

GDR and Soviet-bloc policy towards India, 1971-1989

By Andreas Hilger

During the first decades of the Cold War, the GDR constituted a rather special example of Eastern bloc countries' relations with India. Until the establishment of diplomatic relations, East German diplomacy in India – as in the rest of the world – was preoccupied with lobbying for recognition of the “second” German state. [1] After the East German-Indian exchange of full-fledged representatives in 1972, [2] the GDR was at least theoretically ready to play its full part in Soviet bloc initiatives. The proven loyalty of the SED to the Socialist cause, the GDR's relevance for East-West relations, and Honecker's rise to power had strengthened Moscow's readiness to rely on East-Berlin in international affairs, including relations with developing countries. At the same time, the new quality of East German-Indian connections could permit the development of distinct East German positions in India. In view of this constellation, material from the archives of the former GDR is of special importance for the analysis of Soviet bloc policy towards India during the 1970s and 1980s. By providing insight into information exchanged at various levels between Moscow and the fraternal party in East Berlin, the documents add to our knowledge about Soviet deliberations concerning India in this period. [3] At the same time, the exchange of opinions and assessments sheds additional light on specifics of intra-bloc communication and coordination during the Brezhnev and post-Brezhnev eras. Soviet policy towards South Asia – situated within the broader context of the Cold War and Soviet-Chinese tensions – was expected to serve as a guideline for East Germany, and it was expected to be supported or complemented by East Berlin's undertakings. Simultaneously, the Kremlin's confidential reports about Soviet-Indian summits (and general relations) intended to demonstrate the correctness of Soviet politics at any given stage of relations between the Socialist states and India. Therefore, Moscow's optimistic general evaluation of Indian developments or of Delhi's international positions and reactions tended to be an ambivalent guideline for East Berlin decision-makers. [4] On the other hand, the imprecise character of Soviet explanations gave a certain leeway to the SED's elaboration of specific accentuations within the Socialist framework. The extensive archival legacy of the SED regime makes it possible to reconstruct the East German strategies and priorities in India relatively comprehensively. In sum, the East Berlin documentation helps to describe Soviet parameters and to analyze the East German adaptation in this vital field of international relations under the Socialist, anti-Imperialist paradigm.

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Soviet-Indian relations reached a new peak with the signing of the celebrated “Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation” on 9 August 1971. Due to archival conditions in Russia and India, our knowledge about Moscow’s and New Delhi’s ultimate motives behind the agreement remains somewhat sketchy. Naturally, the Chinese threat and dreaded repercussions of the US-China-Pakistan triangle loomed large in both capitals, but these broader conceptions have yet to be balanced against the immediate impact of the East Pakistan crisis, of Soviet-Pakistan relations, of internal Indian developments, and of other non-strategic issues such as economic ambitions on final content and timing of the pact. [5]

As Surjit Mansingh has pointed out, the broad spectrum of the treaty allowed for flexible interpretations. In 1971, Gromyko stressed the economic perspectives, while his partner Swaran Singh clearly highlighted military aspects. The positions changed after India’s military victory against Pakistan. Now, Soviet interests in the context of collective security intensified, but the Indian side began to focus on economic problems. [6] Under these conditions, East German observers saw Brezhnev’s visit to India in November 1973 not only as support for Indira Gandhi’s position in India or as chance to deepen personal relations, but as an attempt to overcome palpable differences of opinion. [7]

In Moscow’s view, of course, Brezhnev’s visit was an unqualified success. [8] In any case, the talks in New Delhi would define the central issues of Soviet-Indian relations for years to come.

As in the 1950s and 1960s, Moscow continued to follow closely India’s domestic developments. The Kremlin had not given up hope concerning the allegedly “inevitable” blossoming of Socialism in India within the framework of intensive Soviet-Indian contacts. [9] Indira Gandhi’s course undoubtedly enlivened Moscow’s speculations. Although they remained at the level of speculation, without any basis in Indian reality, the hope of exerting indirect influence on domestic developments via economic, cultural, scientific-technological, etc. cooperation proved to be a durable hallmark of Soviet activities.

At the same time, however, Moscow was compelled to note the constantly non-Socialist class character of the Delhi government [10] – therefore, one might speculate how sincere the professed Soviet euphoria on the occasion of Gandhi’s re-election in 1980 really was. [11]

The unshaken belief in the opportunities for international cooperation with India in a Cold War world was one of the Kremlin’s main arguments. [12] The documents show Moscow’s

persistent eagerness to get Indian support in as many issues of the global Cold War as possible, as well as evidence of Soviet-Chinese enmity (Near East, Indian Ocean, Horn of Africa, South Africa, disarmament). Within this general framework, the USSR attached special importance to India's role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The Moscow-Delhi connection was supposed to serve as vivid example of the Soviet readiness to maintain equal and peaceful relations with all nations, thus enhancing Moscow's prestige and attractiveness among possible allies (and mitigating criticism) in the Third World. In addition, Gandhi's anticipated leftist orientation seemed to open new Socialist channels of influence on the "third forces" that the Soviet bloc was attempting to woo – or, in the words of the CPSS bureaucracy in 1976, to provide an opportunity "to activate the anti-Imperialist orientation of the Non-Aligned Movement". [13]

As indicated above, from time to time, Moscow saw reason to doubt the "progressive" merits of Indian governments. Soviet uneasiness grew during the interim rule of the Janata Party under Morarji Desai in the late 1970s. Discrepancies in global and Cold War issues, however, were not confined to the Desai government (as seen in discussions of non-proliferation, Asian collective security, international economic relations, in assessments of US Middle East policy, etc.). The Kremlin's reports reveal two characteristic reactions to Soviet-Indian disagreements. The Soviet leadership continued to interpret Indian positions through the lens of ideology and regarded deviations from expectations as Indian "inconsequence", due to the class character of the Indian governments. [14] Secondly, Moscow attached special importance to India's repeated reassurances of the perpetuity of bilateral friendship. Obviously, Soviet leaders regarded these promises as insurance against any conceivable developments on the twisted road to the worldwide victory of Socialism. The Kremlin simply had to, and wanted to, believe that improvements in Indo-American or Indo-Chinese relations would not impinge upon the Indo-Soviet connection – and anyway, Moscow had little leverage to counter undesirable Indian international maneuvers by political means. [15]

With Mikhail Gorbachev's ascent to power, the importance of India's presumed anti-Imperialist merits for Moscow's foreign policy did not immediately vanish. Like his predecessors, the new Soviet leader approvingly took note of Rajiv Gandhi's statements in this direction. Gorbachev, for instance, informed his East German comrades in late 1985 of Gandhi's statement "that it would be worse for all developing countries of the region [South Asia] if Imperialism succeeded in strangling the revolution in Afghanistan, that the position of the countries defending their independence and autonomy against the pressure of Imperialism would be weaker if the Soviet Union did not even support a neighboring state."

[16] Gorbachev's first visit to India (November 1986) reanimated higher visions of Soviet-Indian relations. In his account, while enumerating well-known aspects and aims of the Soviet-Indian relationship, Gorbachev called for a "new dynamic" in Moscow's approach to India. The secretary-general had traditional means in mind, such as the intensification of Soviet endeavors in the economic, military, scientific-technological, propagandistic, cultural, and social fields, with appropriate regard to the opportunities of individual contacts in India; in this context, the KGB was instructed to take charge of Rajiv Gandhi's security.

Gorbachev's multi-faceted offensive bore resemblance to Nikita Khrushchev's new foreign policy towards India. Indeed, all similarities were intended. "We have lost a lot of what was accomplished in the relations with India during the 1950s and 1960s", Gorbachev complained at the Politburo session on 4 December 1986. He blamed careless Soviet politics and the general lack of Soviet charisma for the distressing results of the preceding two decades. [17]

In the long run, however, Gorbachev's policy towards developing countries would focus more exclusively on economic realities. On the one hand, this meant acknowledging the economic weakness of developing countries that "influences negatively their anti-Imperialistic positions. They are not fighters, but petitioners." [18] At the same time, the general "economization" of Soviet foreign policy was to apply to Moscow's economic relations with Asia, Africa, and Latin America as well: then, "apart from political advantages", Moscow expected countable "economic benefits" from its international commitments. [19] Once again, the demand for economic prudence in Soviet relations with the developing countries to a certain degree resembled appeals from Gorbachev's predecessors Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, and Konstantin Chernenko. [20] However, it took the combination of economic strains and of the general détente in Gorbachev's New Thinking to thoroughly reformulate traditional "anti-Imperialist" certainties and to end the Cold War's zero-sum interpretations of regional conflicts. Conclusions drawn by Vadim Zagladin, one of Gorbachev's close advisers, in 1988 may exemplify this interconnection. "The coming 15 years will be difficult. Socialism needs détente in the international arena", and as consequence: "We should do anything to orient these [developing] countries towards self-sustaining development." [21] This reorientation could be regarded by non-aligned forces and governments alike as deplorable "de-politicization", as abandonment of time-tested anti-Imperialist solidarity, or as neglect of old allies. [22]

As late as September 1971, the GDR's chief ideologues considered the East Pakistan Awami League under its leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to be "bourgeois bankrupts" and "profiteers". Nonetheless, East Berlin understood the emergence of independent Bangladesh as an opportunity to barter the East German diplomatic recognition of Bangladesh – as desired by India – for accomplishment of the official recognition of the GDR by New Delhi. [23] Having achieved this aim, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) was eager to capitalize on the new intergovernmental relations to advance its complex mixture of short- and long-term foreign policy aims. East Berlin's program reflected the GDR's quite unique and – as demonstrated in 1989/1990 – quite precarious multiple embedding in the international system, the East-West-conflict, and German-German relations. Under these circumstances, East German's relations with India had to meet manifold demands. They were to bolster the international standing and legitimacy of the GDR, especially vis-à-vis West Germany's rival claims and performance; given the specifics of the SED regime, international recognition had to compensate for its lack of domestic appeal as well. In addition, enhanced foreign economic relations were expected to facilitate East Berlin's ambitious economic programs. Finally, the GDR was willing to contribute to the worldwide progress of the Socialist cause in general. At the end of the 1980s, however, the crisis of East German-Soviet relations coincided with the final crisis of the GDR, and this multiple pressure revealed the inconsistencies and fragility of grandiloquent declarations of cooperation and friendship between the Soviet Union and East Germany, between East Germany and India, and between the Socialist bloc and the NAM. [24]

Moscow, for its part, wanted the GDR (like the other East European countries) to contribute actively to the Socialist endeavor to strengthen the anti-Imperialist – and anti-Chinese – alliance with developing countries like India. Intra-bloc consultations on different levels projected broad visions of orchestrated economic, military, propagandistic, diplomatic, cultural, or scientific-technological approaches. In 1974, for example, the Soviet representative in the Soviet-Indian Economic Committee, Gordopolov, openly stated Moscow's economic demands. According to Gordopolov, the Kremlin needed the GDR's help to make India "a bridgehead of the Socialist countries in Asia". Since the USSR was unable to fulfill all of Indian expectations, countries like the GDR, Poland, and Czechoslovakia should "step in". [25]

The East German authorities long ago had internalized the rhetoric of international Socialist interests. The SED's fundamental assessments of East German-Indian relations or strategic policy papers for long-term developments in this area reflected traditional views on India's importance in anti-Imperialist – that is, anti-American – and anti-Chinese constellations.

These East German convictions rested largely on considerations regarding India's influential role in the NAM as well as the quasi-natural alliance between Socialist and non-aligned countries and the supposedly irresistible advance of Socialism. [26] Like their comrades in Moscow, the SED's observers registered hopefully any indication of promising "progressiveness" in New Delhi's domestic and foreign policy. The Communist Party of India (CPI), as a self-interested local representative of the international Socialist community, may have strengthened the ideologically informed optimism of East Berlin. [27] In general, the SED wanted to use long-established relations with Indian Communists to support its multi-purpose policy towards India. Distorted information from the CPI's headquarters constituted just one basic problem in the traditional parallel channels of foreign relations between Socialist countries. Indeed, when New Delhi's government more definitely parted company with the CPI, it became increasingly difficult for East Berlin to synchronize contacts at the party and state levels. Apart from the undesired compulsion to define priorities, the SED had to realize that Indira Gandhi was clever enough to turn the tables and to prod East Berlin into exerting a moderating influence on Gandhi's would-be domestic allies. [28]

Incidentally, Gandhi had no problems in adjusting her profile to East German expectations when she considered it necessary. In her explanation of her decision to declare a state of emergency in 1975, she denounced all her opponents as members of a violent minority with ominous connections abroad. Analogously, the popular Jayaprakash Narayan was simply depicted as admirer of Pakistan's military dictator Ayub Khan and of Mao. Gandhi said nothing about her personal motivations or about the political and moral substance of the wide-spread Indian dissatisfaction with her rule. Instead, her letter to SED leader Erich Honecker masterly invoked basic fears of the Socialist countries: "Should small groups be allowed, with the support of Big Money, Big Media, and foreign friends, but without the support of the masses, to impose their opinions on the majority? [...] It is well-known that certain international forces do not like people who do not back down under pressure. Generally, pressure is exerted with the aid of local groups. Recently, foreign newspapers were full of reports about such activities in other countries. I sincerely hope that the Indian people will not be allowed to be caught in a situation where they have to abandon their economic policy or the policy of non-alignment and friendship between nations with different political systems." Honecker's reply suggests that Gandhi had struck the right note. [29] The following visits of Dev Kant Barooah, president of Gandhi's Congress Party, and of Gandhi herself to the GDR marked a first apogee of Indo-East German cordiality. East German reports underlined the broad agreement of both countries regarding "important international questions". Indian reticence in certain fields of vital interest to the Socialist

countries (such as collective security in Asia or the CSCE process) was conspicuously downplayed in East German interpretations. All in all, both sides seemed to regard the bilateral meetings as unique chance to present their countries and politics in the best possible light, to denigrate domestic or international opponents, and to assure each other of goodwill without undertaking far-reaching commitments; [30] in addition, India might have used the East German audience to appease Soviet uncertainties about the substance of Gandhi's course. [31]

A few months later, East Berlin had to come to terms with the change of government in New Delhi. East German authorities took the opportunity to take stock of developments in India and to reassess the chances and limits of Socialist activities. [32] The corresponding ministerial composition may serve as classic example of the application of ideology and theories of real Socialism to international relations. The first part of the paper is a lengthy description of socio-economic conditions and class forces in India. Unsurprisingly, the East Germans detected a definite crisis situation in India and observed the intensification of immanent class struggles. According to the East German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its political supervisors, "the incompetence of the Indian bourgeoisie to solve the problems in India" had created a situation that "objectively placed the establishment of a democratic alternative to the bourgeois ruling system on the agenda". Like their Moscow colleagues, East German foreign-policy experts expressed some uneasiness about the new government's declaration on India's new "real non-alignment" and "equidistance" between the superpowers. Nevertheless, diplomatic and political experts firmly believed in the continuation and improvement of Indian relations with Socialist countries in general and with the GDR in particular. The final conclusions of the East German analysts read like a translation from the Russian. India was to remain one of the core areas of East German international activities, and the GDR's rulers pledged to intensify and enhance the existing relations. Moscow's German counterpart argued that "possibilities do exist for continued anti-Imperialist co-action" as well as "for the enforcement of the peaceful strategy of the Socialist countries. [...] Additional points of contact arise from the lasting antagonism between India and the big power-hegemonic policy of the Peking leadership." [33]

In a word, East German leading circles did not see any reason to cancel Honecker's visit to India in January 1979. According to German communists, the visit met their highest expectations. Indeed, the top-level discussions resembled a global tour d' horizon covering a wide range of basically undisputed issues. In contrast to this positive tenor, East German conclusions seemed to be remarkably reticent with regard to future operationalization of the – assumed – mutual understanding for the SED's manifold foreign-policy agenda. [34]

This pattern, with its sharp discrepancies between stated chances and chosen decisions, was repeated during the 1980s. [35]

Although East German policy towards the non-aligned world since the 1970s was clearly weighted in favor of Africa, the evident unevenness in East Berlin's relations with New Delhi points to inherent frictions in the SED's decisionmaking processes that exceeded regional preferences. [36] Obviously, it was rather difficult to maintain the balance between state and internationalist goals, and between short-term and long-term policy objectives. In the case of India, East German policy seemed to prioritize national – unilaterally oriented – considerations. [37] Diplomatic exchanges or propagandistic offensives, for instance, were prone to egocentric self-aggrandizement at the expense both of persuasive power and of constructive co-operation. It is doubtful whether a simple increase in the number of East German-Indian meetings or the formalized repetition of exchanges of courtesies and reassurances was supposed to lead to a new quality of reliable relations. In practice, summits and high-level consultations were regarded as important events by East Berlin for no other reason than their having taken place. They were to confirm and to enhance the SED regime's prestige as well as its legitimacy on both the international and the domestic fronts. Honecker's increasing, ultimately decisive and more or less exclusive influence on the course of East German foreign relations (supported by his personal network) only intensified these power-preserving mechanisms.

These preferences, of course, did not run counter to the general self-conception of the Soviet bloc, and they did not by themselves impede the anticipated Socialist-Indian rapprochement. Nevertheless, the implicit narrow East German accentuation did not add anything substantial to alleged common, concrete projects like "Asian collective security" and others. The Soviet bloc's collective and individual visionary rhetoric of the 1970s or 1980s provided the necessary space for each member to define its preferred degree of activism within unchallenged parameters. In the long run, the bloc's need to demonstrate unity and coherence would come at the cost of credibility and practicability for an alliance that was unable to live up to its promises of Socialist internationalism. The development of economic relations between East Germany and India – a significant, but often underestimated subset of relations between Socialist and developing countries in the Cold War – may illustrate general contradictions and shortcomings of Soviet bloc-Indian co-operation under the conditions of state Socialism and Socialist disintegration.

Since the early 1970s, East German's policy towards India revealed, in addition to the usual legitimizing and self-promoting aspects of diplomatic activities, a certain bias in favor of economic aspects and aspirations, although the bilateral trade with India (and with non-aligned countries in general) only accounted for a smaller share in East Germany's foreign economic policy. Honecker's focus on the "unity of economic and social policy" (as announced on the SED's VIII Party Congress in June 1971) implicitly assigned new importance to economic opportunities in India. The corresponding benefits never met East Berlin's expectations or projections, since inherent disharmonies frustrated hopes for far-reaching, decisive economic results – as well as for presumed political side-effects. [38] Basically, East German economists had to meet two fundamental, closely interconnected demands. The GDR's planned economy desperately needed freely convertible foreign currency, while at the same time it had to secure "important imports" to serve domestic consumption as well as currency-earning and import-securing exports. From the very beginning, the task was complicated by Indian endeavors to increase the share of manufactured goods in the country's foreign trade. In the long run, the emerging differences were barely reconcilable. Gerhard Schürer, the long-term head of the GDR's State Planning Commission, remembers that he first came to discover the inherent antagonisms in a meeting with the General Secretary of the CPI, Rajeshwar Rao, in the 1970s. According to Schürer's reminiscences, Rao greeted him with biting criticism: "So, you are the man who wants to export more unemployment in the form of combines into our poor country". Schürer was appalled by this "un-Socialist" approach: "Are you a Luddite or a Communist?", he snapped back, but, afterwards, he realized the disturbing discrepancies in Indian and East German realities – "until now, I had only had to deal with a permanent shortage of manpower in the GDR". [39]

In 1974, a Joint East German-Indian Committee for Economic Cooperation was established to manage and coordinate the essentially contrarian economic politics. East German directives for its annual sessions demonstrated by far less concern for Indian than for East German developing aims. East German representatives always had to defend "the necessity to increase the GDR's exports as precondition for increasing Indian imports to the GDR".

[40] In addition, the precarious East German-Indian economic relations were hampered by quality problems in East German products and by the limited range of East German marketable items. In addition, India's own demand for convertible foreign currency impeded the prospects of barter trade; on the other hand, trade incentives in the form of credits were made ineffective by fierce Soviet and capitalist competition regarding the terms of credit. [41] The multi-faceted conflict of objectives and possibilities reduced the enthusiasm for concrete

co-operation on both sides. The Joint Committee skipped its regular 4th session in 1979, but the adjournment only postponed, rather than removing, the dissonances about fundamental aspects of East German – or Indian – foreign economic relations. [42] Meanwhile, the so-called Mittag Committee – established in 1977 as “Committee for co-ordination of economic, cultural, scientific-technological, and of activities in the non-civil spheres” in the developing world – had started to promote more openly the economization of GDR relations with the developing countries. Its priorities were echoed by party bureaucracies on all levels. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs followed suit as well. In general, according to the diplomatic line of approach in 1980, East German ambassadors in Asia, Africa, or Latin America had to “strengthen the anti-Imperialist potencies and to expand the GDR’s international position”, but at the same time, they had to pay special attention to the “long-term securing of our raw material supply and export”. [43] In the 1980s, the Joint Committee for Economic Cooperation basically faced the same problems as in the 1970s, [44] but for East Germany, the requirement to improve its terms of trade and trade efficiency had become more urgent. Against this background, East Berlin’s neglect of the requirements or political predilections of its partners in the developing world became more obvious and led to telling strategic reversals: Now, existing political relations were to be exploited to “realize the economic tasks” and to expand economic relations, especially with developing countries with “solvent markets”. [45] In the last few years of the GDR’s existence, its trade with India tended to follow simple rules of profit maximization. As late as October 1989, the East German ambassador in New Delhi, Wolfgang Grabowski, highlighted in his strategy papers and “orientation for 1990” the crucial importance of East German-Indian economic co-operation, since it could “contribute to finding short-, middle-, and long-term solutions to” East Berlin’s economic problems. [46]

A new focus on the education of cadres for the developing world could barely conceal the admission of economic failure: In a conversation with Karen Brutents in 1988, Günter Sieber, the head of the SED Central Committee’s Department of International Affairs with economic expertise, admitted the underlying calculations: Providing immaterial goods was, above all, “cost-saving for us”. [47] Twenty months later, the old SED guard was gone, leaving behind a shattered economy and unfulfilled promises of anti-Imperialism, cooperation, and solidarity between the Socialist states and the developing world.

[1] Johannes H. Voigt, *Die Indienpolitik der DDR. Von den Anfängen bis zur Anerkennung (1952-1972)*, Köln 2008; confidential information about visit O. Winzer to Birma, Cambodia, and India, 21 February – 3 March 1968, PA AA, MfAA, C 751/75, Bl. 22ff.

[2] In practice, the East German consulate general in New Delhi was upgraded to an embassy, consul general Herbert Fischer – an excellent expert on India and former comrade-in-arms of Gandhi –

became the GDR's first ambassador. See his reminiscences: DDR – Indien. Ein Diplomat berichtet, Berlin 1984.

[3] For all practical purposes, the Russian archives are inaccessible for this period. Thanks to the Gorbachev Foundation, the situation is becoming more transparent for the Gorbachev-era. See Mikhail Gorbachev, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 1ff., Moscow 2008 et seq.

[4] See Information about visit of Indian President Zakir Husain to Moscow, 8–18 July 1968, in: PA AA, MfAA, C 69/73, pp. 21–5. Although India was obviously concerned about Soviet military aid to Pakistan, the Soviet comrades came to the conclusion that the “possibilities for the development of relations between the Socialist countries and India have improved”.

[5] Surjit Mansingh, *India's search for power. Indira Gandhi's foreign policy, 1966–1982*, New Delhi 1984, pp. 86ff.; Richard Sisson/Leo E. Rose, *War and secession. Pakistan, India, and the creation of Bangladesh*, Berkeley 1990, pp. 187ff.; Katherine Frank, *Indira. The life of Indira Nehru Gandhi*, repr. London 2005, pp. 323ff.; Elizabeth Wishnick, *Soviet Asian collective security policy from Brezhnev to Gorbachev*, in: *East Asia*, 7 (1988), pp. 3–28; Hari Vasudevan, *New Delhi, 1971. New Delhi, 1971: Der indisch-sowjetische Vertrag und seine Bedeutung. Die Perspektive der bilateralen Wirtschaftsbeziehungen*, in: Andreas Hilger (ed.), *Die Sowjetunion und die Dritte Welt*, Munich 2009, pp. 181–200; contemporary observations are summarized by Arnold L. Horelick, *The Soviet Union's Asian collective security proposal. A club in search of members*, in: *Pacific Affairs*, 47 (1974), pp. 269–85. Treaty published in Mansingh, *India's search for power*, pp. 387–89.

[6] Mansingh, *India's search for power*, pp. 144f. For differences in the immediate context of the East Pakistan crisis, see Sisson/Rose, *War*, pp. 202f.; speech by Gromyko on the Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Warsaw Pact, 1 December 1971, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30, No. 13868, Berlin; Memo Consul General GDR in India, 27 June 1972, about problems of Indo-Soviet relations, PA AA, MfAA, C 1743/76, pp. 31–6.

[7] GDR embassy, Information about visit, 17 December 1973, PA AA, MfAA, C 1743/76, Bl. 39–45.

[8] The following discussions are based on the confidential Soviet information about Soviet-Indian summits from 30 November 1973 to 25 July 1989. Many of the memoranda of conversation can be found in BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/13941, Berlin.

[9] Cf. especially: [Report on Brezhnev's visit to India](#), 11 December 1973, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/13941; and [Report on Indira Gandhi's visit to the Soviet Union](#), 15 June 1976, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/13941, Berlin.

[10] [Report on Brezhnev's visit to India](#), 22 December 1980, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/13941, Berlin.

[11] [Soviet Assessment of Developments in Indian Domestic and Foreign Policies, 10 March 1980](#), BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/13941, DY 30/IV B 2/20/443, Berlin.

[12] Cf. especially: [Report on Kosygin's visit to India](#), 3 April 1979, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/13941, Berlin.

[13] Cf. especially: [Report on Gandhi's visit to the Soviet Union](#), 15 June 1976, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/13941, Berlin; [Report on Kosygin's visit to India](#), 3 April 1979, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/13941; speech by Brezhnev on the Session of the Political Consultative Committee, 25 November 1976, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/11719.

[14] Cf. especially: [Report on Brezhnev's visit to India](#), 22 December 1980, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/13941, [Report on the Visit of Morarji Desai to the Soviet Union](#), 1 November 1977; [Report on the Visit of the Indian Foreign Minister Vajpayee to the Soviet Union](#), 2 October 1978; [Report on Kosygin's visit to India](#), 3 April 1979; [Report on the Visit of the Indian Prime Minister Desai to the Soviet Union](#), 18 June 1979; all *ibid.*; Note on a Conversation with Victor Maltsev, 4 July 1977, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/IV B 2/20/443, Berlin.

[15] Cf. especially: [Report on the Visit of the Indian Foreign Minister Vajpayee to the Soviet Union](#), 2 October 1978, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/13941, Berlin.

[16] Information Soviet Union about visit of the member of the Chinese Politburo, Li Peng, to Moscow, 30 December 1985, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/2A, No. 2844-2846, Berlin.

[17] The visit is documented in Gorbachev, *Sobranie* 5, pp. 218–57. The Politburo discussion, *ibid.*, pp. 275–79. For the Soviet reports on Indian-Soviet summits under Gorbachev see [Report on the Visit of Rajiv Gandhi to the Soviet Union](#), 4 June 1985, [Report on the Visit of Mikhail Gorbachev to India](#), 18 December 1986; [Report on the Visit of Mikhail Gorbachev to India](#), 15 December 1988, [Report on the Visit of Rajiv Gandhi to the Soviet Union](#), 25 July 1989, all in BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/13941, [Memorandum on Soviet Policy towards the Developing Countries](#), 27 December 1988, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/12383; East German Embassy Moscow, 17 April 1989, Aspects of Soviet policy in implementation of the Vladivostok-program in relations with South and South East Asia, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30, No. 12382, Berlin. For the “cherished” 1950s and 1960s, see [Indo-](#)

[Soviet relations in the Nehru years: The view from India, 1949–1961](#); [Indo-Soviet relations: New Russian and German evidence](#), as part of the PHP's collection "Global Cold War".

[18] [Speech by Gorbachev on the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact](#), 10 June 1986, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/11726, Berlin.

[19] Information East German Embassy Moscow (27 October 1987) about Shevardnadze's speech at the MID, 4 July 1987, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/12383, Berlin.

[20] Draft Memo Brezhnev to Politburo, 6 July 1968, in General'nyj sekretar' L. I. Brežnev, 1964–1982, *Special issue* Vestnik Archiva Prezidenta (Moscow: Germanskij Istoričeskij Inst., 2006), pp. 70–9, at p. 76; Speeches Chernenko and Tikhonov at the Comecom-Summit June 1984, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30, No. 11750; for the transition period, see speech by Tikhonov at the Comecom-Summit 25–27 June 1985, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30 J IV 2/2A, No. 2774, Berlin.

[21] Memo of conversation Sieber – Zagladin, 22 January 1986, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/11670, Berlin.

[22] Conception Paper for the Forthcoming Meeting of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization, May 1988, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/12051; Report East German Embassy Moscow, 20 July 1988, about the reactions of Indian members of AAPSO about Soviet suggestions. A comparison of Soviet strategies in the AAPSO reveals the fundamental shift in Moscow's foreign policy approaches: In 1988, the paper recommends political regional solutions for regional conflicts, while in 1984, the Soviet position stipulated "that the struggle for peace and international security takes precedence over discussions about regional problems". Information GDR Solidarity Committee about consultation of Socialist committees, 5 March 1984, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30, No. 12043, Berlin. In a recent paper on Gorbachev and India, Sergey Radchenko highlighted the failures of Soviet policy (India and the Cold War, 1947–1991, 18–19 May 2009, Washington, D.C.). However, a thorough analysis on the basis of accessible archival material in Moscow and New Delhi is yet to be written.

[23] [Outline of East German Positions in Forthcoming Talks with the Communist Party of East Pakistan](#), 30 September 1971, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/IV A 2/20/642; [Report on the Trip of the East German Foreign Minister \(Otto Winzer\) to India and Bangladesh](#), 19 January 1972, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/2A, Nr. 1575, Bl. 164-168, Berlin.

[24] Surprisingly, there is a dearth of substantial secondary literature on the Indo-East German relations since 1971/1972, while the overall picture of East German's policy towards the developing world has found some in-depth analyses: Hans Siegfried Lamm/Siegfried Kupper, DDR und Dritte Welt, München 1976; Hans-Joachim Spanger/Lothar Brock, Die beiden deutschen Staaten in der Dritten Welt. Die Entwicklungspolitik der DDR – eine Herausforderung für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland? Opladen 1987; contributions by Hans-Joachim Döring and Hans Lindemann, in: Deutscher Bundestag (Hg.), Materialien der Enquete-Kommission "Überwindung der Folgen der SED-Diktatur im Prozess der deutschen Einheit", Bd. VIII/1, Das geteilte Deutschland im geteilten Europa, Frankfurt/Main 1999, pp. 97–1168, 1840–1965; as reminiscences Joachim Heidrich (ed.), DDR – Indien. Partner auf Zeit. Erfahrungen und Einsichten, Münster 1998. See also Hans-Hermann Hertle/Konrad H. Jarusch, Einleitung. Vom Erfolg zur Krise. Innenansichten kommunistischer Herrschaft unter Breshnew und Honecker, in: Hertle/Jarusch (eds), Risse im Bruderbund. Die Gespräche Honecker – Breshnew 1974 bis 1982, Berlin 2006, pp. 11–60. The general outlook of East German foreign policy is discussed by Hermann Wentker, Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen. Die DDR im internationalen System 1949–1989, München 2007; Benno-Eide Siebs, Die Außenpolitik der DDR 1976–1989. Strategien und Grenzen, Paderborn 1999.

[25] GDR embassy New Delhi, 7 February 1974, consultation with Soviet representatives about economic aid, PA AA, MfAA, C 1743/76, pp. 46–53; reports about meeting of CC-Secretaries for ideology and international affairs, 4–5 March 1975, 25–26 January 1976, 26 February 1980, 3–4 November 1981, 9 December 1983, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/11860, 11861, 11869, 11871, 18878; MfAA, memo of conversation with Deputy Foreign Minister, Firjubin, April 11, 1979, PA AA, MfAA, C 5058, pp. 19–23; speech by Gorbachev at 14th meeting of Committee of Foreign Ministers of the Warsaw Pact, 24–25 March 1987, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/11742, Berlin.

[26] Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Assessment of developments in South Asia and conclusion regarding future relations with India and others, confirmed by Foreign Policy Committee, 10 October 1974, PA AA, MfAA, C 1782/76, Bl. 16ff. For general assessments of the Non-aligned movement since its 6th summit in Havana, 1979, see the MfAA's reporting for the period 1979–1983, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30, No. 11645, Berlin.

[27] Information about participation of SED delegation in the CPI's 10th Party Congress, 18 February 1975, BArch-SAPMO DY 30/J IV 2/2, No. 1548; GDR embassy New Delhi, 8 September 1975,

Information about session National Council CPI, and Information about Session Central Executive Council CPI, 9 December 1975, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/IV B 2/20, No. 278, Berlin.

[28] Information by CC Candidate Kirchhoff, 20 December 1976, about visit of National Front delegation to India, BArch-SAPMO, DY 6/vorl. 1343, Berlin.

[29] [Letter from the East German First Secretary \(Erich Honecker\) to Indira Gandhi](#), 13 August 1975, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30, Nr. 2448, Bl. 38-40; ; Gandhi's letter in *ibid.*, DY 30, No. 2448, Bl. 24 ff, Berlin. The background of the "emergency" is discussed in Frank, Indira, pp. 357ff., 368ff.

[30] Report on the Visit of the President of the Congress Party of India (R) (Dev Kant Baruah), 29 April 1976, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2./2.033, Nr. 83, Bl. 10-14; Memorandum of Conversation Between the President of the Congress Party of India (R)(Dev Kant Baruah) and the Deputy Foreign Minister of the GDR (Herbert Krolikowski), 30 April 1976, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/2a, Nr. 1992;; Transcript of a Conversation Between the East German First Secretary (Erich Honecker) and the President of the Indian National Congress (R) (Dev Kant Baruah), 27 April 1976, BArch-SAPMO, DY 6/vorl. 3364; Report on the Visit of the Indian Prime Minister (Indira Gandhi) to the GDR, 4 July 1976, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/2a, Nr. 1992.Berlin; the discussion of the broader framework of East German-Indian relations is based on Wentker, Außenpolitik, p. 1ff, 54ff., 371ff., and Siebs, Die Außenpolitik, pp. 12ff., 116ff., 193ff.

[31] See footnotes 14 and 15.

[32] [Report on the Visit of the President of the Congress Party of India \(R\) \(Dev Kant Baruah\)](#), 29 April 1976, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2./2.033, Nr. 83, Bl. 10-14; [Memorandum of Conversation Between the President of the Congress Party of India \(R\)\(Dev Kant Baruah\) and the Deputy Foreign Minister of the GDR \(Herbert Krolikowski\)](#), 30 April 1976, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/2a, Nr. 1992; [Analysis of Indian Foreign and Domestic Policies by the GDR's Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), 13 November 1978, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/IV B 2/20/443, Berlin.

[33] [Analysis of Indian Foreign and Domestic Policies by the GDR's Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), 13 November 1978, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/IV B 2/20/443, Berlin.

[34] [Report on the Visit by the East German First Secretary \(Erich Honecker\) to India](#), 12 January 1979, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/ J IV 2/2A/2205, Bl. 100-124, Berlin.

[35] Report on the Meeting of the Chairmen of the Joint Economic Committee, 16 November 1983, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/3011, Bl. 46-56; Report on the Visit of the Indian Vice President (Ramaswami Venkataraman) to the GDR, 9 November 1985, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/2.039/300, Bl. 29-60, [Memoranda of Conversation of the East German Politburo Member Hermann Axen with Indian Officials](#), 23 December 1985, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/2A/2846, Bl. 31-57, Berlin.

[36] Wentker, Außenpolitik, pp. 16f., 463ff.; Siebs, Die Außenpolitik, pp. 19f., 116ff., 190ff., 201ff.

[37] The East German accentuation is demonstrated by document 730919; Schürer's report about his visit shows similar balances, 10 October 1973, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/2A, No. 1724, pp. 119ff, Berlin.

[38] For general accounts of East German's economic relations with developing countries, see Spanger/Brock, Die beiden deutschen Staaten, pp. 245ff; Siebs, Außenpolitik, pp. 210ff., 295ff.; Wentker, Außenpolitik, pp. 374ff., 391–9, 459ff.; for the Indian case, see Gottfried Freitag, Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit DDR – Indien, in: Heidrich (ed.), DDR – Indien, pp. 72–101. Incidentally, the extent of the GDR's military cooperation with India is hard to determine, but the lion's share of aid and support in this area was most likely delivered to direct partner states that were part of "progressive" movements in the Third World; see Heinrich Engelhardt, Unterstützung befreundeter Staaten und progressiver nationaler Befreiungsbewegungen durch die NVA, in: Klaus Neumann (ed.), NVA. Anspruch und Wirklichkeit nach ausgewählten Dokumenten, 2nd ed. Hamburg 1996, pp. 317–29.

[39] See Resolution Chairmanship of the Council of Ministers about development of foreign economic relations with India in 1973-1975, 24 January 1973, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/3J, No. 1620, Berlin; Directive for the Trip to India by the Head of the Planning Commission of the GDR, 19 September 1973, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/3, Nr. 2059, Bl. 19-22; Resolution Council of Ministers about realization of East German-Indian agreements, 15 November 1973, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/2J, No. 5027, Berlin; Gerhard Schürer, *Gewagt und verloren. Eine deutsche Biographie*, 3rd ed. Frankfurt/Oder 1996, pp. 315f.

[40] Conclusions regarding report about visit Sindermann to India et al., 19 December 1974, BArch-SAPMO, DC 20/I/3, No. 1217; Resolution Chairmanship Council of Ministers about 1st session, 6 June 1975, BArch-SAPMO, DC 20/I/4, No. 3347. Quotation in report Gerhard Weiss, 30 September 1977, to Honecker et al. about 2nd Session of the Joint Committee, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30, No. 3009;

analogously, directive for 3rd Session of the Joint Committee, 21 November 1978, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/3, No. 2833, Berlin.

[41] Freitag, Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit, pp. 81f., 90f.; Resolution CC Secretariat, 19 April 1978, about development of East German-Indian economic relations, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/3, No. 2741; draft for Mittag-Committee, 29 April 1981, about 4th Meeting of East German-Indian Joint Committee, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30, No. 2679, Berlin.

[42] Minutes CC-Secretariat, 21 November 1979, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/3, No. 2988; Directive for 4th Session Joint Committee, 28 August 1980, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/3, No. 3113, Berlin; Report Weiss about 4th Meeting Joint Committee, 24 February 1981.

[43] Information MfAA about Meetings of East German Ambassadors, 20 February 1980, and 8 May 1981, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30, No. 11352 and 11353; the Mittag-Committee is discussed by Wentker, Außenpolitik, pp. 374f.; for the CC-Secretariat, see Resolution about complex concept of long-term economic, scientific-technological, and cultural relations with India, 2 September 1981, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30 /J IV 2/3, No. 3265, Berlin.

[44] Report on the Meeting of the Chairmen of the Joint Economic Committee, 16 November 1983, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/3011, Bl. 46-56; Information about 7th Meeting of the Joint Committee, 22 September 1987, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30, No. 3012, Berlin.

[45] Draft for meeting Mittag Committee, 18 January 1984, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30, No. 2688, Berlin.

[46] W. Grabowski, 25 October 1989, to Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, E. Moldt, PA AA, MfAA ZR 989/03; similar accentuation in Embassy GDR New Delhi, 6 June 1989, to MfAA, Indian interests in the GDR, PA AA, MfAA ZR, 916/03; Grabowski, 29 November 1989, to MfAA, Dpt. SSOA, Lindner, Orientation for 1990, PA AA, MfAA ZR 916/03; Grabowski, 5 December 1989, to Modrow, PA AA, MfAA ZR 916/03. The PA AA's archival material for 1989/90 was declassified in late 2009 in the context of the 20th anniversary of German unification. My thanks go to the PA AA's archivists, Dr. Frhr. von Boeselager and Mr. Geyer, for their active and generous support to my research.

[47] G. Sieber, 2 February 1988, to K. Brutents, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30, No. 11670; Report on the Long-term Concept for Scientific and Technological Cooperation GDR/India, 1 October 1984, BArch-SAPMO, DY 30/2690, Bl. 312-316, Berlin.