazione comune del Pci e del Partito Comunista Francese, November 15, 1975; *Mov. Op. int.* 146, Dichiarazione comune del Partito comunista di Spagna, del Partito comunista francese e del Partito comunista italiano, Madrid, March 3, 1977. PCE stands for Spanish Communist Party.

14. Joint statement of the Secretary general of the PCI and the Secretary general of the PCF supporting the reform of the European Parliament, Rome, December 1978, *L'Unità*, December 18, 1978.
15. I have made this argument and analysed the differences in bilateral relations between the SED and, respectively, the PCI, the PCF and the PCE in my article "L'eurocomunismo nelle carte della SED," in *Mondo contemporaneo*, no. 3, 2006, pp. 63-95, in particular pp. 78-93.
16. Berlinguer was Secretary general of the PCI from 1972 until his death in 1984. On the PCI in those years see for example, Silvio Pons, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo*, *op. cit.*; of the same author, *I comunisti italiani e gli altri. Visioni e legami internazionali nel mondo del Novecento*, Turin, Einaudi, 2021; Francesco Barbagallo, Enrico Berlinguer, Roma, Carocci, 2006; Roberto Gualtieri, "The Italian Political System and Détente (1963-1981)," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2004, pp. 428-449; Roberto Gualtieri (ed.), *Il PCI nell'Italia repubblicana (1943-1991)*, Rome, Carocci, 2001; Valentine Lomellini, "The PCI and the USA: Rehearsal of a Difficult Dialogue in the Era of Détente," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2015, pp. 346-360; Laura Fasanaro, "Neither in One Bloc, Nor in the Other: Berlinguer's Vision of the End of the Cold War," in Frédéric Bozo *et al.* (eds.), *Visions of the End of the Cold War in Europe (1945-1990)*, New York, Berghahn Books, 2012, pp. 163-176.
17. BStU, MfS, HVA, 76, "Auskunft über die Politik und innerparteiliche Situation der Italienischen Kommunistischen Partei (IKP) unter besonderer Berücksichtigung gegnerischer Wertungen und Aktivitäten, 16. März 1979."
18. Laura Fasanaro, "Neither in One Bloc, Nor in the Other," *art. cit.*
19. I will better explain the goals of East Germany's Westpolitik in part 3.
20. Laura Fasanaro, *La DDR e l'Italia. Politica, commercio e ideologia nell'Europa del cambiamento (1973-1985)*, Rome, Carocci, 2016, chap. 3 and 7.
21. See for example, BStU, MfS, HA XVIII, 7616, "Botschaft der DDR in Italien, Gespräch mit Dr. Fracassi am 7.4.76 – Gesprächsvermerk", Rome, April 7, 1976; Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (hereafter PAAA), Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der DDR (hereafter, MfAA), ZR 1228/87; "Vermerk über das Gespräch des Aussenministers [...] Oskar Fischer, mit dem italienischen Aussenhandelsminister [...] Ossola am 27.10.1978, Rome October 27, 1978. See also BStU, MfS, HA XVIII, 7616, Gerhard Beil, "Information über die 4. Tagung der Gemischten Regierungskommission DDR-Italien, Italien-DDR, Berlin, den 20.5.1977"; same folder, "Protokoll der IV. Tagung der Gemischter Kommission im Rahmen des Abkommens zwischen der Regierung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und der Regierung der Italienischen Republik über wirtschaftliche, industrielle und technische Zusammenarbeit vom 18.4.1973;" same folder, "Gemeinsames Programm der Gemischten Kommission der Regierung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und der Regierung der Italienischen Republik für die wirtschaftliche, industrielle und technische Zusammenarbeit in den Jahren 1977 und 1978." A more detailed description of Italian-East German trade agreements can be found in Laura Fasanaro, *La DDR e l'Italia*, *op. cit.*, Ch. 5.
22. BStU, MfS, HA XVIII, 7616, Gerhard Beil, "Information über die 4. Tagung der Gemischten Regierungskommission [...], den 20.5.1977," *doc. cit.*
23. Odd Arne Westad, "Beginnings of the End: How the Cold War Crumbled," in Silvio Pons and Federico Romero, *Reinterpreting the End of the Cold War*, London, Frank Cass, 2004, p. 73; M. Gorbachev, *Le idee di Berlinguer ci servono ancora*, Rome, Sisifo, 1994, pp. 16-20.
24. Hermann Axen and Kurt Hager were both *Politbüro* members: the former was the SED Central Committee's Secretary responsible for International Relations, the latter one of the party's ideologues.
25. See for example Bundesarchiv (hereafter BA, SAPMO, IV 2/2.035/92, Einschätzung der Gemeinsamen Erklärung der Französischen Kommunistischen Partei und der Italienischen Kommunistischen Partei vom 17. November 1975; Büro Axen, IV 2/2.035/35, Bericht über die Berliner Konferenz der Kommunistischen und Arbeiterparteien Europas (29. Und 30. Juni 1976);

see also, PCI Archive at the Istituto Gramsci, Fondo Berlinguer, Mov. op. int., 140, Discorso di Enrico Berlinguer Segretario generale del Pci alla Conferenza dei partiti comunisti e operai d'Europa, Berlin, June 29-30, 1976.

26. BA, SAPMO, Büro Axen, IV 2/2.035/35, Zur Einschätzung der Berliner Konferenz der kommunistischen und Arbeiterparteien Europas 1976 und zur Entwicklung der kommunistischen Bewegung, 7. Dezember 1976.

27. I have previously made these arguments, based on the SED's records, in Laura Fasanaro, "Eurocommunism. An East German perspective," in Leopoldo Nuti (ed.), *The Crisis of Détente in Europe*, op. cit., pp. 244-255.

28. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (hereafter PAAA), Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der DDR (hereafter, MfAA), C 3525, Information note and analysis of the Tindemans Report (no date, probably beginnings 1976), "Zum Tindemans Bericht [...]. Zur Zielsetzung u. zu den Konzeptionen des Berichtes."

29. PAAA, MfAA, C 3525, Botschaft der DDR in Italien, [...], Zum Ergebnis der Konsultationen des belgischen Ministerpräsidenten Tindemann mit führenden italienischen Politikern zur Vorbereitung seines "Berichts über die Europäische Union" and die EWG-Gipfel-konferenz, Dezember 1975, Rom, 19.10.1975.

30. PAAA, MfAA, C 3525, Information note and analysis of the Tindemans Report (no date, probably beginnings 1976), "Zum Tindemans Bericht," doc. cit.; C 3525, Account of the content of the Tindemans Report, "Zum Tindemans-Bericht über die Europäische Union" (Quelle: HA Grundsatzfragen und Planung), no date; C 3525, "Entwurf. Einschätzung der Perspektive zur Schaffung einer 'Europäischen Union' in Westeuropa und Schlussfolgerungen für unsere Haltung, 21.4.1976".

31. PAAA, MfAA, C 3525, Information note and analysis of the Tindemans Report (no date, probably beginnings 1976), "Zum Tindemans Bericht," doc. cit.

32. *Ibid.*

33. PAAA, MfAA, C 3525, Account of the content of the Tindemans Report, "Zum Tindemans-Bericht", no date, doc. cit.

34. PAAA, MfAA, C 3525, Information note and analysis of the Tindemans Report (no date, probably beginnings 1976), "Zum Tindemans Bericht," doc. cit.

35. *Ibid.*

36. PAAA, MfAA, C 3525, Account of the content of the Tindemans Report, "Zum Tindemans-Bericht", no date, doc. cit.

37. PAAA, MfAA, C 3525, Information note and analysis of the Tindemans Report (no date, probably beginnings 1976), "Zum Tindemans Bericht," doc. cit.

38. PAAA, MfAA, C 3525, "Entwurf. Einschätzung der Perspektive zur Schaffung einer 'Europäischen Union', 21.4.1976," doc. cit.

39. Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Stasi-Unterlagen (hereafter BStU), Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (hereafter MfS), HVA, Nr. 85, "Wirtschaftspolitische Informationsübersicht Nr. 9/78, 6. Oktober 1978."

40. BStU. MfS, ZAIG, Nr. 6273, "Leiterinformation über den Stand der Auseinandersetzungen zwischen den imperialistischen Hauptmächten über die weitere Gestaltung der Ost-West-Wirtschaftsbeziehungen in Vorbereitung auf das Wirtschaftsgipfeltreffen vom 28.-30.5.1983 in Williamsburg/USA, Berlin, 15.3.1983."

41. See for example BA, SAPMO, Büro Hager, IV B2/2.024/129, "Vorschläge für die Zusammenarbeit zwischen der KPdSU und der SED auf theoretischem und ideologischem Gebiet", Berlin, June 22, 1973.

42. Hermann Wentker, *Aussenpolitik in engen Grenzen*, op. cit., pp. 446 and ff.; on this topic see also, Anja Hanisch, *Die DDR im KSZE-Prozess 1972-1985. Zwischen Ostabhängigkeit, Westabgrenzung und Ausreisebewegung*, München, Oldenbourg Verlag, 2012; Federica Caciagli, *La Germania Est tra Mosca*

e Bonn. *Ostpolitik e Westpolitik nel rilancio del processo di sicurezza in Europa (1969-1975)*, Rome, Carocci, 2010.

43. Hermann Wentker, *Aussenpolitik in engen Grenzen*, op. cit., pp. 371 and ff.
44. *Ibid.*; see also PAAA, MfAA, C 3519, "Abteilung Westeuropa. Massnahmen für die Weiterentwicklung der bilateralen Beziehungen der DDR zu Italien im Zeitraum 1975/76."
45. See Oliver Bange, "'Keeping détente alive': inner-German relations under Helmut Schmidt and Erich Honecker, 1974-1982", in L. Nuti (ed.), *The Crisis of Détente in Europe*, op. cit., pp. 230-243.
46. Archive of the Craxi Foundation, B. 155/Fasc. 39, Ufficio del consigliere diplomatico del Presidente del Consiglio dei ministri, "Nota sui rapporti bilaterali Italia-RDT in vista della visita di Erich Honecker in Italia, 23-24 aprile 1985" (no date, probably April 22, 1985).
47. Maximilian Graf, *Die DDR und die EWG 1957-1990*, op. cit., pp. 25-27.
48. David W. Kennedy, David Webb, *Integration: Eastern Europe and the European Economic Communities*, 28 Colum.J. Transnat'l L. 633, 1990 (available at, <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:16121164>, accessed January 27, 2022), p. 636.
49. Angela Romano, "Untying Cold War knots," art. cit., pp. 159-160.
50. M. Graf, *Die DDR und die EWG 1957-1990*, op. cit., pp. 22-28.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
52. A. Romano, "Untying Cold War knots," art. cit., p. 162.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 163-167. See also Suvi Kansikas, *Socialist Countries face the European Community*, op. cit.
54. M. Graf, *Die DDR und die EWG 1957-1990*, op. cit., pp. 22-27.
55. BStU, MfS, HA XVIII Nr. 6428, "US Department of Commerce, Overseas Business Reports, German Democratic Republic Five-Year Plan Summary and Commercial Analysis," September 1977.
56. M. Graf, *Die DDR und die EWG 1957-1990*, op. cit., p. 26.
57. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-29. On the late phase of the 1980s, see also Wolfgang Mueller, "Die UdSSR und die Europäische Integration," in Michael Gehler (ed.), *Vom Gemeinsamen Markt zur Europäischen Unionsbildung. 50 Jahre Römische Verträge 1957-2007*, Wien-Köln-Weimar, Böhlau, 2009, pp. 617-662, quoted by M. Graf, op. cit., footnote 26.
58. André Steiner, *The Plans that Failed*, op. cit., p. 162. See also the analysis of the US Department of Commerce on the GDR of 1977 entitled "US Department of Commerce, Overseas Business Reports, German Democratic Republic Five-Year Plan Summary and Commercial Analysis," September 1977, BStU, MfS, HA XVIII, Nr. 6428.
59. See H. Wentker, *Aussenpolitik in engen Grenzen*, op. cit., pp. 477 and ff.
60. W. Lippert, "Economic Diplomacy and East-West Trade During the Era of Détente: Strategy or Obstacle for the West?," in L. Nuti (ed.), *The Crisis of Détente in Europe*, op. cit., p. 198. Of the same author, see also *The Economic Diplomacy of Ostpolitik: Origins of NATO's Energy Dilemma*, New York, Berghahn, 2010.
61. See Gareth Dale, *Between State Capitalism and Globalization*, op. cit.
62. *Ibid.*, pp. 163-169.
63. Pavel Szobi, "Between ideology and pragmatism," art. cit., p. 256.
64. A. Romano, "Untying Cold War knots," art. cit., p. 156.
65. Honecker's quote is reported by Pavel Szobi, "Between ideology and pragmatism," art. cit., p. 257.
66. *Ibid.*, pp. 255-269.
67. André Steiner, *The Plans that Failed*, op. cit., pp. 142-144; see also Hermann Wentker, *Aussenpolitik in engen Grenzen*, op. cit., p. 391. For a broader view on structural economic evolution in the two German states, see Werner Plumpe, André Steiner (eds), *Der Mythos von der postindustriellen Welt. Wirtschaftlicher Strukturwandel in Deutschland 1960-1990*, Göttingen, Wallstein Verlag, 2016.

68. Angela Romano, Federico Romero, "European Socialist regimes facing globalization," art. cit., p. 159.

ABSTRACTS

Between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s a deep socio-economic transformation crossed both Eastern and Western Europe in very different, yet interrelated ways. In both regions, despite profoundly diverse contexts, communist parties reshaped their perception, image and vision of Europe accordingly. This article looks into East Germany's perspective on some key elements of European politics, from Italian Eurocommunism to European integration, in the aftermath of the German Democratic Republic's international recognition. The article explores three main aspects. First, it looks into the different reactions of, respectively, the East German Socialist Unity Party (SED) and the Italian Communist Party (PCI) to Europe's momentous transition. In this respect, it argues that the former mainly focused on handling that change, by subsequently adapting the GDR's inner and foreign policy, whereas the latter engaged in an attempt at leading and steering change, both domestically and internationally, through its Eurocommunist line. Second, the article investigates the East German perception of the "European Union" idea and reveals that this was seen as a project with significant political implications, that went beyond the visible economic power of the European Community. Third, the article reconstructs some of the main aspects of the GDR's *Westpolitik*, within the context – and the limits – of the economic and energy crisis that in distinct ways involved both Western and Eastern Europe in the 1970s.

Entre 1975 et 1985 l'Europe a vécu une phase de profonde transformation socio-économique. Bien que les contextes de l'Europe orientale et occidentale soient évidemment très différents, ce bouleversement a touché les deux espaces : ainsi, les partis communistes de l'Est et de l'Ouest ont dû reconsidérer aussi leurs images et visions de l'Europe. Cet article analyse la perception dans la République démocratique allemande (RDA) de certains thèmes fondamentaux de la politique européenne, comme l'eurocommunisme, en particulier la version du Parti communiste italien (PCI), et l'évolution de l'intégration européenne. Trois questions sont analysées dans cet article. D'abord, les différentes réactions des partis communistes est-allemand et italien aux changements économiques et sociaux dans les deux pays. Il semble que le Parti socialiste unifié de la RDA (SED) ait essayé surtout de contrôler le défi du changement, tandis que le PCI voulait avant tout le favoriser et le conduire dans la direction de l'eurocommunisme. L'article se focalise ensuite sur l'idée de l'« Union européenne » dans la perspective du SED. Au milieu des années 1970, la portée de cette idée apparaît déjà forte du point de vue politique, au-delà de l'évidente puissance économique de la Communauté européenne, et malgré ses divisions internes. L'article analyse, enfin, quelques aspects de la *Westpolitik* est-allemande, dans le contexte de la crise économique et énergétique européenne, et compte tenu des limites posées par cette crise.

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Mots-clés: République démocratique allemande (RDA), parti communiste italien (PCI), eurocommunisme, intégration européenne, crise économique

Keywords: German Democratic Republic (GDR), Italian Communist Party, eurocommunism, European integration, economic crisis

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