

10-1-2013

Sailing in the Shadow of the Vietnam War: The GDR Government and the "Vietnam Bonus" of the Early 1970s

Gerd Horten

Concordia University - Portland, ghorten@cu-portland.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://commons.cu-portland.edu/humfacultyresearch>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Horten, Gerd, "Sailing in the Shadow of the Vietnam War: The GDR Government and the "Vietnam Bonus" of the Early 1970s" (2013). *Humanities Faculty Articles & Other Works*. 3.
<http://commons.cu-portland.edu/humfacultyresearch/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Humanities Department at CU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Humanities Faculty Articles & Other Works by an authorized administrator of CU Commons. For more information, please contact libraryadmin@cu-portland.edu.

Sailing in the Shadow of the Vietnam War: The GDR Government and the “Vietnam Bonus” of the Early 1970s

Gerd Horten

ABSTRACT

In concert with the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries, the East German government vigorously opposed the Vietnam War in the 1960s and early 1970s and supported North Vietnam politically and economically. Concurrently, it sponsored ongoing solidarity campaigns in support of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) against the US-led coalition. As the American war effort deteriorated, the East German government reaped a significant boost both internationally and domestically as a result of these campaigns. This “Vietnam Bonus” helped to enhance the international stature of the GDR and increased the domestic stability of the SED government in the early 1970s.

The Vietnam War provided the East German government with a golden opportunity. No functionary of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED) could have dreamed up a better script for the country’s Cold War propaganda. It had all of the ingredients and characters for a gripping and winning formula: an aggressive capitalist American intruder who became all the more menacing as the war went on; the evil West German ally who assisted the imperialist bully and became implicated in its destructive actions; a socialist Vietnamese underdog whom much of the world and the East German population eventually supported; and a benevolent Soviet neighbor who supplied and aided the Vietnamese victim at the same time as it was seeking to bring all sides to the negotiating table. Even the ongoing conflict between the two great Communist powers, China and the Soviet Union, which intensified during the second half of the 1960s, could not spoil this powerful narrative. While the GDR followed the lead of the Soviet Union and worked in close

collaboration with its East Bloc allies, the propaganda value of the Vietnam War was all too good to be true, and certainly too good to pass up.¹

Best of all, unlike the building of the Berlin Wall, which was allegedly constructed in 1961 to protect the East German population, or the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, which was justified as brotherly assistance for a neighbor facing an alleged threat of a “counterrevolution,” this Vietnam War narrative did not have to be invented nor stubbornly defended against the better knowledge of an ever skeptical East German population. On this issue, the SED leadership would ultimately be vindicated for its early condemnation of the war and joined by an ever-widening number of Western media and publics as well. Not surprisingly then, its anti-Vietnam stance and numerous Vietnam solidarity campaigns were one of the centerpieces of its critique of the capitalist system and often functioned as a key linchpin in its propaganda war against the imperialist West in the late 1960s and early 1970s. And the longer the war lasted, the more convincing this narrative became.²

Even American officials had to concede that they had handed the East German government an important strategic advantage. As a secret public opinion survey by the United States Information Agency (USIA) highlighted, the Vietnam War proved to be a trump card for the GDR propaganda war with East German audiences: “The East German regime’s propaganda drumfire and its ‘solidarity’ meetings on VN [Viet Nam] doubtless [*sic*] have had some impact, fostering the belief that the US is a colonialist and imperialist power bent on squashing a legitimate national liberation movement in SE Asia.” Equally importantly, it gave the SED regime a significant boost in its standing with its own population, as the American survey emphasized: “While East Germans are constitutionally skeptical of regime propaganda on all issues, the official line may have more credibility on VN than all other issues. One of the main counteracting sources of information for East Germans, Western TV, has not been notably effective in presenting the US case.”³ And this assessment was reported in 1966, well before the American war effort deteriorated and in advance of increasing reports of US war crimes in Vietnam, which would create strong worldwide opposition and provide ever more fuel for the East German propaganda mill.

It is somewhat surprising how little the Vietnam War, specifically the consistent and forceful opposition of the East German government to the war, has been incorporated into the overall historical scholarship of the GDR in the late 1960s and 1970s.⁴ Neither studies on the foreign relations of East Germany nor analyses of the domestic politics of the SED government have paid this issue much attention.⁵ Likewise, even scholars trying to understand and explain the relative longevity and stability of the GDR have overlooked the Vietnam narrative as a contributing factor.⁶

In order to fully appreciate the political advantage which the Vietnam War provided for the GDR government, it is important to recognize the generally skeptical

and distrustful attitude which the East German population had towards its political leadership. As many historians have attested, the hold of the East German government on its population was always a tenuous one and nowhere near as total as the term “dictatorship” would imply—despite its elaborate surveillance and spying activities. The SED leadership was generally resigned to the fact that most people withdrew into their own personal spaces and condoned, for example, the routine consumption of Western media by the early 1970s as long as it did not challenge the political order. Noncooperation, reluctant support for government initiatives and consistent “grumbling” were part and parcel of daily life in the GDR and highlight this complex social contract between the SED leadership and the people of East Germany.⁷

This article analyzes three layers of the East German antiwar and Vietnam solidarity campaigns. The most immediate criticism was aimed at the United States and by extension West Germany, which according to GDR officials revealed their global imperialist aspirations through their attack against a socialist country. Within these campaigns, the harshest political attacks were often reserved for the West German class enemy, who in the eyes of the East German government had created a special alliance with the United States in order to carry out its capitalist revanchist strategy. The second political layer of the GDR’s vigorous antiwar campaigns connected the East German government with numerous international organizations and antiwar movements. Primary among these efforts was the active participation and at times leadership of the GDR in the yearly Stockholm antiwar conferences. The final key target of the official antiwar propaganda was the East German population. Though eternally skeptical of all official initiatives, large segments of the public supported many of the Vietnam solidarity campaigns primarily in the second half of the war. This was in no small measure due to the fact that the antiwar sentiment in the GDR grew in the late 1960s just as it did in the rest of the world. Based on the documentary evidence, public support for Vietnam solidarity campaigns in the GDR peaked between 1972 and 1975.

Finally, this article also addresses some of the complications and hurdles in the path of this successful antiwar strategy, most notably the suppression of the Prague Spring and the GDR’s support for and participation in the invasion of Czechoslovakia in early 1968. Yet despite this and other obstacles, the GDR’s anti-Vietnam activities of the late 1960s and early 1970s consolidated the SED government’s international status. Just as important, this “Vietnam Bonus” provided a significant boost to the internal stability of the GDR in the early to mid-1970s, because East Germany’s early opposition to the war was ultimately validated and because the Vietnam solidarity campaigns were supported by increasing portions of the generally disaffected East German population in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Layer 1: Exposing the True Intentions of the American and West German Enemies

One of the great advantages of the Vietnam War for East Berlin, as the US analysis emphasized, was that the escalating conflict merged so easily with some of the main propaganda themes of East Germany's Cold War rhetoric. One of the central ones was that the United States was an imperialist power bent on economic exploitation as well as world conquest and committed to subduing liberation movements in the developing world.⁸

Not surprisingly, the GDR blasted the United States for its aggressive actions in Vietnam with the onset of the war, as reflected in the coverage of *Neues Deutschland*, East Germany's main party newspaper. As early as August 1964, the newspaper accused the United States of a "war of aggression" in connection with the Gulf of Tonkin crisis and argued that President Johnson and the American Congress were purposefully provoking a war in Vietnam. When the American Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, the GDR vigorously condemned the early bombing campaigns against North Vietnam, highlighted the worldwide protests against the US actions, and solidly placed itself on the side of the North Vietnamese people in the conflict.⁹ As might be expected, these harsh attacks against the US-led war increased after 1965 as the American ground war intensified and the bombing raids escalated, coinciding with heightened international criticism of the conflict and intensifying solidarity campaigns and demonstrations in East Germany.

Even though the détente policies were gathering speed in the late 1960s, the Vietnam War provided an easy target for steady propaganda against "barbaric Americans" and ongoing criticism against ruthless US attacks. The GDR interpreted the US military campaigns in Vietnam and the eventual invasions in Cambodia and Laos as part of a worldwide campaign of aggression and as a blatant attempt to halt communism's historic march towards victory. Articles like those entitled "Adventurous Plans of the Pentagon" or "Poison War Against Women and Children in South Vietnam" ran continuously in the East German media through the late 1960s and beyond. Likewise, East Germany eagerly followed the growing financial and economic difficulties which the United States encountered in its pursuit of the war and increasingly merged coverage of America's international aggression with reports on its domestic conflicts and racial turmoil. Finally, it was of incalculable value to the GDR government that few of these stories had to be invented and that more and more Western, and especially West German, media were seconding the East German point of view by the late 1960s and especially in the early 1970s.¹⁰

The unrivaled strength of the Vietnam War narrative from an East German perspective was that the SED leadership could simultaneously attack its two main Cold War enemies: it easily lent itself for attacks against the imperialist motives of

the United States, yet it was equally easy to implicate West Germany in this narrative. By March 1966, *Neues Deutschland* escalated its rhetoric against the United States and referred to Vietnam as a war of annihilation (*Vernichtungskrieg*). And as East German journalists saw it, West Germany was providing both political and military support for the US campaigns. As one article put it, “Even the bourgeois press has to concede: Bonn is providing bombs for the dirty war in Vietnam! This naked fact exposes that all the talk about ‘humanitarian aid’ is cynical double-talk.” The GDR media increasingly focused on the escalation of the war, the use of poison gas, and the increasing protests in both East and West in 1966. Meanwhile East Germany portrayed itself as the true “German peace state,” offering support and assistance to the innocent workers and farmers of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).¹¹

Another continuous thread in the verbal assault against the West German neighbor was the persistent innuendos hinting at the participation of German troops in Vietnam. As early as June of 1965, East Germany was reporting that the West German army (*Bundeswehr*) was preparing military missions. In addition to the financial and military aid that West Germany was already providing, *Neues Deutschland* argued that the Bonn government was just waiting for the “appropriate moment” when West German soldiers would become engaged in the war. By March of 1966, the paper was referring to detailed studies by West Germany’s armed forces which allegedly advocated for the use of its troops in the Vietnam theater. The cited study recommended active West German military participation in order to consolidate the alliance with the United States.¹² The fact that no such West German troops ever materialized and that the Bonn government consistently rejected American requests for German boots on the ground did not dissuade the ongoing use of these allegations.

The fact of the matter was that the East German government was well informed about the extent of the West German support for South Vietnam as well as its relations with the United States. In a detailed internal report from April 1966, for example, SED officials highlighted especially the economic and humanitarian aid which the Bonn government was providing the South Vietnamese government. The report conceded that the direct benefits of the war for West Germany were rather minor. It highlighted that the German economy had only marginally benefitted from the additional orders which the increased US expenditures had created. There was no “Vietnam-Boom,” nothing equivalent to the “Korea-Boom” which the West German economy allegedly experienced in connection with the war in the early 1950s. Much of the support for South Vietnam, moreover, had come in the form of food deliveries, medical supplies, or by providing civilian internships to South Vietnamese students and trainees. In an almost disappointed tone, the GDR officials had to admit in their report that “there were no West German investments worth mentioning in South Vietnam.” Overall the analysis concluded that while the German economic interests in the war were rather

negligible, “the West German government viewed its support to South Vietnam as moral assistance for the United States with the hope of shifting the balance of the international system in favor of the imperialist forces.”¹³

Vietnam was seen as the latest example in a number of military campaigns which defined this capitalist strategy. But, as one GDR historian argued, it took on a special role because it was the most flagrant example of this neoimperialist campaign and represented the “most horrific colonial warfare in human history.” Simultaneously, it was seen as only one piece in America’s Cold War “strategy of roll-back,” through which it was trying to thwart the blossoming of recently liberated, socialist states in regions ripe for freedom and self-determination. Southeast Asia, together with Latin America and Africa, was viewed as the latest and third front in this concerted global US-led strategy.¹⁴

What is of course noticeable here is how closely these arguments overlapped with the emerging critiques of the Vietnam War in Western Europe and in the United States. As the war dragged on, growing segments of populations in Western countries no longer viewed America through the lens of World War II liberator and protector of democracy and freedom. The war slowly but surely eroded this attractive image and put even the staunchest defenders of the United States on the defensive. After the repeated and brutal bombing raids, after My Lai and the invasion of Cambodia, after the use of napalm and other poison gases, who would want to defend this raging giant seemingly bent on mindless destruction? By 1969, this shift in Western and world opinion was widespread and endemic, and well known in Washington. A secret 1969 USIA public opinion survey captured this emerging global consensus: “The results of the survey research provide a rather bleak picture,” the survey conceded. In all regions of the globe, with the sole exception of some countries in Southeast Asia such as Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines, majorities in most countries of the world wanted the United States to end the war in Vietnam and pull out its troops.¹⁵

However, the East German government reserved its most biting comments and criticism for its West German adversary. It emphasized the fact that the Bonn government, even its widely respected Chancellor Willy Brandt, was a most compliant ally supportive of America’s Vietnam War. Interpreting this acquiescence as steady support for the United States policies, East Berlin ascribed West Germany a particularly significant role in the overall neoimperialist capitalist global strategy and liked to refer to the “special alliance” (*Sonderbündnis*) between Washington and Bonn. As a government-sponsored analysis put it, the “special alliance of the West German and American imperialism . . . [represented] not only the longest and strongest, but also the most aggressive union of economic and political interests.” Therefore, it was no coincidence that the FRG quietly overlooked even the most egregious violations of basic human rights and international laws in Vietnam and effectively had become

the coconspirator of the United States in what the study referred to as “a ruthless genocide.”¹⁶

West German politicians were quite aware that they were vulnerable to what became known as the “guilt-by-association” argument (*Mitschuld*), but they felt that they had little leeway to blunt these cutting attacks. They believed that the country owed a great debt to the United States for its past assistance and knew that it continued to rely on American protection more urgently than any other West European country. In addition, the Brandt government was very aware that it needed US backing if it wanted *Ostpolitik* to succeed. In short, because of its unique military and geostrategic location as well as its own foreign relations initiatives, West Germany was trapped, forced to stand side by side with an ever more unpopular America in a conflict the world and its own population increasingly despised.¹⁷

Not surprisingly, this notion of West Germany as an accomplice and most trusted ally in Vietnam remained a core element in East Germany’s Cold War battle and seamlessly continued a key theme advanced by the SED government since the late 1940s. By the late 1960s, articles insinuating the shipment of West German poison gas to Vietnam and Bonn’s willingness “to pay for the US war without reservation” cemented and elaborated on the “guilt-by-association” argument—a charge which became increasingly difficult to refute.¹⁸ In fact, by the early 1970s East Berlin took this argument one step further arguing that West Germany was indeed enabling the United States to keep fighting its war by providing the monetary resources to do so. East German officials argued that this financial and monetary cover by the FRG allowed the war to continue and was equivalent to financing all American military operations in Vietnam during the year 1970.¹⁹

The question of “Who paid for Vietnam?” indeed became an explosive issue both in East and West Germany in the final years of the war. The increasing cost of the war significantly contributed to the United States’ worsening financial position, especially its balance-of-payments deficit. Western European countries—West Germany in particular—were securing the value of the US dollar through buying large amounts of American reserves and refused to sell them even as the value of the dollar began to decline, thus indirectly helping to finance the war. This was done with an implicit understanding of the “Atlantic bargain,” by which the United States provided military protection in exchange for international monetary support from its allies. As Hubert Zimmermann highlights, in this way America’s allies helped finance the Vietnam War through what he refers to as “an indirect ‘Vietnam tax.’” This indirect support became especially apparent after consecutive devaluations of the dollar in the early 1970s, when the currency lost about forty percent of its value. Any country holding US dollar reserves, with West Germany leading the pack, lost an equivalent share of their dollar reserves. In a 1971 interview, the president of the German Central Bank



Figure 1. GDR Vietnam Solidarity Exhibit, 1969 (Courtesy of BStU Archiv; MfS-ZAIG-Fo-1361-Bild-0026)

remarked with regret: “We should have been more firm with the Americans.” That same year, the left-leaning West German newspaper *Frankfurter Rundschau* put the matter more bluntly and more in line with that of the East German government: “Our economists and our banks know it, even though our politicians don’t want to acknowledge it, but our country feels that we have paid a large portion of the senseless, murderous war in Vietnam and continue to do so.”²⁰

East Berlin’s politicians and media frequently returned to these accusations. By the summer of 1967, in articles such as “In Hitler’s Tracks,” *Neues Deutschland* compared the “pacification attempts by South Vietnam and the United States to the early phase of Hitler’s conquest.” A couple of weeks later it published a similar attack under the heading, “The Nazi Cross on the US Dollar.” This latter article argued that the foreign relations of the United States in Vietnam were littered with atrocious war crimes and found their domestic equivalent in the ruthless exploitation and suppression of the black minorities within its own borders. In all of this, the continued and steady West German monetary support was of critical importance and deeply implicated the Bonn government, as the writer emphasized.²¹

This fear of the resurgence of fascism as well as of once again failing the test of history ran like a red thread through all of the West German protest movements and

the antiwar campaigns as well. As early as 1966 the West German antiwar movement began to refer to the “American genocide in Vietnam” and drew direct connections between the US atrocities committed in Vietnam and those carried out by the Nazis during World War II. A poster distributed by the West German antiwar movement in 1966 asked the poignant question: “How much longer will we allow murder to be committed in our names?” As the American bombing campaigns kept rolling over North Vietnam again and again, the events reminded Germans of their own ruined cities and inevitably aroused sympathy for the innocent North Vietnamese victims caught up in the inevitable slaughter.²² Moreover, the compelling rationale of the antiwar protests was not to once again condone atrocities and war crimes but instead to answer the call implied in the popular German protest slogan “He who keeps quiet agrees.”²³

In West Germany, the Tet Offensive and the revelations of the atrocities at My Lai and other locations reported in 1969 caused a significant revision in media coverage, but they were also deeply embedded in the domestic struggles of the FRG. Not only did the ideological differences of the West German print media become more pronounced, but more journalists were moving towards critical or even outright oppositional reporting starting in 1969. A final trope of reporting, which gained more currency in the latter stage of the war, was the indirect and inadvertent blurring of Nazi war crimes and American atrocities in Vietnam. The reports of the use of chemical warfare by the United States, the barbaric bombing campaigns, and the mass killings of innocent civilians by American GIs merged with the domestic discourse of German World War II war crimes.²⁴ In East and West Germany, the war in Vietnam was increasingly viewed as unjustifiable, immoral and reprehensible by the late 1960s and early 1970s, giving ever more sustenance to the concerted GDR antiwar campaigns.

Layer 2: Reaping the Political Rewards of International Antiwar Collaboration

The manifold activities of the GDR Vietnam Committee were accompanied by a flurry of international antiwar politics on the part of East Germany’s broader Solidarity Committee, which led to significant conferences both inside and outside of the country. Most of the conferences hosted by the GDR itself focused on interpreting the Vietnam War through a communist lens, which viewed it as part of a concerted global imperialist campaign led by the United States meant to undermine the rise of independent and socialist countries. The vast majority of these events were attended by socialist or Warsaw Pact countries only. One such conference held in East Berlin in February of 1969, for example, focused on the problems of the anti-imperialist struggle in Asian countries. Of the roughly two hundred participants, forty-seven came from abroad, but only five of them were from West European countries.²⁵

Much more vital in terms of international cooperation and recognition was the

increasing participation of the GDR in antiwar conferences held in West European countries. Most significant among these were the annual Vietnam Conferences in Stockholm, which first convened in 1966 and eventually gained broad-based international recognition and were later attended by national governmental representatives as well. The GDR sent its first delegation in 1967 and gradually gained the respect of the fellow attendees. In 1970, the GDR Vietnam Committee was invited to join the Executive Committee of the Stockholm Vietnam Conference in recognition of its numerous contributions to the international antiwar campaigns. Aside from monetary and other donations, its scientific studies which proved the use of biological and chemical warfare in Vietnam were seen as very influential contributions.²⁶

Equally important was another venture which significantly added to the prestige of the GDR in the international anti-Vietnam War movement: the powerful documentaries made by Studio H&S, named after the two documentary makers Walter Heynowski and Gerhard Scheumann. During the heyday of its influence between the mid-1960s and the late 1970s, this legendary team focused most of its films on biting critiques against Western imperialism, especially the war in Vietnam, as well as attacks against West Germany. While the documentaries were primarily made for domestic consumption, many were purchased by news and TV organizations outside the East Bloc and viewed in different parts of Western Europe and the developing world.²⁷

The two most renowned early anti-imperialist and antiwar documentaries were *Der lachende Mann: Bekenntnisse eines Mörders* (*The Laughing Man: Confessions of a Murderer*) which aired in 1966 and *Piloten im Pyjama* (*Pilots in Pajamas*) released in 1968. The first focused on a German Foreign Legionnaire, an ex-soldier of the Wehrmacht from World War II, who had continued his murderous trade in the name of anticommunism under the guise of Western imperialism in different parts of the developing world. *Pilots in Pajamas*, by contrast, focused directly on the United States and the Vietnam War. It consisted of interviews with ten American pilots who had been shot down in attacks over North Vietnam. It was not their murderous intent but rather their ordinary nature which was the focal point of the four-part series. Important in a German context, like the defendants in the post-World War II Nuremberg Trials, their default answer to the question of their motivation was that they had simply followed orders when attacking targets in the DRV.²⁸

East Germany also became especially involved in consecutive conferences which focused on US war crimes in Indochina. After the initial one in Stockholm in 1970, the next two were hosted by two NATO countries—Norway and Denmark—a point which was not lost on SED officials. At the conference held in Oslo in June of 1971, the GDR delegation distributed a powerful report on the use of herbicides by the United States in Vietnam written by Gerhard Grümmer. The report detailed in scientific yet accessible language the use of various herbicides (Agent Orange, Agent Blue, and Agent White) and described the companies involved in the manufacture

and distribution of the herbicides. It targeted powerful American corporations such as Dow Chemical but also implicated segments of the West German BASF company. The internal conference report emphasized that the GDR delegation came well prepared for the deliberations and that its contributions were widely praised by the participants.²⁹

In the early 1970s, East Germany solidified its status as a reliable and constructive member of the international antiwar movement by faithfully attending both the Stockholm conferences as well as subsequent meetings which focused on American war crimes in Indochina. Through these activities and its development of antiwar research and documentaries, the GDR also increasingly created pragmatic alliances with West European antiwar organizations and became a significant distributor of antiwar materials. By the early 1970s, the Vietnam Committee had established working relationships with the British organization *Medical Aid for Vietnam*, the Dutch group *Medisch Comité Nederland*, as well as the radical Austrian group Anti-Imperialist Solidarity Committee (*Antiimperialistisches Solidaritätskomitee*). In addition to supplying these organizations with antiwar literature and documentaries, the GDR arranged for the transport of medical and blood donations from Western Europe and included them as part of its own shipments to the DRV.³⁰

Although none of these international activities led to long-term political alliances, these policies and antiwar efforts on the part of the GDR garnered a great amount of respect for the country and established it as a fellow leader in antiwar circles. And as the movement against the war grew and as it attracted increasing numbers of politicians especially to the Stockholm Vietnam Conferences in the early 1970s, East Germany could delight both in the remarkable victory of the Vietnamese people against overwhelming odds as well as the increasing recognition which its own contributions yielded. It had established itself as an anti-imperialist champion in the eyes of many Third World countries and had raised its status among many West European nations as well.³¹ Despite all of its horrors and tragedies, the Vietnam War presented a long-term political advantage for the SED government.

Layer 3: Enjoying the Support of the East German Population

The official solidarity with North Vietnam began early in East Germany and well before the American invasion. In the early 1950s, the two countries established diplomatic relations, and East Germany soon began supporting the DRV with economic and humanitarian aid. By 1957, East Germany was already the third-largest provider of aid, behind China and the Soviet Union. In the early 1960s, East Germany was also one of the first countries to recognize the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF) and supported the rebel group with military aid.³²

In July 1965, during the commemoration of the eleventh anniversary of the Geneva Accords which ended the French Indochina War in 1954, the GDR government

announced the creation of the Vietnam Committee (*Vietnam Ausschuss*). This committee was established as part of the larger Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee (*Afro-Asiatisches Solidaritätskomitee*), which had been created in 1963 and which would be renamed the Solidarity Committee of the GDR (*Solidaritätskomitee der DDR*) in early 1973. The Vietnam Committee was the main hub of the antiwar efforts in the GDR throughout the 1960s and the 1970s and coordinated the numerous government campaigns as well as aligned them with the overall foreign relations policies of the SED government and those of the East Bloc countries.³³

To be sure, it is no easy task to assess the true degree of public support for the Vietnam solidarity campaigns which were rolled out over the next decade and more. As many historians have attested, it is always difficult to get a reliable read on the public opinion in the GDR. Even when statistics and public opinion reports are available, they are fraught with potential pitfalls and complications. While East Germans were frequently surprisingly frank in their complaints and disagreements, everyone understood that there were limits to the degree of grumbling which the state tolerated and penalties attached to excessive noncooperation and outright opposition. East Germans knew to be circumspect in voicing their true opinions for fear of jeopardizing their career opportunities or just the chance of receiving a new apartment or other favors from state officials. Therefore, “double-talk” was widespread and an essential aspect of living within the confines of the East German state.³⁴

Despite this caveat, the main trend lines of the popular support for the Vietnam solidarity campaigns do emerge from documentary sources. They show that the East German public was uncooperative or resistant to most official campaigns in the early years of the war in the mid-1960s. Like much of the rest of the world, the sentiment began to change in the late 1960s, however, as many East Germans became incensed by the war and were willing to do more to support the North Vietnamese people. This public antiwar mood and support for the solidarity campaigns reached their peak in the early 1970s, especially in 1972 and 1973, when the relentless US bombing raids and the eventual withdrawal of American troops further heightened support for the DRV underdog. The certainty of a DRV victory assured high interest until 1975, when the war’s immediacy began to fade despite the best efforts of the GDR government to keep its memory relevant and alive. In general, then, especially when compared with other government initiatives, the Vietnam solidarity campaign was rather successful overall. As Hermann Schwiesau, a long-time leading official in the East German foreign office and GDR ambassador to several countries, recalled after the fall of the Berlin Wall: “This was a unique solidarity campaign in GDR history in terms of its breadth, longevity and volume . . . The willingness to donate on the part of the GDR population surpassed all previous campaigns.”³⁵

Based on the reports of the Ministry for State Security (*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, MfS or *Stasi*), this support was rather halting in the initial years of the war.

Across the GDR, the official calls for solidarity donations largely went unanswered especially between 1964 and 1967. A Stasi official in Leipzig reported this broad negative sentiment in his district in August of 1966: “The missing sense of solidarity with and disinterest towards the Vietnamese people is predominant based on the unofficial reactions of all population groups—even among some comrades.”³⁶ Frequently such rejections were justified with comments by East Germans that they did not want to unnecessarily prolong the war or simply that Vietnam was none of their business. At the same time, some requests for blood donations also revealed racist resentment, such as not wanting to provide “the yellow race with white blood.” And when the Warsaw Pact countries met in Bucharest in July of 1966 and opened the door to possibly sending military volunteers to Vietnam, the GDR public response was especially loud and unanimous in opposition to such an initiative.³⁷

As might be expected, reports of negative responses remained part of the mix for the duration of the war well into the mid-1970s, yet the public lack of cooperation noticeably decreased towards the end of the decade parallel to the increased international antiwar opposition. By 1970, Stasi officials reported a far greater willingness to donate time and money to the solidarity campaigns as well as increased and more vocal opposition to the war. In fact, at times positive reports came in the form of criticisms, as in the case of one collective which had produced motorcycles through overtime as a direct donation to the DRV; yet they stood uncollected in the parking lot and were rusting away. By early 1973, one district official reflected the changing mood of the population at the official end of the war: “The first reports after the signing of the end of the Vietnam War make it clear that the public is following these events with great interest and that they are welcomed unanimously.”³⁸

In addition, the monthly reports from the districts corroborated the notion that the GDR public had become far more involved in the solidarity campaigns by the early 1970s. Reports from Dresden, for example, highlighted an ever-growing willingness to participate in the donation campaigns and referred to “thousands of new acts of solidarity and donation campaigns.” As one report from February 1973 summed up the situation, “The ever-widening solidarity movement is especially evident because many workers are willing to donate between 1–5% of their yearly bonus and an ever larger number have increased their monthly solidarity donations.”³⁹ The same was true for Leipzig, where increasing segments of the population strongly condemned the renewed US bombing raids in 1972 and where numerous local solidarity campaigns were underway in late 1972 and 1973.⁴⁰

These reports also correspond with the overall increase in public donations over the decade between 1966 and 1975. The yearly public donations amounted to roughly 16 million Marks in 1966 and more than doubled by 1968. They reached a new peak in 1973, with more than 48 million, and almost doubled again by 1975 to a total of 83 million Marks. Even though these donations always made up only a small portion



Figure 2. Vietnam Protest Demonstration in East Berlin, Unter den Linden, late 1968
(Courtesy of BStU Archiv; MfS-OTS-Fo-0055-Bild-0002)

of the overall government aid provided to the DRV, they are notable for their sizes as well as their increases over the years.⁴¹

Individual groups and organizations frequently participated in the antiwar solidarity campaigns as well. The Writers Association underwrote campaigns such as “Schools for Vietnam” or “Health for Vietnam” while the GDR churches combined their efforts under the banner of *Bread for the World* and donated 500,000 Marks towards the reconstruction and equipment of the hospital in Viet-Duc in the DRV in 1971 alone. Equally important was the establishment of an orthopedic center in North Vietnam, which, though delayed until 1975, would ultimately provide prosthetics for thousands of Vietnamese bombing victims.⁴² East German musicians organized the collection of musical instruments for the Hanoi Symphony, and the GDR Farmers Congress alone raised 6.5 million Marks in addition to the donation of farm tools and equipment.⁴³

By early 1973, GDR officials working in the Solidarity Committee of the GDR felt decidedly more upbeat about the reception of their campaigns than they had at the beginning of the war. Especially after the agreement to end the war in Vietnam was signed in January of 1973, they noted an especially “lively echo” among the East German population and “an even wider expansion of the solidarity movement.” After listing all the various past and present campaigns on behalf of the Vietnamese people, the Committee also committed itself to bringing 10,000 North Vietnamese to the GDR by the end of the decade in order to help with the education and training of the population as well as the rebuilding of the country after the devastating war.⁴⁴

By contrast, the solidarity campaigns seemed to once again lose much of their popular appeal in the second half of the 1970s after the end of war despite the Vietnam Committee’s attempts to keep the legacy of the exemplary anti-imperialist struggle of the Vietnamese people alive. Part of this government strategy was a renaming campaign which had started in the late 1960s. Collectives, schools, and other organizations were encouraged to adopt the name of Vietnamese heroes in order to keep the struggle of the DRV present in the daily life of the GDR. By the late 1970s, these efforts were especially focused towards the primary and secondary schools in East Germany both in terms of renaming schools and shaping the curricular as well as the extracurricular activities for students who came of age after the Vietnam War had ended. The goal of these governmental efforts was to use the memory of the war for “the mobilization of students in order to make them familiar with the Vietnamese struggle and strengthen the notion of the [international] solidarity movement.”⁴⁵ Yet most of the GDR public seemed to have moved on in the second half of 1970s, preoccupied with more pressing and immediate issues like the Biermann case, expatriations, ever more onerous economic shortages, as well as the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

Complications and Obstacles to East Germany’s Vietnam Solidarity Campaigns

While the East German government was able to utilize the anti-Vietnam War rhetoric in a number of ways, and while there was some significant political convergence between the criticism in the West and some of the Communist positions, this did not mean that the East Berlin propaganda offensive was without complications or setbacks. These can only be addressed briefly within the confines of this article.

The first tension was that the two main imperialist foes, West Germany and the United States, retained their seductive appeal during this time period. If anything, the election of Brandt in 1969 and the implementation of *Ostpolitik* lengthened the shadow that West Germany threw over its East German neighbor. The GDR public admired Willy Brandt personally and was quite attracted to his government’s form of social democracy. The monthly reports in the GDR are filled with warnings of “the lack of ideological clarity” on the part of the East German public and references to

“illusions” about the true intentions of the FRG government under Brandt. Reading these reports, one comes away with a strong sense that most East Germans would rather have lived under a Brandt than an Ulbricht or a Honecker government.⁴⁶

The United States, though much further removed and more abstract, maintained its symbolical appeal for freedom and unfulfilled East German desires despite the war in Vietnam. Especially the “other America,” the one which protested the war and expressed this opposition in music and films, never lost its magnetic force in the GDR. United States politics, on the one side, and American culture and aesthetic values and habitus, on the other, frequently inhabited two different spheres for ordinary East Germans, and the late 1960s and early 1970s were no exception.⁴⁷

Another part of this complication of East Germany’s antiwar narrative was the fact that East Berlin was trying to engage its primary Cold War enemy, the United States, in negotiations starting in the mid-1960s. These diplomatic overtures were, of course, not shared with the public at large. The twin goals of this campaign were to reap concrete economic trade benefits as well as to lobby for the international recognition of the GDR. Since the United States and East Germany did not establish official diplomatic relations until 1974, these attempts were carried out through a number of indirect and unofficial channels. For example, East Germany encouraged and welcomed an increasing number of American visitors to the Leipziger Messe in the second half of the 1960s. In addition to its contacts to the American Communist party, the SED government also approached a number of left-leaning political groups in the hopes of establishing more political leverage. Increased calls for the exchange of scientists were part of this concerted GDR overture as well. However, very little came of these undertakings, since the United States viewed East Germany as one of the least flexible of the East European regimes and because it made its relationship with the GDR completely subservient to its infinitely more vital ties with its West German ally.⁴⁸

Far more challenging for the East German Vietnam narrative than these external tensions was the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the GDR’s support role in ending the Prague Spring. Nobody in East Germany bought the official line that the invasion was necessary in order to subdue an attempted “counterrevolutionary plot” in the CSSR. The brutal crushing of the democratic uprising in Czechoslovakia and the participation of East German troops in the invasion caused widespread protests in the GDR, but this opposition did not coalesce into an organized movement even though there were signs of protest everywhere. Only 20 out of 180 students at the University of Greifswald, for example, were willing to sign the Declaratory Acts which supported the invasion into Czechoslovakia. All over the country, young people spontaneously used graffiti and slogans like “Long live Dubček—Freedom for Czechoslovakia” to express their solidarity with the Czech uprising. Work stoppages by East German workers and

leaflet campaigns by students were further signs of the large-scale discontent with East Germany's obedient and hypocritical support for Moscow's strong-armed tactics.⁴⁹

The invasion of the CSSR also seriously impacted the activities of the World Peace Council (WPC), which had evolved through the combined efforts of the East and West European Communist parties in the postwar period. The Vietnam War clearly provided a great opportunity to expand these activities across the East-West divide, and for a while the Council in fact functioned as a two-way information exchange between communist Eastern Europe and like-minded groups in the West. The East German chapter, the German Peace Council, had the strong backing of the SED government, but it was also a staunch supporter of Moscow and its political priorities. While it was successful in organizing solidarity activities for the DVR, the World Peace Council ultimately failed in effectively crossing borders because of its ideological rigidity and adherence to Soviet policies. The decisive break with Western organizations came in connection with the Warsaw Pact invasion in Czechoslovakia. As Günter Wernicke put it: "The Prague Spring of 1968 marked the watershed, despite the attempts of the WPC to polish its image in the 1970s It sealed the WPC's fate as an instrument subject to the overriding influence of Soviet foreign policy."⁵⁰

A third major complication of East German antiwar propaganda strategy was the personal contact, or lack thereof, between the North Vietnamese guest students and workers and the GDR population. At best, North Vietnamese were tolerated in the GDR and at worst rejected by the GDR public at large. Despite the lofty rhetoric of aiding a brother country, North Vietnamese students and trainees in the GDR were relegated to a second-class status. This had as much to do with public resentment as with enforced North Vietnamese guidelines. Fearful that their fellow countrymen might grow soft or might adopt East Germany's official anti-Chinese political stance, North Vietnamese officials closely supervised their comrades in the GDR and discouraged fraternization between them and their East German hosts. Not only personal interactions but also bourgeois pleasures like going to the movies and other cultural events were strongly discouraged. East Germans, for their part, increasingly began to view their Vietnamese guests both as financial burdens and—similar to their Polish neighbors—competitors for scarce consumer products. This latter accusation became far more pronounced in the late 1970s and 1980s, as more Vietnamese guest workers were brought to the GDR in order to compensate for the lack of workers in East Germany.⁵¹

Conclusion

Despite these various cross currents, the activities surrounding the Vietnam War were a significant net plus for the East German government in its Cold War battle against the West. First, it provided the SED leadership with significant support for its long-held

claim that the United States was a capitalist octopus set on strangling nascent socialist regimes. Likewise, the antiwar rhetoric opened up numerous venues to implicate the West German capitalist adversary and to put the Bonn government on the defensive. Second, it allowed the GDR to join and at times lead the burgeoning international opposition to the Vietnam War, which included not just the usual Communist allies but found receptive audiences in Western Europe and the developing world as well. Finally, unlike many other official campaigns, the opposition to the Vietnam War was backed by large segments of the East German population and somewhat lessened their disaffection from the SED government.

As several historians have reminded us, within the lifespan of East Germany there were always periods when the GDR was more stable and when the compromise between “passive conformity and leaving politics to the party” was more widely accepted. Mary Fulbrook argues that “this compromise was, very nearly, achieved—perhaps for the space of two or three years in the early to mid-1970s.” Marc-Dietrich Ohse concurs and even goes so far as to call the early 1970s the “golden years” of the GDR. In his recollections, Christoph Dieckmann similarly refers to 1973 as the time of “the closest relationship between the government and the [East German] youth.”⁵²

While the population never accepted the SED government as legitimate, there were numerous reasons for the increased identification with the GDR during these years: the strengthening of the party apparatus and the Stasi, to be sure, but also rising living standards, greater cultural tolerance, and increased travel within the East Bloc; the stellar victories at the 1972 Munich Olympics and increased international acceptance also added to this increased conformity with the East German state.⁵³ The relatively effective anti-Vietnam War and solidarity campaigns as well as the resulting “Vietnam Bonus,” as this article argues, were another important cause for this greater stability of the GDR in the early 1970s.

Concordia University, Portland, Oregon

Notes

1. For good overviews of the international history of the Vietnam War, see two collections of essays: *International Perspectives on Vietnam*, ed. Lloyd C. Gardner et al. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000) and *America, the Vietnam War, and the World: Comparative and International Perspectives*, ed. Andreas W. Daum et al. (Publications of the German Historical Institute; Washington D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 2003). The Soviet Union’s policies towards Vietnam are discussed in Ilya V. Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996) and Jonathan Haslam, *Russia’s Cold War: From the October Revolution to the Fall of the Wall* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), chapters 8 and 9.
2. On the Berlin Wall, see Patrick Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall: East Germany and the Frontiers of Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), chapters 5 and 6. On the supposed “counter-revolutionary threat” of the Prague Spring, see Manfred Wilke, “Ulbricht, East Germany, and the Prague Spring,” in *The Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968*, ed. Günter Bischof et al. (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2010), 341–70.

3. "Vietnam and World Opinion: Analysis and Recommendations," August 1966, National Archives RG 306, USIA, Office of Research, folder "Special Reports, 1964–1982."
4. The two notable exceptions are Günter Wernicke, "*Solidarität hilft siegen!*": *Zur Solidaritätsbewegung mit Vietnam in beiden deutschen Staaten: Mitte der 60er bis Anfang der 70er Jahre* (Hefte zur DDR-Geschichte 72; Berlin, 2001) and Nguyen van Huong, "Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Vietnam und den Vertragsarbeitern aus Vietnam sowie die Situation der Vietnamesen in Deutschland heute," in: *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission "Überwindung der Folgen der SED-Diktatur im Prozess der deutschen Einheit,"* ed. Deutscher Bundestag, Bd. VIII, 2 (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1995), 1301–63.
5. Even fine and well-received studies have largely overlooked this topic. See, for example, Hermann Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen: Die DDR im internationalen System, 1949–1989* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2007) or Marc-Dietrich Ohse, *Jugend nach dem Mauerbau: Anpassung, Protest und Eigensinn (DDR 1961–1974)* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2003).
6. For an excellent overview of these studies, see Andrew Port's introduction entitled "The Puzzle of Stability" in his book *Conflict and Stability in the German Democratic Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1–10.
7. Konrad H. Jarausch, ed., *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004), Introduction and chapter 3; Jeannette Z. Madarász, *Conflict and Stability in East Germany, 1971–1989: A Precarious Stability* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), chapter 5; and Ehrhart Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR, 1949–1989* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2012).
8. For succinct surveys, see Christian M. Ostermann, "Die USA und die DDR," in *Die DDR und der Westen: Transnationale Beziehungen, 1949–1989*, ed. Ulrich Pfeil (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2001), 165–83, and Dorothee Wierling, "Amerikabilder in der DDR," in *Umworbener Klassenfeind: Das Verhältnis der DDR zu den USA*, ed. Uta A. Balbier et al. (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2006), 32–38.
9. "USA-Bomben auf Vietnam," *Neues Deutschland*, 6 August 1964, cover page. Side-by-side articles on US atrocities and GDR solidarity early on became a standard feature of this reporting style: see articles "USA geben Urheberrolle zu" and "DDR an der Seite Vietnams," *Neues Deutschland*, 8 August 1964, cover page. Both articles were bracketed by the heading: "Weltweite Protestwelle gegen die amerikanische Aggression."
10. For an overall GDR assessment of the US international policies in connection with Vietnam, see "Ziele und Auswirkungen der Aggression der USA in Indochina," June 1965–May 1970, Abteilung USA des Ministeriums für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der DDR, C 506/74. The two articles were both published in *Neues Deutschland*, 20 July 1968 and 13 August 1968, respectively.
11. The quote is from the article, "Amerikaner führen Vernichtungskrieg in Südvietnam," *Neues Deutschland*, 8 March 1966. The use of poison gases is discussed in the front page article on 11 March 1966. For a typical portrayal of East Germany as the peaceful of the two nations, see front page article, 13 March 1966. All translations are my own.
12. "Bundeswehreininsatz in Südvietnam wird vorbereitet," 19 June 1965, and "Sensationelle Studie über die Beteiligung der Bundeswehr an USA-Aggression in Vietnam," 19 March 1966, both in *Neues Deutschland*.
13. "Das ökonomische Engagement der BRD im Zusammenhang mit der USA-Aggression in Südvietnam," 2 April 1966, Abteilung USA des Ministeriums für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der DDR, A 18325.
14. Horst Rennhack, *BRD-Imperialismus: Komplize der USA-Aggressoren in Indochina* (Berlin: Staatsverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1973), 9–24; the quotes are on pages 9 and 15.

15. "Current Climate of Foreign Opinion on Viet-Nam," 21 April 1969, National Archives RG 306, Records of the US Information Agency, Office of Research, folder "Special Reports, 1964–1982."
16. Rennhack, *BRD-Imperialismus*, 27.
17. For a discussion of the "guilt-by-association" argument and dispute, see Alexandra Friedrich, "Awakenings: The Impact of the Vietnam War on West German-American Relations in the late 1960s" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Temple University, 2000), chapters 3 and 4. On the broader tensions created by the war, see Wolfram F. Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), chapter 9. Brandt's strong misgivings about the war are discussed by Peter Merseburger in *Willy Brandt, 1913–1992: Visionär und Realist* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2006), 554–63.
18. See articles in *Neues Deutschland*, "FNL brandmarkt Mitschuld Bonns," 1 September 1966; "Bonn will weiterhin rückhaltslos für den USA-Krieg zahlen," 6 January 1968; and "Ein System und seine Methoden," 9 January 1971.
19. Rennhack, *BRD-Imperialismus*, 98–113.
20. Hubert Zimmermann, "Who Paid for America's War?," in *America, the Vietnam War, and the World* ed. Daum et al., 170 and 172. The quote from the *Frankfurter Rundschau* is cited in Rennhack, *BRD-Imperialismus*, 113.
21. "Auf Hitler's Spuren," *Neues Deutschland*, 27 July 1967 and "Das Hakenkreuz auf dem Dollar," *Neues Deutschland*, 6 August 1967.
22. Nick Thomas, *Protest Movements in 1960s West Germany: A Social History of Dissent and Democracy* (Oxford: Berg Publishing, 2003), 73.
23. Wilfried Mausbach, "Auschwitz und Vietnam: West German Protest Against America's War During the 1960s," in *America, the Vietnam War, and the World*, ed. Daum et al., 286. See also Quinn Slobodian's excellent study, *Foreign Front: Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), especially chapter 3.
24. Anita Eichholz, *Der Vietnamkrieg im SPIEGEL: Eine inhaltsanalytische Untersuchung* (Berlin: Verlag Volker Spiess, 1979), 74–86 and 164–69. On this overall shift in attitudes towards the war, see also Joachim Arendt, *Johnson, Vietnam, und der Westen: Transatlantische Beziehungen, 1963–1969* (Munich: Olzog, 1994) and Gerd Horten, "The Mediatization of War: A Comparison of the American and German Media Coverage of the Vietnam and Iraq Wars," *American Journalism: A Journal of Media History* 28, no. 4 (2011): 29–54.
25. "Bericht über die Woche wissenschaftlicher Tagungen und Kolloquien," 6 March 1969, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bunderarchiv [hereafter SAPMO-BArch], DZ 8/139. The forty-seven foreign participants came from eighteen different countries; of the five from the West, two each came from Italy and Great Britain and one from Belgium.
26. Wernicke, "Solidarität hilft siegen!," 19 and 54.
27. For good overviews of these films and the Studio H&S, see Rüdiger Steinmetz, "Heynowski & Scheumann: the GDR's leading documentary team," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 24, no. 3 (2004): 365–79, and Nora Alter, *Projecting History: German Nonfiction Cinema, 1967–2000* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002), chapter 1.
28. Steinmetz, "Heynowski & Scheumann," 370–74. On the reception of the films in Western Europe, see also Mogens Rukov, "Respekt vor der Autorität der Tatsachen: Zur Rezeption der H&S-Filme in Westeuropa," in *Dokument und Kunst: Vietnam bei H&S. Eine Werkstatt-Ein Thema-Elf Jahre-Dreizehn Filme* (Berlin: Akademie der Künste der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1977), 37–40. These and other documentaries focused on the Vietnam War and American atrocities were also a central focal point of the well-known annual International Documentary Film Festival in Leipzig in the late 1960s and early 1970s; see Victor Grossman, "Sauerstoff im stickigen Leipzig: Eindrücke eines US-Amerikaners von der Internationalen Dokumentarfilmwoche in Leipzig," in *Umworbener Klassenfeind*, ed. Balbier et al., 180–91.
29. Gerhard Grümmer, "Herbizide in Vietnam (Teil 1)," published in *wissenschaft und fortschritt*

- 20, no. 3 (1970), SAPMO-BArch; DZ 8/106. For the report on the 1971 conference, see “Information über die 2. Sitzung der Internationalen Kommission zur Untersuchung amerikanischer Kriegsverbrechen in Indochina (Oslo 20.–24. Juni 1971),” SAPMO-BArch, DZ 8/129.
30. For the request by the British and Dutch medical groups, see memo of 30 June 1971; the letter by Medical Aid for Vietnam (6 July 1970) is in the same folder: SAPMO-BArch, DZ 8/155.
31. For the GDR’s raised status in Africa in the 1970s, see Gareth M. Winrow, *The Foreign Policy of the GDR in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), chapter 3. As Young-Sun Hong has pointed out, this rivalry of the GDR versus the United States and West Germany also extended into the developing world: “Kalter Krieg in der Ferne: Dekolonisierung, Hygienesdiskurs und der Kampf der DDR und der USA um die Dritte Welt,” in *Umworbener Klassenfeind*, ed. Balbier et al., 77–94. Finally, in her article “Die Westpolitik der DDR (1966–1989),” Marianne Howarth argues that the immediate years after 1973 represented “[eine] Phase [der] Blütezeit ihrer Diplomatie und ihrer auswärtigen Politik” for the SED; in *Die DDR und der Westen*, ed. Pfeil et al., 89.
32. Van Huong, “Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Vietnam,” 1304–11.
33. Günter Wernicke, “Solidarität hilft siegen!,” 14.
34. Port, *Conflict and Stability*, chapter 5; Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall*, chapter 6; and Ohse, *Jugend nach dem Mauerbau*, 287–95.
35. Siegfried Bock, Ingrid Muth, und Hermann Schwiesau, eds., *DDR-Aussenpolitik im Rückspiegel: Diplomaten im Gespräch* (Münster: LIT, 2004), 287.
36. For the Leipzig report, see Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik [hereafter BStU], BVfS Leipzig, AKG 00312/02, 29 August 1966.
37. Comments like these, especially the one about not wanting to prolong the war, were frequent among those who did not participate in the solidarity campaigns. For other examples, see BStU, MfS, BV Berlin, AKG 441, 10 August 1967 and BStU, Chemnitz, AKG 7399, 12 September 1966. The racist rejections seemed far less frequent by comparison; for an example, though, see BStU, BVfS Leipzig, AKG 00313/01, 18 January 1967.
38. For the complaint, see BStU Chemnitz, AKG 8255, 8 January 1970. See also BStU, MfS, BV Berlin, Abteilung VIII, 363, 11 May 1972 and BStU, MfS, SED-KL 2079, 10 May 1972. The quote is from BStU Chemnitz, AKG 8849, 29 January 1973.
39. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/2211; the quotes are from the monthly reports from Dresden from 8 January 1972 and 27 February 1973, respectively.
40. SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/2260; see reports from 2 June 1972 and 1 October 1973.
41. Van Huong, “Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Vietnam,” 1312–14.
42. On the church’s participation, see the correspondence between Oberlandeskirchenrat von Brück and Zahlbaum, 27 August–20 December 1971; the writers campaign is discussed in two appeals: “Schulen für Vietnam” and “Gesundheit für Vietnam”; for the orthopedic campaign, finally, see the report by the head of the Orthopädie Technik Berlin, 24 July 1975, all in SAPMO-BArch, DZ 8/146.
43. “Faktenmaterial über die Vietnam-Solidarität der DDR-Bevölkerung,” 25 April 1973, and memo to Kurt Krüger, Vietnam Committee, 15 August 1974, SAPMO-BArch, DZ 8/123.
44. The quote is from the report “Faktenmaterial über die Vietnam-Solidarität der DDR-Bevölkerung,” 25 April 1973, and the projection from a report from 15 August 1974, both in SAMPO-BArch; DZ 8/123.
45. “Akttenotiz über den Erfahrungsaustausch mit Schulen, die einen vietnamesischen Ehrennamen tragen,” Vietnam-Ausschuss, 23 November 1978, SAPMO-BArch, DZ 8/157.
46. See, for example, reports of 13 March 1972 and 2 June 1972, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/2243 or reports of 15 November 1972 and 2 April 1973, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/2219.
47. See Therese Hörnigk and Alexander Stephan, *Jeans, Rock und Vietnam: Amerikanische Kultur*

- in der DDR* (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2002) and the essays by Edward Larkey and Heiner Stahl on American and Western pop music in *Umworbener Klassenfeind*, ed. Balbier et al., 232–60.
48. See several articles in *Umworbener Klassenfeind*, ed. Balbier et al.: Philip Matthes, “David und Goliath,” 40–58; Stefan Meining, “Unerfüllte Träume: Erich Honecker, die jüdische Wiedergutmachungsfrage und die USA,” 59–76; and Jens Niederhut, “Unpolitische Beziehungen: Der Wissenschaftleraustausch der USA mit der DDR,” 123–43.
49. The alleged counterrevolutionary threat is discussed by Wilke, “Ulbricht, East Germany, and the Prague Spring,” in *The Prague Spring*, ed. Bischof et al., 341–70. For the public response, see Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949–1989* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 193–200; the quote is on page 197.
50. Günter Wernicke, “The World Peace Council and the Antiwar Movement in East Germany,” in *America, the Vietnam War, and the World*, ed. Daum et al., 314.
51. Van Huong, “Die Politik der DDR gegenüber Vietnam,” 1325–36, and Jonathan R. Zatin: “Scarcity and Resentment: Economic Sources of Xenophobia in the GDR, 1971–1989,” *Central European History* 40, no. 4 (2007): 683–720. This move towards contract labor in the GDR in the 1970s was part of a larger shift in development aid, as Young-Sun Hong has pointed out. See his article “The Benefits of Health Must Spread Among All: International Solidarity, Health, and Race in the East German Encounter with the Third World,” in *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics*, ed. Katherine Pence et al. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 183–210.
52. Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, 141; Ohse, *Jugendbau nach dem Mauerbau*, 281; and Christoph Dieckmann, “Küche, Kammer, Weite Welt: Mythen der Erinnerung,” in *Bye Bye Lübben City: Bluesfreaks, Tramps, und Hippies in der DDR*, ed. Michael Rauhut et al. (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf, 2009), 22.
53. For a discussion of the political and economic factors, see Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall*, chapters 5 and 6; Ohse, *Jugend nach dem Mauerbau*, chapter 5; Madarász, *Conflict and Compromise in East Germany*, chapter 2; and Wentker, *Außenpolitik in engen Grenzen*, 391–459. On the 1972 Olympics, see Uta A. Balbier, *Kalter Krieg auf der Aschenbahn: Der deutsch-deutsche Sport, 1952–1972: Eine politische Geschichte* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2007), chapters 4 and 5.

Contributors

GERD HORTEN (ghorten@cu-portland.edu) is Professor of History at Concordia University—Portland, Oregon. He teaches American and international/transnational history and is the author of *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda during World War II* (2002). He is currently working on a study on American-German relations in the 1970s.

SETH HOWES (howes@oakland.edu) is Assistant Professor of German at Oakland University. He received his PhD in German from the University of Michigan in Spring 2012, and is currently working on a book project which studies the theory and practices of committed authorship in the Cold War cultures of divided Germany.

ARI LINDEN (ari.linden@ku.edu) is a visiting assistant professor of German at the University of Kansas. He received his PhD from Cornell University in 2013 and is currently working on a book that addresses the theoretical stakes of satire in twentieth-century German and Austrian drama.

BIRGIT TAUTZ (btautz@bowdoin.edu) is Associate Professor at Bowdoin College. Author of *Reading and Seeing Ethnic Differences in the Enlightenment: From China to Africa* and editor of *Colors 1800/1900/2000: Signs of Ethnic Difference*, she is working on a new book, *Translating the World: Remaking Late Eighteenth-century Literature between Hamburg and Weimar*.

RICHARD WEIKART (rweikart@csustan.edu) is Professor of History at California State University, Stanislaus. He has published four books, including *Hitler's Ethic: The Nazi Pursuit of Evolutionary Progress* (2009) and *From Darwin to Hitler* (2004). He is currently working on a book on Hitler's religion.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.