

## The Windfall of Détenté

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For my postdoctoral project at the Berlin Center for Cold War Studies I have been researching the building of the Urengoy-Pomary-Uzhgorod Pipeline in the early 1980s as well as the rise of opportunities for collaboration between the opposing blocs in Europe. The focus is on the political ramifications of a transnational, pro-European project that, despite international crises, helped buttress détente. My point of departure is that there was no relapse of the Cold War in Europe at the time. Indeed, the pipeline's construction was a key factor in institutionalizing the politics of de-escalation. Also, from a wider perspective the resulting economic cooperation played a substantial part in the peaceful resolution of the East-West conflict. My project aims to re-evaluate Western European efforts to politically involve and economically access the Soviet Union. Eastern European perceptions of economic détente and rising financial dependence will likewise be examined. The study moreover sheds light on the origins of Europe's present-day energy supply grid.

It deals not least with the emancipation of Europe from the crisis-prone relations between the US and the Soviet Union. Of special interest are the successful efforts of West Germany and France to establish durable economic ties with the Warsaw Pact states – in stark contrast to US



policy, which in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Poland's declaration of martial law, would have preferred to wage economic war against the USSR. The pipeline's construction was made possible by a transnational network of political leaders, diplomats, trade officials and businesspeople. This network's tools of influence and manner of functioning will be investigated using Eastern and Western primary sources from multiple archives. I will argue that the pipeline's establishment extended far beyond profit and trade interests and should therefore be recognized in its political dimensions. From the West German perspective, trade with the East was an essential condition for a dynamic Ostpolitik seeking transformation of the other side. Helmut Schmidt and Hans-Dietrich Genscher wanted to establish a sustainable web of ties with the Soviet Union that would enable both the expansion of relations with East Germany and the "ransoming" of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe. From 1975, the Bonn government indeed managed to buy the emigration of between 30,000 and 40,000 ethnic Germans annually from Poland.

The pipeline's construction was conceived as a barter exchange for the benefit of both sides. The Soviet Union serviced the credits for Western equipment with gas deliveries totaling 40 billion cubic meters annually, managed to exploit its enormous commodity reserves and earned Western currency by exporting natural gas. The states of Western Europe significantly diversified their energy supplies – a political objective made all the more urgent by the 1973 energy crisis. A greater framework for energy trading across Europe was thereby created. Partners included Ruhrgas, Gaz de France, Italy's ENI and gas companies in Austria, the



Netherlands and Belgium. Despite continuous warnings from Washington against economic reliance on the Soviets and various attempts by the Reagan Administration to torpedo the deal, construction on the 4500-km conduit began in 1982. When completed in 1984 it stretched from the northwest Siberian region of Urengoy to the Slovak border. To this day it remains the biggest pipeline in Europe. In Slovakia it splits into two branches: One leads through the Czech Republic into Germany, from where the gas is distributed throughout Western Europe. The second branch serves Austria and ensures transport to Italy, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia.

I regard the growing financial and economic cooperation between East and West as a catalyst for the collapse of the Communist systems. The causes for the demise of Communism are commonly found in US human rights policy and the effects of the “Third Basket” in the CSCE Final Act. I would argue instead that, as a whole, economic cooperation was more significant and, additionally, had more immediate effects. The building of the pipeline established a profound, trans-bloc interdependence. The economic integration of the Soviet Union made rigid insistence on ideological segregation untenable. The pipeline thereby helped delegitimize Communism. It became a conduit not only for an expanded trade in gas, but equally for the exchange of ideas and values. Tens of thousands of workers, including many from East Germany, came into contact with Western technology. Western methods of working and organization were imitated. The potential for economic cooperation was put on display at various levels.



The pipeline demonstrated that economic cooperation was a value in its own right; one that could be decoupled from the arms race that was going on simultaneously. The crisis sparked by the military buildup exposed Europe's dependence on the United States and the Soviet Union. However, the pipeline showed that the Europeans were anything but bystanders in the East-West conflict and continued to advance their interest in de-escalation. How could the transatlantic conflict over US sanctions be resolved through consultations within NATO? To what extent was Washington's assent the product of an acknowledgement that the Western European allies needed precisely this signal to keep backing the policy of rearmament toward their highly skeptical populations? What links are there between the lifting of the US embargo and the readjustment of Western CSCE policy, which sought to uphold human rights while establishing trust-building mechanisms in the military field? These questions, too, will be taken up and discussed from a multi-archival perspective.

The enshrining of de-escalation in Europe established the framework for the subsequent summit diplomacy of Reagan and Gorbachev. In my view the lifting of sanctions in November 1982 was Reagan's first step on the path to a policy of cooperation with the Soviets. While his predecessors Nixon, Ford and Carter made the expansion of détente in Europe dependent on the Soviets' good behavior in other conflict regions, Reagan distanced himself as early as 1983 from this tit-for-tat approach. Secretary of State George W. Shultz formulated an agenda for decoupling Europe and the global rivalry of systems. With a process-oriented policy of incremental steps, Shultz sought to stabilize relations



with the Soviets – especially regarding arms control and human rights – and regain the Europeans’ trust. My research interest here is mainly directed at the question of what contribution Shultz made to the strategic debate within NATO in general and to political de-escalation and military deterrence in particular. The study can therefore be placed within the context of new research on “long détente,” referenced in a forthcoming volume (The Long Détente: Changing Concepts of Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1950–1980s. Oliver Bange, Poul Villaume, eds. Central European University Press) and in projects directed by Federico Romero at the European University Institute in Florence on Eastern European de-escalation policy and cooperation of Warsaw Pact states with the European Community.

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