

We All Fall Down *Simon Miles*

The Dismantling of the Warsaw Pact and the End of the Cold War in Eastern Europe

At the Madrid summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in July 1997, the sixteen allies voted to add three more: the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. In the *NATO Review*, the leaders of these three countries—all former Warsaw Pact members—introduced themselves to the rest of the membership two years ahead of their joining. Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski heralded the alliance “overriding the divisions at Yalta” that had split Europe. He stressed Poland’s commitment to playing a critical role in the European security order, the shared values between NATO’s current members and its newest, and the 90 percent support in his country for NATO membership.¹ His Czech counterpart, President Václav Havel, celebrated the opportunities created in 1989 for the countries of Eastern Europe to “make their own decisions.”² The Czech Republic, Havel declared, was unequivocally choosing NATO for more than just security; Prague and the other members of the alliance shared a common set of values. Hungary’s foreign minister, László Kovács, also pledged Budapest’s sustained contributions to European security in the future.³

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1. Aleksander Kwaśniewski, “Poland in NATO—Opportunities and Challenges,” *NATO Review* 45, no. 5 (1997): 4–7. One Polish major general went much further, writing in the military’s in-house journal that “Christianity [was] the foundation of European identity” and, therefore, of the newly enlarged NATO. See: Sławoj Leszek Głódź, “Chrześcijaństwo fundamentem tożsamości europejskiej” [Christianity is the foundation of European identity], *Mysł Wojskowa* 60, no. 4 (1999): 72–89, Biblioteka Narodowa [National Library], Warsaw, Poland, loc. P5806A, no. 55.

2. Václav Havel, “NATO and the Czech Republic: A Common Destiny,” *NATO Review* 45, no. 5 (1997): 8.

3. László Kovács, “Hungary’s Contribution to European Security,” *NATO Review* 45, no. 5 (1997): 9–11.

NATO's eastward expansion was the culmination of a highly contingent process begun a decade earlier at the end of the Cold War.⁴ Its wisdom remains debated to this day.⁵ But the Eastern Europeans' perspective is largely missing from debates over the end of the Cold War and the roots of NATO's expansion.⁶ The retreat of Soviet power from Eastern Europe from 1989 to 1991 is a story told almost exclusively from the perspective of architects in Moscow or onlookers in Washington. The central character is usually Mikhail Gorbachev, either because his "new thinking" led him to grant Eastern Europe its freedom—or because his mismanagement of the Soviet reform project gave him no other choice.⁷ The formalization of the Soviet withdrawal, the dissolu-

4. On the policy decisions during these critical years, see: Matěj Bílý, *Varšavská smlouva, 1985–1991: Dezintegrace a rozpad* [The Warsaw Pact, 1985–1991: Disintegration and dissolution] (Prague: Ústav pro Studium Totalitních Režimů, 2021); James M. Goldgeier, *Not Whether but When: The U.S. Decision to Enlarge NATO* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999); Jan Nowak-Jeziorański, *Polska droga do NATO: Listy, dokumenty, publikacje* [Poland's path to NATO: Letters, documents, and publications], ed. Dobroslawa Platt (Wrocław, Poland: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Ossolineum, 2006); Lajos Pietsch, ed., *Magyarország és a NATO: Esszé, dokumentumok, kronológia* [Hungary and NATO: Essays, documents, and chronology] (Budapest: Magyar Atlanti Tanács, 1998); Mary Elise Sarotte, *Not One Inch: America, Russia and the Making of Post-Cold War Stalemate* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021); Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *To Build a Better World: Choices to End the Cold War and Create a Global Commonwealth* (New York: Twelve, 2019).

5. Mark Kramer, "The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement Pledge to Russia," *Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2009): 39–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01636600902773248>; Mary Elise Sarotte, "A Broken Promise? What the West Really Told Moscow about NATO Expansion," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (2014), 90–97; Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, "Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the U.S. Offer to Limit NATO Expansion," *International Security* 40, no. 4 (Spring 2016): 7–44, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00236; Marc Trachtenberg, "The United States and the NATO Non-Extension Assurances of 1990: New Light on an Old Problem?," *International Security* 45, no. 3 (Winter 2020/21): 162–203, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00395. On the policy and scholarly debate writ large, see: James M. Goldgeier and Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, "Evaluating NATO Enlargement: Scholarly Debates, Policy Implications, and Roads Not Taken," *International Politics* 57, no. 3 (2020): 291–321, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-020-00243-7>.

6. Mark Kramer, "The Demise of the Soviet Bloc," *Journal of Modern History* 83, no. 4 (2011): 788–854, <https://doi.org/10.1086/662547>; Mary Elise Sarotte, "The Convincing Call from Central Europe: Let Us into NATO," *Foreign Affairs*, March 12, 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-03-12/convincing-call-central-europe-let-us-nato>. By contrast, one counterfactual analysis of NATO's first post-Cold War round of expansion considers nearly every variable except the policy positions of the new members themselves. See: Kimberly Marten, "Reconsidering NATO Expansion: A Counterfactual Analysis of Russia and the West in the 1990s," *European Journal of International Security* 3, no. 2 (2017): 135–161, <https://doi.org/10.1017/eis.2017.16>.

7. For the enlightened Mikhail Gorbachev, see: Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 212–251; Svetlana Savranskaya, "The Logic of 1989: The Soviet Peaceful Withdrawal from Eastern Europe," in Svetlana Savranskaya, Thomas S. Blanton, and Vladislav M. Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces of History: The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010), 1–47; William Taubman, *Gorbachev: His Life and Times* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2017), 462–499. For a more critical assessment, see: Vladislav M. Zubok, *Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021), 70–97.

tion of the Warsaw Pact, and the role of the Pact's own non-Soviet members in bringing it down remain afterthoughts.

The superpowers were not the only ones that shaped events: the non-Soviet members of the Warsaw Pact, too, had agency.⁸ I use new archival evidence from Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania to show how policymakers east of the Iron Curtain navigated and shaped the end of the Cold War and why they made the choices they did. Across Eastern Europe, historical documents from these five former Pact members' diplomatic, intelligence, military, and party-political repositories are now accessible, making it possible to reconstruct Eastern European diplomacy during the Cold War's denouement, a time of extraordinary change in international politics. These countries grasped what it would take to adapt and succeed in the post-Cold War world, broke out of the strictures of the Warsaw Pact after 1989, hastened its demise over Soviet objections in 1991, and moved closer to the sturdier Western institutions that they rapidly came to see as better serving their economic, security, and other needs over the course of the 1990s. By the end of the decade, most would be members of both NATO and the European Union.

This evidence challenges long-standing imperial tropes about the Warsaw Pact in the alliance politics literature.⁹ John Oneal writes off the Pact as lacking the requisite "independent, voluntary behavior" to be considered an alliance.¹⁰ Glenn Snyder also dismisses the Pact as a "cloak for [Soviet] imperial domination."¹¹ Stephen Walt, too, explains away Moscow's relationship with the rest of the Pact as "imperial" and the alliance's other members as "under de facto Soviet control."¹² John Lewis Gaddis similarly dismisses the Pact as "managed

8. On the grand strategies of and available to small states, see: Robert O. Keohane, "Lilliputians' Dilemmas: Small States in International Politics," *International Organization* 23, no. 2 (1969): 291–310, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081830003160X>; Tom Long, *A Small State's Guide to Influence in World Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); Matthias Maass, *Small States in World Politics: The Story of Small State Survival* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2017).

9. An "imperial" relationship is not necessarily as one-directional in terms of power as those who invoke it to explain how the Warsaw Pact functioned mean to suggest. See: Ronald E. Robinson, "Non-European Foundations of European Imperialism: Sketch for a Theory of Collaboration," in Roger Owen and Robert B. Sutcliffe, eds., *Studies in the Theory of Imperialism* (London: Longman, 1972), 117–142; Ronald E. Robinson, "The Excentric Idea of Imperialism, with or without Empire," in Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel, eds., *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 267–289.

10. John R. Oneal, "The Theory of Collective Action and Burden Sharing in NATO," *International Organization* 44, no. 3 (1990): 380, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300035335>.

11. Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 39; see also Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (1984): 461–495, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2010183>.

12. Stephen M. Walt, "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International*

from Moscow, in the classic manner of old-fashioned empires. . . . The result was surely subservience.”¹³ But historians of the Soviet Union like Sheila Fitzpatrick have long challenged such depictions, using new materials from the Soviet archives to refute the so-called totalitarian model of absolute state control of a powerless, passive society by a monolithic, authoritarian regime in Moscow.¹⁴ These ideas apply to the Warsaw Pact as well. Historians of Eastern Europe are writing what Vojtech Mastny dubs a “new history of Cold War alliances,” demonstrating in new and unexpected ways that Eastern European states used both agency and leverage to drive alliance policy.¹⁵

Four principal themes shaped the foreign policy choices of the non-Soviet members of the Pact. First, Eastern European policymakers resolved to destroy the Warsaw Pact that bound them to the Soviet Union and differentiated them from the rest of Europe. Given the chance to make a break from the Soviet Union, new, democratic governments were determined to exercise and demonstrate their newfound independence. Second, they also decided early on to cast their lot in with Western Europe. That meant participating in its security organs where possible, which brought the benefit of U.S. protection, and in economic and political institutions such as the European Economic Community (EEC). The economic opportunities in the West were of particular significance to the East, newly free to seize them. Third, Eastern Europe took a dim view of the ideas, which abounded at the time, to base new European security architecture on institutions that included the Soviet Union, such as the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). The Eastern Europeans saw a new international order coalescing around old Western institutions. Particularly wary of what trajectory the Soviet Union would take as Gorbachev’s leadership seemed to grow increasingly tenuous, they did not want fragile new institutions that might not be able to contain an uncooperative Soviet Union. Without ruling out new institutions, they also wanted reliable Western institutions that would protect them from Moscow, as opposed to new ones that gave the Soviet Union a say in their security. Fourth, events and preferences changed at a breakneck pace. Not only did Eastern European of-

Security 9, no. 4 (1985): 36, <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.9.4.3>; see also Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).

13. John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 289.

14. Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Revisionism in Soviet History,” *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History* 46, no. 4 (2007): 80.

15. Vojtech Mastny, “The New History of Cold War Alliances,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4, no. 2 (2002): 55–84, <https://doi.org/10.1162/152039702753649647>.

ficials take the initiative quickly, beginning to gravitate westward, but key leaders changed their views on the future in mere months, often coaxed by (usually more junior) policymakers who wanted to go further, faster.

Viewed from Eastern Europe, therefore, success in the post–Cold War world necessitated integrating into existing international institutions, above all those that originated west of the Iron Curtain. Critically, both reformers like Havel (the dissident playwright who became Czechoslovakia’s first democratically elected leader since 1948) and figures like Wojciech Jaruzelski (the architect of martial law in Poland in the early 1980s) reached the same conclusion. In Poland and Romania, those who had once led Communist regimes were now steering their countries away from the Soviet Union and toward the West. These leaders were not liberal Europhiles; they were pragmatists.¹⁶ NATO was a critical part of this shift. Eastern European policymakers, wary of turbulence in the Soviet Union that they believed threatened any attempt to build new, pan-European security institutions, sought the security of a robust political and military framework that promised both security and economic benefits. Joining the alliance would come with security guarantees from the United States, to be sure, but that was far from the Eastern Europeans’ only goal. NATO membership would be a vehicle for valuable cultural, economic, and political—as well as security—integration.

A chronological treatment illuminates the striking speed of both events and policy changes from 1989 to 1991. Leaders east of the crumbling Iron Curtain recognized their short-term window of opportunity to lock in long-term benefits and took it.¹⁷ Section 1 covers the transformative year of 1989. Even before the night of November 9, when East Germans brought down the Berlin Wall, policymakers across the Warsaw Pact had been devising ways to distance themselves from Moscow. Afterward, it was immediately obvious that the Eastern bloc would change. Section 2 focuses on East Germany in the first half of 1990. Leaders in East Berlin were determined not to let the superpowers obstruct German reunification. Meanwhile, the rest of the Pact, which had

16. Tom Gallagher, “Incredible Voyage: Romania’s Communist Heirs Adapt and Survive after 1989,” in Vladimir Tismaneanu and Bogdan C. Iacob, eds., *The End and the Beginning: The Revolutions of 1989 and the Resurgence of History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012), 521–542; Wojciech Jaruzelski, Jan Osiecki, and Ewa Charitonow, *Generał: Wojciech Jaruzelski w rozmowie z Janem Osieckim* [The General: Wojciech Jaruzelski in conversation with Jan Osiecki] (Warsaw: Prószyński, 2014), 609–635.

17. On the interaction between understandings of time and foreign policy behavior, see: David M. Edelstein, *Over the Horizon: Time, Uncertainty, and the Rise of the Great Powers* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017).

spent the Cold War warning of the dangers of German militarism and revanchism, now insisted that only Germans should decide whether to reunify, undermining their Soviet ally's efforts to retain control. Section 3 covers the same early 1990 period but focuses on the rest of Eastern Europe. There, policymakers began to integrate with Western institutions wherever they could. Section 4 centers on the Warsaw Pact's June 1990 summit, the first Political Consultative Committee meeting since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Already, the drive to demolish the Pact was evident. Section 5 discusses the Eastern Europeans' efforts through the latter half of 1990. The push to end the Pact and integrate with Western economic, political, and security institutions accelerated in part because of increasing policy coordination among soon-to-be-former members, particularly the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. But these states also worked to hedge against Moscow's sharp reversal of its approach to the region, as they watched the domestic situation within the Soviet Union deteriorate. Before the conclusion, section 6 illustrates how, in 1991, all these efforts came to fruition with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact.

Opening the Iron Curtain, January–December 1989

It has become a truism to say that 1989 changed everything for Europe. But European leaders—especially those who came to power after the revolutions of that year had brought down Communist regimes—recognized that the paradigm shift in policy at home would have to mean a commensurate change in foreign policy, too.¹⁸ The Warsaw Pact, the politico-military alliance that bound them to the Soviet Union, would have to change, and quickly. A new crop of leaders in Eastern Europe envisioned remaking Europe's security order, above all by bridging East and West.¹⁹

Hungary led the charge. In a two-day Central Committee meeting in February 1989, Hungary's leadership had ended its own Communist Party's monopoly on politics.²⁰ At the end of that month, the Hungarian Politburo

18. Constantin Oancea, December 9, 1989, Arhive Naționale Istorice Centrale [Central National Historical Archive] (ANIC), Bucharest, Romania, fond Tratatul de la Varșovia [Warsaw Pact] (TV), dosar 189.

19. Vasile Sandru to Oancea, January 20, 1990, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 191.

20. Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt [Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party] (MSZMP) Central Committee meeting, February 10–11, 1989, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára [Hungarian National Archive] (MNL OL), Budapest, Hungary, fond M-KS-288 (MSZMP Központi Szervei) [Central Organs of the MSZMP], csoport 4 (Központi Bizottság) [Central Committee], őrzési egységek 250–252. For a history of Hungary's evolving role in the Eastern bloc, see: Csaba Békés,

deemed the border-security regime “tantamount to incarceration” and ordered the fences on the border with Austria dismantled and the border guards’ strength cut by hundreds per year.²¹ To reinforce Hungary’s new openness, Budapest would host a conference in the spring of 1989 on “Europe and European Cooperation on the Eve of the 1990s,” to which it would invite everyone from the usual Western European Communist parties to British and Canadian Tories.²²

Hungary’s foreign minister, Péter Várkonyi, vowed that the country’s sovereignty would no longer be “compromised on the pretext of protecting socialism. . . . The main objective of our international political program is to reduce the importance of military blocs . . . or to phase them out, . . . taking advantage of the resulting political and economic benefits.”²³ In a similar vein, Mátyás Szűrös, the chair of the National Assembly’s Foreign Affairs Committee, announced that “we are even more open to partners in the West” and other “developed economies” around the world.²⁴ This meant not just longtime European interlocutors like West Germany, but also Israel and South Korea. Unilateral defense spending cuts—far outstripping those of the Soviet Union—were a key component of this effort to open Hungary’s society and economy.²⁵ Polish diplomats, too, stressed their “efforts to draw closer to Western European institutions,” such as NATO and the EEC, as central to Warsaw’s foreign policy already in January 1989.²⁶

Hungarian leaders had identified one of the key issues in the Eastern European debate over the future: relations with the West. Even before the Berlin Wall had fallen, Budapest feared a future in which the current permis-

Enyhülés és emancipáció: Magyarország, a szovjet blokk és a nemzetközi politika 1944–1991 [Appeasement and emancipation: Hungary, the Soviet bloc, and international politics, 1944–1991] (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2019).

21. MSZMP Politburo meeting, February 28, 1989, MNL OL, fond M-KS-288, csoport 5 (Politikai Bizottság) [Politburo], őrzési egység 1054.

22. MSZMP Politburo meeting, March 21, 1989, MNL OL, fond M-KS-288, csoport 5, őrzési egységek 1058–1059.

23. Várkonyi and Ferenc Kárpáti, “Javaslat Politikai Bizottságnak a Varsói Szerződéssel összefüggő időszerű kérdésekről” [Proposal to the Politburo on current issues related to the Warsaw Pact], May 5, 1989, MNL OL, fond M-KS-288, csoport 5, őrzési egység 1065.

24. MSZMP Central Committee meeting, September 27, 1988, MNL OL, fond M-KS-288, csoport 4, őrzési egységek 242–243.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Henryk Jaroszek, “Pilna notatka w sprawie nawiązania kontaktów ze Zgromadzeniem Północnoatlantyckim” [Urgent note on establishing contacts with the North Atlantic Assembly], January 10, 1989, Biuro Archiwum i Zarządzania Informacją Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych [Bureau of Archives and Information Management of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs] (BAZI MSZ), Warsaw, Poland, zespół 35/1992, wiązka 6, teczka 8697.

sive context evaporated. What if the Soviet political transformation were abandoned, or worse, reversed? What if hard-liners ousted Gorbachev as general secretary and tried to reassert control over Eastern Europe by force?²⁷ A meeting of Communist parties in September 1989, for example, was so conservative in its focus on “the dictatorship of imperialism” and its refusal to acknowledge reforms (“the word *perestroika* . . . never occurred,” one Hungarian diplomat observed) as to be irrelevant to Budapest’s reality. Clearly, they warned, not everyone in Moscow shared Gorbachev’s view of Eastern Europe’s future.²⁸

The fall of the Berlin Wall accelerated the changes already underway in Eastern Europe.²⁹ Clearly the Pact would have to be overhauled, and almost certainly to the detriment of its military elements, which made little sense with the Iron Curtain coming down—and with new governments coming into power not interested in maintaining the fiction of a rapacious West. The Soviet Union staunchly resisted efforts to demilitarize the Pact. So too did Bulgaria, looking warily at the escalating violence in neighboring Yugoslavia, and embroiled in its own dispute with NATO member Turkey over Sofia’s policy of forced assimilation of its Turkish minority.³⁰ In fact, only the Hungarians and the Czechoslovaks believed that the 1990s would be the decade of disarmament. They decided in December 1989 to begin negotiations with Moscow to completely remove Soviet troops from their respective territories. Soviet military installations dotted the Eastern European landscape, and though Gorbachev had begun the process of reducing their garrisons in late 1988 with a much-lauded speech to the United Nations, it was too little, too late.³¹ Prague considered those “leases to be invalid because they were concluded under duress” and those troops’ presence to be a violation of international law.³² For the

27. MSZMP Central Committee meeting, September 27, 1988.

28. Géza Kótai, “A szocialista országok belüli kommunista- és munkáspártok külügyi titkárainak várnai találkozójáról” [On the Varna meeting of the foreign secretaries of the communist and workers’ parties of the socialist community], October 2, 1989, MNL OL, fond M-KS-288, csoport 5, őrzési egység 1079.

29. On the events of 1989 in East Germany and their consequences, see: Jeffrey A. Engel, ed., *The Fall of the Berlin Wall: The Revolutionary Legacy of 1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Mary Elise Sarotte, *The Collapse: The Accidental Opening of the Berlin Wall* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

30. Simion Pop and Lucian Petrescu to Sergiu Celac and Oancea, February 27, 1990, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 191. On Bulgaria’s so-called rebirth process, see: Mary Neuberger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

31. Gorbachev remarks, United Nations, New York, December 7, 1988, *Sobranie sochinenii* [Collected works], vol. 13, ed. Vladimir T. Loginov et al. (Moscow: Ves’ Mir, 2008), 18–37.

32. Peter Tomka, “Návrh na začatie expertných rokovaní so ZSSR o sovietskych jednotkách roz-

Czechoslovaks in particular, with memories of the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion that crushed the Prague Spring, this was “a political, but also a psychological, issue. . . . The pan-European balance of power cannot depend on the situation created by military intervention.”³³

Soviet leaders, it seemed, were already thinking about how to make NATO seem like the malign actor in Europe’s transformation. But their putative allies—the ones actually transforming—suspected that it was the Soviet Union that was acting in bad faith. After all, Moscow refused to provide basic information about the Soviet nuclear and conventional military presence on its own territory.³⁴ Although Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze conceded that the 1968 invasion was wrong, he also insisted that Moscow needed guarantees of “stability” and “balance” in Europe before bringing Soviet troops home. On that issue, some feared going too far, too fast. The Poles, for example, doubted that they should disarm while their German neighbors unified and grew stronger; to them, a withdrawal of Soviet troops was not entirely welcome.³⁵

The Future of Germany, January–May 1990

East Germany’s fate was clear in the first months of 1990: it would exit the Warsaw Pact.³⁶ German unification caused concern on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Nobody made that clearer than the Soviets, who warned of West German machinations behind events in the East, disguised as “pan-Europeanism.” Moscow’s representatives predicted that “greater Germany” would become a nuclear power, destabilize the continent, and trigger an “explosion” of nationalism. Soviet officials insisted that it was in all of Europe’s interest for the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) to survive as an independent state rather than to unify with the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany). To that end, it pledged to help East Berlin resist Bonn’s pres-

miestnených v ČSSR” [Proposal for the initiation of expert-level negotiations with the USSR on Soviet troops stationed in Czechoslovakia], January 10, 1990, Archiv Ministerstva Zahraničních Věcí [Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs] (AMZV), Prague, Czech Republic, Materiály do Vlády [Material for the Government] (MV), karton 160.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Dávid Meiszter, “A bécsi tárgyalások a VSZ LKB moszkvai ülésén” [The Moscow meeting of the Warsaw Pact Special Committee on Disarmament], January 9, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j (Külügyminisztérium) [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], év 1990, doboz 94.

35. Tomka, “Návrh na začatie expertných rokovaní so ZSSR o sovietskych jednotkách rozmiestnených v ČSSR.”

36. Pop and Petrescu to Celac and Oancea, February 27, 1990.

sure. And even if Hungarian diplomats thought that the Soviets were being hyperbolic and overestimating their ability to shape events, they thought that the Germans were being equally naive and ahistorical. Reassurances that the process launched in 1989 was no “Anschluss” were welcome, but Nazi aggression was not easily forgotten.³⁷

Internally, the East Germans acknowledged that the rest of Europe did not embrace the idea of a unified, powerful Germany. A “leap forward” in German military power could spell disaster.³⁸ But the worst-case security scenario for East Germany would be a NATO that extended beyond the Oder and Neisse rivers and perhaps all the way to the Bug River that divides Poland from the Soviet republics of Ukraine and Belarus. Already in early 1990, many in East Berlin feared that NATO’s eastward expansion—including, but not limited to, East German integration—would be perceived as such a threat in Moscow that the Soviet Union would use violence to undo or at least to stop it, and Europe would be plunged into chaos.³⁹

According to Havel, thinking along the same lines as the East Germans, the unification of Germany would need to take place in accordance with the Soviet Union’s interests as much as those of the other victorious powers of World War II (France, the United Kingdom, and the United States), and as part of a pan-European process.⁴⁰ But a March 1990 meeting of the Warsaw Pact’s foreign ministers made clear that this would be difficult to achieve. Mere months after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Shevardnadze and Soviet policymakers grudgingly accepted unified Germany as a NATO member but insisted that the occu-

37. László Szücs, “A német kérdés a VSZ TCS januári ülésén” [The German question at the January meeting of the Warsaw Pact Information Committee], January 17, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 93.

38. Ministerium für Nationale Verteidigung [Ministry of National Defense], “Konzeptionelle Standpunkte zur Rolle und dem Auftrag deutscher Streitkräfte im Prozess des Zusammenwachsens der beiden deutschen Staaten” [Conceptual position on the role and mission of the German militaries in the process of German reunification], February 12, 1990, Militärarchiv [Federal Military Archive] (MA), Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany, DVW 1/43739.

39. By early 1993, the Germans (particularly the Ministry of Defense) feared that an insecure “Zwischeneuropa” would form in the strategic vacuum of Eastern Europe, including their neighbor, Poland. Better to have Poland in NATO, they believed, even if it complicated relations with Moscow, than instability on Germany’s borders. See: Volker Rühle, “Shaping Euro-Atlantic Policies: A Grand Strategy for a New Era,” *Survival* 35, no. 2 (1993): 129–137, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396339308442689>.

40. Jiří Jiříček and Jozef Štefaňák, “Zpráva o průběhu a výsledcích pracovní návštěvy předsedy rady ministru Německé demokratické republiky Hanse Modrowa v ČSSR dne 6. února 1990” [Report on the course and results of the working visit of Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the German Democratic Republic Hans Modrow to Czechoslovakia on February 6, 1990], February 9, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 160.

pying powers keep troops on its territory. Attempting to make this palatable, Shevardnadze proposed creating joint brigades modeled on the Franco-German Brigade, stood up in 1987. But the Czech delegation felt that they had a better idea—the vehicles of post-Cold War European integration (and German reunification) should be “the best institutions of Western European integration”—above all NATO and the EEC.⁴¹ Hungary’s position was also clear: the future of East Germany was not a matter for the Warsaw Pact per se, but for independent decisions by each of its members. “There is no common position,” concluded Polish Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski. But everyone except the Soviet Union agreed that Moscow should have no special role in the German question “as the victor of World War II . . . [because] the decision to unify belonged to the Germans.” Far from amplifying Soviet preferences, Warsaw Pact members were now coalescing against Moscow on the future of Germany, one of the defining issues of the Cold War.⁴²

East Germany’s first civilian defense minister, Rainer Eppelmann, had been a leader of the peace movement and labeled a threat to national security by the East Berlin regime. Now, he was tasked with maintaining it through reunification. Military blocs, Eppelmann proclaimed, were a thing of the past. NATO and the Warsaw Pact would become purely political alliances. “Fighting one’s own people who happen to belong to NATO has become nonsensical. The process of unification is irreversible. . . . We want European thinking!”⁴³ But Eppelmann’s rapidly conceived solution was more befuddling than reassuring. A unified Germany, he argued, should maintain two armies corresponding to the two soon-to-be-former German states, with one force a NATO member and one in the Warsaw Pact.⁴⁴

Unsurprisingly, Eppelmann’s Soviet counterparts did not support this idea. The military commander of the Warsaw Pact, Army General Pyotr Lushev,

41. Jiříček and Václav Eichinger, “Informace o průběhu a výsledcích setkání ministrů zahraničních věcí členských států zemí Varšavské smlouvy k německé otázce konaného dne 17. března 1990 v Praze” [Information on the course and results of the meeting of ministers of foreign affairs of the member states of the Warsaw Pact on the German question held on March 17, 1990, in Prague], March 20, 1990, AMZV, MV, karta 161.

42. Krzysztof Skubiszewski, “Notatka informacyjna ze spotkania Ministrów Spraw Zagranicznych państw-stron Układu Warszawskiego (Praga, 16–17 marca 1990 r.)” [Informational note on the meeting of the ministers of foreign affairs of the states of the Warsaw Pact (Prague, March 16–17, 1990)], March 23, 1990, BAZI MSZ, zespol 11/1995, wiazka 1,teczka 8894. On the centrality of the German question, see: Susan Colbourn, *Euromissiles: The Nuclear Weapons That Nearly Destroyed NATO* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022); Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

43. Eppelmann remarks, Strausberg, East Germany, May 14, 1990, MA, DVW 1/43737.

44. *Ibid.*

complained that only the Pact's members were disarming (even if they were actually slashing defense budgets for economic reasons) while NATO was doing nothing of the sort. Eppelmann elaborated on his dual-military scheme to the Soviet officer, explaining that both alliances would remake European security by transforming into political entities, which Eppelmann took as a given. That Germany would be a NATO member, also a given, did not need to mean that NATO's military influence would expand eastward. Even after unification, East Germany's Nationale Volksarmee should remain independent from West Germany's Bundeswehr, each remaining on its respective former territory. And so long as U.S. and NATO troops remained in the former West Germany, Soviet troops should remain in the East.⁴⁵ Lushev did not engage with these curious ideas.⁴⁶

Soviet Defense Minister Marshal Dmitrii Iazov, by contrast, expressed his displeasure in a series of meetings with Eppelmann in spring 1990. He first and foremost denounced Eppelmann's "incomprehensible" decision to change his department's name to the Ministry for Disarmament and Defense. He bemoaned the decommunization of Eastern European militaries, never acknowledging the state-wide decommunizing that drove it. And he complained that while the United States had not withdrawn one soldier from Europe, the Soviet Union's ostensible allies were demanding Soviet withdrawals and seemed intent on breaking the Warsaw Pact.⁴⁷ As for Eppelmann's proposal for two German armies, Iazov concluded that "the existence of two armies in one state is unreal." Who would fund such a force? It certainly would not be the Soviet Union, amid rising public hostility to the Soviet presence.⁴⁸

After his meetings with Iazov, Eppelmann warned that "because of a strong affinity for the West, due to concrete political and economic interests, the Eastern Europeans could shortly withdraw from the [Warsaw Pact] individually" and lock the Soviet Union out of the future European security order.⁴⁹ To Lushev, it was unthinkable that a state as powerful as the Soviet Union could be excluded from any viable post-Cold War international order, especially in Europe. Events, and above all Eastern European preferences, were changing more quickly than the Soviet leaders could keep up with.⁵⁰

45. Eppelmann-Lushev memorandum of conversation, April 20, 1990, MA, DVW 1/43735.

46. The full plan for this arrangement bore some resemblance to the U.S. National Guard system, with a chain of command running through state as well as federal government.

47. Eppelmann-Iazov memorandum of conversation, April 26, 1990, MA, DVW 1/43735.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Eppelmann-Lushev memorandum of conversation, May 10, 1990, MA, DVW 1/43735.

50. *Ibid.*

In April, top East German leaders visited Moscow to reassure Soviet policymakers. Premier Lothar de Maizière, the first democratically elected and last leader of East Germany, tried to strike a balance between his government's intention to leave the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet fear of NATO shifting eastward. But the ongoing presence of Soviet troops was untenable. Emboldened citizens complained about noise, traffic, and pollution from Soviet bases. To illustrate this situation, de Maizière raised the issue of East Germany's completion of Oka short-range ballistic missiles: The military had destroyed their launchpads, but nobody knew enough about the weapons to dismantle them safely. Would the Soviet Union mind taking them back?⁵¹

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Moscow's allies expected that international institutions would play a key role in the post–Cold War. They thus began to look for new international forums in which to exercise their independence from Soviet dictates. Initially, the twenty-three NATO and Warsaw Pact members as well as the thirty-five CSCE signatories held talks to discuss disarmament and confidence-building measures. Over time, new opportunities to the west presented themselves.⁵² At the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the North Atlantic Assembly, the Western European Union, and the European Parliament, Hungarian diplomats used early observer-status invitations to make it clear that they belonged in these Western institutions on a permanent basis.⁵³ Earlier in 1989, Czechoslovakia had tried to join the Council of Europe only to be rebuffed as a nondemocracy. With free elections on the horizon, the door was opening. Of course, the value was largely symbolic, but at a time of such rapid and profound change, symbols mattered because they reassured publics and policymakers alike that more tangible, consequential progress was possible.⁵⁴

51. Ministerium für Abrüstung und Verteidigung (MfAV) [Ministry for Disarmament and Defense], "Besuch des Ministerpräsidenten der DDR, Herrn de Maiziere in der UdSSR vom 26.–27. April 1990: Mögliche Aussagen zu militärpolitischen Fragen" [Visit of prime minister of the DDR de Maiziere to the USSR, April 26–27, 1990: Possible statements on politico-military questions], April 1990, MA, DVW 1/43752.

52. Bílý, *Varšavská smlouva*, 321–332.

53. Erik Baktai, "A VSZ-tagállamok kapcsolatai az Európa Tanáccsal és más nyugat-európai szervezetekkel" [Relations between Warsaw Pact member states and the Council of Europe and other Western European institutions], February 6, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 93.

54. Eduard Bláha, "Návrh na podání žádosti o udělení statutu pozvaného státu Rady Evropy pro CSSR a přijetí za jejího člena" [Proposal for the submission of an application for granting Czecho-

Junior policymakers were particularly determined to make the most of the opening during the 1990s. Pact members had in the late 1980s begun to convene young diplomats, who displayed none of their seniors' restraint or concern for Soviet sensitivities. At a January 1990 meeting, the Czechoslovak delegation rejected the idea that they had any "natural common interests" with the Soviet Union. When all the Eastern European delegations stressed their belief that NATO was the essential vehicle for creating a common European home, the Soviet delegation had nothing to say.⁵⁵ But the meeting also laid out another reality of the post-Cold War: that the states of Eastern Europe, as they adjusted to new circumstances, would compete with one another for influence with and material assistance from the West.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, Moscow denounced the rampant "mistrust and suspicion" within the Warsaw Pact.⁵⁷ The West was exploiting the events of late 1989 for its own end, Soviet representatives insisted; and to make matters worse, the naive countries of Eastern Europe seemed to be playing directly into its hands.⁵⁸

It was no secret that virtually all the current members of the Pact, with varying degrees of success, were looking to the West and trying to forge relations with existing structures on the other side of the crumbling Iron Curtain. All had an interest in "overcoming the policy of blocs and seeking ways to unite Europe."⁵⁹ In part, for the Eastern Europeans, this was ideological. The concepts of democracy and civil society, which they associated with Western Europe, had begun to transform their societies in 1989. It also had an important economic component. Czechoslovak policymakers concluded that they

slovakia the status of an invited state to the Council of Europe and acceptance as a member], December 9, 1989, AMZV, MV, karton 160.

55. Marianne Berez et al., "VSZ tagországok fiatal diplomatáinak és tudósainak találkozója (Szófia, 1990. január 8–12)" [Meeting of young diplomats and scientists of Warsaw Pact member states (Sofia, January 8–12, 1990)], January 13, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 94.

56. Jerzy Małosa, "Notatka informacyjna nt. Spotkania młodych dyplomatów i naukowców państw-stron Układu Warszawskiego" [Informational note on the meeting of young diplomats and scientists of the member states of the Warsaw Pact], January 25, 1990, BAZI MSZ, zespol 37/1992, wiązka 1, teczka 8992.

57. Sandru to Romulus Neagu and Petrescu, May 23, 1990, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 191.

58. László Borsists, "A hagyományos fegyverekkel összefüggésben Becsben folyó tárgyalásokra a VSZ közös álláspontra kialakítása a személyi állomány létszámára, technikai eszközeire vonatkozóan, a közép-európai térségre koncentrálna" [For the Vienna conventional-forces talks, the Warsaw Pact will develop a common position on personnel and equipment numbers, focusing on Central Europe], June 4, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 94.

59. Juraj Migaš and Radomír Boháč, "Správa o priebehu a výsledkoch pracovnej návštevy ministra zahraničných vecí ČSSR J. Dienstbiera v Pošskej republike a Maďarskej republike" [Report on the course and results of the working visit of Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs J. Dienstbier to Poland and Hungary], January 17, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 160.

would have to completely restructure their economy.⁶⁰ That meant embracing “a new system.”⁶¹ It also necessitated gaining access to the Western marketplace.⁶² Only with more advanced foreign technology could they engineer a “return to Europe.”⁶³ Even before the Berlin Wall came down, the Poles preferred to focus on economic matters that affected their own interests rather than those of the entire Eastern bloc.⁶⁴ Jaruzelski emphasized in his meetings with Gorbachev during a visit to the Soviet Union in April 1990 that improving relations with the West was now his country’s top foreign policy priority.⁶⁵ Indeed, at the same time as its Warsaw Pact allies, Moscow asserted its interest in forging potentially profitable links with the EEC, the “economic foundation of the common European home.”⁶⁶

For Moscow, this sense of hope was tinged with insecurity about what roles the Soviet Union, NATO, and the United States would play in Europe. Even the joint statement for the Pact’s thirty-fifth birthday in 1990 would be about working more closely with NATO, once its members’ chief bogeyman.⁶⁷

60. Michal Štanceš, “Návrh opatření, která umožní překonávat technické překážky obchodu ve VKS, zejména pak v EHS, v souvislosti s dobudováním jednotného vnitřního trhu” [Proposed measures to overcome technical obstacles to trade with advanced capitalist states, especially in the European Economic Community, in connection with the completion of the common market], February 6, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 160.

61. Migaš and Vladimír Suchan, “Informace o průběhu a výsledcích pracovní návštěvy předsedy rady ministrů Polské republiky T. Mazowieckého v CSSR” [Information on the course and results of the working visit of Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Poland T. Mazowiecki to Czechoslovakia], January 23, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 160.

62. Ministerstvo Zahraničního Obchodu (MZO) [Ministry of Foreign Trade], “Návrh na přijetí záruk za dodržování ‘Zásad ochranného režimu’ pro uvolnění dodávek moderní technologie do CSSR krytých listinou COCOM” [Proposal for the acceptance of guarantees of compliance with the ‘Principles of the Safeguard Regime’ for the release of supplies of modern technology to Czechoslovakia covered by COCOM], March 7, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 160.

63. Petr Bambaš and Pavel Borovička, “Návrh na připojení ČSSR k iniciativě ‘4’ (regionální spolupráce Itálie, Rakouska, Jugoslávie a Maďarska)” [Proposal for Czechoslovakia to join the ‘4’ initiative (regional cooperation between Italy, Austria, Yugoslavia, and Hungary)], March 16, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 160.

64. Jerzy Nowak to Henryk Jaroszek, January 5, 1989, BAZI MSZ, zespól 26/1992, wiązka 4,teczka 8984.

65. Bolesław Kułski, “Notatka informacyjna z oficjalnej wizyty Prezydenta RP Wojciecha Jaruzelskiego w Związku Socjalistycznych Republik Radzieckich” [Informational note on the visit of President of the Polish Republic Wojciech Jaruzelski to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics], May 14, 1990, BAZI MSZ, zespól 35/1997, wiązka 1,teczka 7442.

66. Kutasi, “A VSZ TCS februári ülése a szövetséges országok kapcsolatairól az Európa Tanácsal és más nyugat-európai szervezetekkel” [The February meeting of the Warsaw Pact Information Committee on relations between allies and the Council of Europe and other Western European institutions], February 19, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 93.

67. Külügyminisztérium [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], “A VSZ TCS áprilisi ülése a VSZ évfordulójáról” [The April meeting of the Warsaw Pact Information Committee on the anniversary of the Warsaw Pact], April 18, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 94.

But, as the Eastern Europeans kept reminding the Soviets and others, they had the same rights as every other state—and could now actually exercise them.⁶⁸ As Czechoslovakia's foreign minister, Jiří Dienstbier, put it, "existing institutions are no longer responsive" to the realities in Europe. "Today, the Warsaw Pact and NATO operate in different conditions than in the past. These organizations, which still divide Europe, should be primarily involved in disarmament. We assume that further developments will primarily strengthen their political role and gradually reduce their military role. This process need not be symmetrical, as the two alliances are not identical in many respects."⁶⁹ Czechoslovakia, for its part, would "make full use of existing multilateral institutions . . . which could gradually become pan-European."⁷⁰

After a visit to NATO headquarters in Brussels at the end of February 1990, Dienstbier recognized why existing institutions like it were the better bet for Czechoslovakia. In the Soviet Union—and, indeed, throughout Eastern Europe—democracy's gains were fragile. Germany was a test case for whether NATO was the best way to provide security for both the reunified country and the former members of the Warsaw Pact.⁷¹

Back in Prague, the foreign ministry concluded that Europe was trending toward unification and integration—but lopsidedly, vastly favoring institutions originating in the West. Czechoslovakia's interests and its "predominant European orientation" would be best served by extending these institutions eastward.⁷² Doing so would act as a hedge against the perceived danger of the "political and economic crisis" unfolding in the Soviet Union during 1990.⁷³ If Soviet hard-liners took power, they could undo efforts to build new institutions. Furthermore, embracing Western institutions would keep the United States engaged in Europe, which would diminish the danger that a conservative turn in Moscow would pose to newly free Eastern Europe. Finally, according to Czechoslovak policymakers, the key determinants of power in the

68. Csaba Mohi, "Nyugati országok álláspontjának új elemei az EBEE és a NATO szerepéről" [New aspects of the position of Western countries on the role of the CSCE and NATO], May 17, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 94.

69. Dienstbier, "Evropské bezpečnostní komisi" [European security commission], April 6, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 161.

70. Ibid.

71. Ivan Bušniak and Ivan Jestřáb, "Informace o průběhu a výsledcích návštěvy ministra zahraničních věcí J. Dienstbiera v Dánsku, Nizozemí a Belgii" [Information on the course and results of the visit of Minister of Foreign Affairs J. Dienstbier to Denmark, the Netherlands, and Belgium], March 24, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 161.

72. Jaroslav Šedivý and Bušniak, "Koncepte československé zahraniční politiky" [Czechoslovak foreign policy concept], March 30, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 161.

73. Ibid.

future would be economic and technological—two sectors that the West dominated and to which Moscow had little to offer. In “opening up to the world,” Prague was looking westward.⁷⁴ And while NATO might be a stepping-stone, the top priority was to “restore the position of Czechoslovakia in Europe” and “involve our state in pan-European integration processes”—in other words, the EEC—as well as to seek out “a more permanent form of cooperation.”⁷⁵

But not just yet. Both the British and French governments cautioned Dienstbier that Czechoslovakia was not ready for EEC membership: it should start with smaller institutions and work its way up.⁷⁶ The Maastricht Treaty, which would create the European Union in 1993, was still being negotiated, and Western Europeans feared that allowing Eastern European states in would slow, or perhaps scuttle, the arduous process already underway.⁷⁷ And so, the Czechoslovaks took steps to assuage these concerns. They signed on to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade to facilitate market access.⁷⁸ They even signed up for the war on drugs.⁷⁹ Dienstbier stressed, however, to his French counterpart Roland Dumas that “accession to the EEC remains a priority” for Czechoslovak foreign policy and that Prague’s chief orientation was European.⁸⁰ On security issues, both agreed that isolating the Soviet Union could cause Moscow to reverse its foreign policy or provide ammunition to

74. *Ibid.*

75. Ministerstvo Zahraničních Věcí (MZV) [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], “Konkretizace úkolu zahraničně politické koncepce v multilaterální oblasti” [Concretizing the tasks of the foreign policy concept in the multilateral field], March 30, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 161.

76. Miloš Hoffmann, “Informace o vystoupení ministra zahraničních věcí J. Dienstbiera na mezinárodním kolokviu ‘Demokratické revoluce na Východě—přísliby a rizika’ a jeho jednáních ve Francii dne 10. února 1990” [Information on the speech by Minister of Foreign Affairs J. Dienstbier at the international conference ‘Democratic Revolutions in the East—Promises and Risks’ and his activities in France on February 10, 1990], March 7, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 160; Boháč, “Informácia o oficiálnej návšteve ministerskej predsedkyne Spojeného kráľovstva Veľkej Británie a Severného Írska M. Thatcherovej v ČSFR v dňoch 16.–18.9.1990” [Information on the official visit of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland M. Thatcher to the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic (ČSFR), September 16–18, 1990], October 2, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 164.

77. Zdeněk Vaníček, “Zpráva o průběhu a výsledcích pracovní návštěvy předsedy vlády ČSFR Mariána Čalfy v Komisi Evropských společenství, v Belgickém království a Irsku” [Report on the course and results of the visit of ČSFR Prime Minister Marián Čalfa to the Commission of the European Community, Belgium, and Ireland], May 28, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 162.

78. MZO, “Aktivizace čs. účasti ve Všeobecné dohodě o clech a obchodu (GATT)” [Initiation of Czechoslovak participation in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade], June 7, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 162.

79. Jindřich Tišler, “Zpráva o připravenosti a nasazení celní správy v boji s mezinárodními organizacemi pašeráků narkotik” [Report on the readiness and activities of the customs administration in the fight against international drug-smuggling organizations], June 19, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 162.

80. František Hanika, “Informace o průběhu a výsledcích oficiální návštěvy státního ministra a ministra zahraničních věcí Francouzské republiky R. Dumase v ČSFR” [Information on the course

hard-liners seeking to oust Gorbachev. But Dienstbier and Dumas were also adamant about keeping the United States and Canada in Europe as a counterbalance against the Soviets.⁸¹

When NATO members met in Paris in May 1990, they heard from former enemies now seeking to become allies. Bertram Wiczorek, parliamentary undersecretary in the East German Ministry for Disarmament and Defense, observed that the “Wir sind das Volk” protest slogan in East Germany had given way to the German-wide “Wir sind ein Volk” demand for reunification. He insisted that East Berlin had always been a voice for disarmament and peace and denounced those who saw imminent German reunification as a “Fourth Reich” as alarmists, of which there were plenty in the room. The East Germans did not want to jeopardize anyone’s security: “It is not a matter of losing old friends” in the East, Wiczorek insisted, “it is a matter of making new ones.”⁸²

For Moscow, Eastern Europe cutting ties with the Warsaw Pact was naive, but to Eastern European policymakers it was simply a matter of adapting to new realities. To Bulgaria, the Warsaw Pact was the element of the Cold War-era European system least likely to survive. More likely would be increasing Eastern European participation in formerly Western European security structures, such as NATO, on the path toward fuller European integration. In Warsaw, too, it was clear that NATO was itself adapting to new, post-1989 realities. But unlike the Pact, NATO was not adapting itself out of existence. Soviet leaders were none too pleased. One Hungarian diplomat, for example, found himself buttonholed by a Soviet counterpart who excoriated Budapest and the rest of Eastern Europe for talking about allowing NATO—a hostile bloc, he insisted—to expand right up to the Soviet Union’s borders. “We tried to dispel their concerns,” the Hungarian reported coolly.⁸³

Opening Gambits, June 1990

The future of European security—as well as the future of the Warsaw Pact—was the main issue for the first Political Consultative Committee summit meet-

and results of the official visit of Minister of State and Minister of Foreign Affairs of France R. Dumas to the ČSFR], July 10, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 162.

81. *Ibid.*

82. Wiczorek remarks, Paris, France, May 11, 1990, MA, DVW 1/43736.

83. Ottó Juhász, “A VSZ TCS májusi ülése az összeurópai biztonsági struktúrák kialakításáról” [The May meeting of the Warsaw Pact Information Committee on the establishment of pan-European security structures], May 29, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 94.

ing held in Moscow in June 1990.⁸⁴ Behind the scenes, Soviet diplomats worried about a “crisis of confidence” in Eastern Europe.⁸⁵ They reassured their allies that the Pact would survive. The Soviets were wide of the mark. At the beginning of 1990, Moscow’s allies might have spoken of “the democratization of the Warsaw Pact,” albeit with reservations.⁸⁶ But barely half a year later, they were no longer asking if the Pact would survive—they had resolved to ensure it could not.⁸⁷

That resolve was on full display at the Moscow summit. Ion Iliescu of Romania celebrated the country’s first democratic elections, which reoriented its foreign policy. Bucharest’s strategic objective was to integrate into European structures for economic and political cooperation. The new realities of international politics changed those structures, but Romania expected that vastly more change would transpire in the East as opposed to the West—after all, the former was changing largely to be more like the latter.⁸⁸ De Maizière of East Germany concurred, seeing both alliances as part of the process of building a new European security order. “A pillar of the bridge of understanding between East and West” which would make that possible, he insisted, would be a unified Germany.⁸⁹ Jaruzelski noted that Poland was already expanding its own contacts with NATO. “In making changes to the Warsaw Pact,” he went on, “we also count on transformation in NATO.”⁹⁰ Those changes to the Pact would have to be radical, stripping out nearly all its military components and rebalancing power among the members at the Soviet Union’s expense. But in the end “Europe . . . should be considered a single security space.”⁹¹ Czechoslovakia’s Havel celebrated the fact that, “for the first time, [Pact members] are meeting as sovereign, independent, and equal partners.”⁹² But he saw the Warsaw Pact as a temporary organization fit only for the current transitional period, not beyond. The future belonged to integration,

84. Gorbachev to Ion Iliescu, May 29, 1990, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 192, vol. 1.

85. Sándor Jolsvai, “Szovjet közlések a VSZ PTT ülésének előkészítéséről” [Soviet communications on preparations for the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact], May 24, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 95.

86. Jiříček, “Zpráva k návrhu na uskutečnění pracovní návštěvy předsedy rady ministru NDR Hanse Modrowa v Československé socialistické republice” [Report on the proposal to hold a working visit by DDR Chariman of the Council of Ministers Hans Modrow to Czechoslovakia], January 22, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 160.

87. Sandru to Celac, May 25, 1990, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 191.

88. Iliescu remarks, Moscow, Soviet Union, June 7, 1990, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 192, vol. 1.

89. De Maizière remarks, Moscow, Soviet Union, June 7, 1990, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 192, vol. 1.

90. Jaruzelski remarks, Moscow, Soviet Union, June 7, 1990, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 192, vol. 1.

91. *Ibid.*

92. Havel remarks, Moscow, Soviet Union, June 7, 1990, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 192, vol. 1.

and as such, "Czechoslovakia, as a country located in the center of Europe, [was] establishing close contact with Western European integration groups."⁹³ Hungary's Prime Minister József Antall went further, welcoming a unified Germany's membership in NATO because it would guarantee the country's full and indivisible sovereignty, as would the U.S. military's continued presence in Europe. There was no point trying to reform the Pact, better instead to focus on building the European security system of the future, which looked much like that of Western Europe's past: NATO.⁹⁴

Gorbachev was not so sure. Yes, the Pact and NATO would likely be subsumed into the as-yet-unrealized future European security order. "The true interests of the Soviet state are to finally overcome the division of the continent and, together with our allies, to integrate into a single Europe. . . . Some contours of the emerging renewed Europe are already visible," he observed, "but much is still hidden behind the veil of time."⁹⁵ The main vector of change in 1990 was democratization; it was right for Germans to decide the future of Germany, and Gorbachev hoped that would be a catalyst for progress and for transcending the bloc structure. The Soviet leader could not ignore that Moscow's allies looked westward for security, much to his dismay. Aligning with the West, he insisted, meant rejecting a common European home and perpetuating Cold War-type divisions.⁹⁶ But for most Eastern Europeans, it was better to risk alienating the Soviet Union than to be stuck in the East. Their main preoccupation was not security; they feared being unable to make the most of all the new economic opportunities in the West.⁹⁷

The Warsaw Pact's first major meeting since the events of 1989 ended with a communiqué extolling its members' overcoming "the ideological image of the enemy," which was "no longer in keeping with the spirit of the times."⁹⁸ The era of blocs was over. In the words of the East Germans, "The conference took place under completely new conditions. For the first time, legitimate rep-

93. *Ibid.*

94. Antall remarks, Moscow, Soviet Union, June 7, 1990, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 192, vol. 1.

95. Gorbachev remarks, Moscow, Soviet Union, June 7, 1990, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 192, vol. 1.

96. *Ibid.*

97. Nowak, "Notatka informacyjna o propozycji ZSRR dotyczącej nowego ułożenia stosunków między Układem Warszawskim i NATO" [Informational note on the proposal by the USSR for a new basis for relations between the Warsaw Pact and NATO], July 3, 1990, BAZI MSZ, zespół 37/1992, wiązka 1,teczka 8992.

98. MfAV, "Deklaration der Teilnehmerstaaten des Warschauer Vertrag" [Declaration of the member states of the Warsaw Pact], June 1990, MA, DVW 1/43735.

representatives of all the participating states, who had won free and democratic elections, took part.”⁹⁹ They were exiting the Warsaw Pact—vividly illustrated by the West German diplomats serving, unprecedentedly, as political advisers to their East German counterparts throughout the meeting.¹⁰⁰ Soviet security interests should not be disregarded, East Berlin’s delegation stressed, lest the process of dissolving the Pact become even more difficult.¹⁰¹ Moscow needed security guarantees “beyond theoretical arguments.”¹⁰²

Hungary’s delegates saw no need for restraint. It was a new era, and Moscow’s security quibbles seemed anachronistic, a relic of a bygone era—just like the Pact itself. Western institutions were the future. NATO, for example, would transform and survive. The Pact was in a death spiral; its Eastern European members were all transitioning to models of governance based on pluralistic democracy, human rights, and market economies. Moreover, its ability to provide security was at best questionable, and only growing more so as Gorbachev’s political situation in the Soviet Union deteriorated.¹⁰³ NATO was the more sophisticated tool for cooperation and would likely be the cornerstone of a future pan-European security framework. Hungary was oriented toward Western European integration and enjoyed a head start in that regard from its prior liberal economic policies and trade dealings with the EEC.¹⁰⁴ Thus, Budapest concluded, Hungary’s departure from the Pact should be as destructive as possible and bring down the whole house of cards. And if Hungary could not break the Pact on its own, it should work to persuade as many other members as possible to leave as well, with the Czechoslovaks and the Poles most likely to join in and the Soviets now the only serious op-

99. MfAV, “Bericht über die Tagung des Politischen Beratenden Ausschusses der Teilnehmerstaaten des Warschauer Vertrages am 7. Juni 1990 in Moskau” [Report on the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact of June 7, 1990, in Moscow], June 8, 1990, MA, DVW 1/43735.

100. Skubiszewski, “Notatka informacyjna o naradzie Doradczego Komitetu Politycznego państw-stron Układu Warszawskiego w Moskwie” [Informational note on the meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow], June 19, 1990, BAZI MSZ, zespół 11/1995, wiązka 1, teczka 8995.

101. MfAV, “Bericht über die Tagung des Politischen Beratenden Ausschusses der Teilnehmerstaaten des Warschauer Vertrages am 7. Juni 1990 in Moskau.”

102. Peter Herrich to Werner Ablaß, July 16, 1990, MA, DVW 1/43753.

103. Jeszenszky, “Jelentés a Minisztertanácsnak a Varsói Szerződés tagállamai Politikai Tanácskozó Testületé moszkvai üléséről” [Report to the Council of Ministers on the Moscow meeting of the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee], June 13, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 95.

104. Külügyminisztérium, “Magyarország és a Varsói Szerződés” [Hungary and the Warsaw Pact], June 1, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 95.

ponents. Meanwhile, without revealing its plans to leave, Hungary should keep participating in the Pact's "radical reform"—intentionally sabotaging it at every opportunity.¹⁰⁵ "The aim should be to start moving closer to NATO. . . . Multilateral cooperation would guarantee our security and integration into pan-European institutions."¹⁰⁶ Those institutions would be built on the Western European framework, Hungarian policymakers concluded. Relations with NATO would need to be formalized and then expanded.¹⁰⁷ To do that, Budapest would need to be seen in the West as "an attractive and serious partner."¹⁰⁸

Poland participating in "the reconstruction of a disappearing alliance [was] out of the question."¹⁰⁹ Relations with the West were a top priority. It wanted EEC membership and could already in the summer of 1990 envision a future as a NATO member.¹¹⁰ Warsaw agreed that the Pact's days were numbered, that it was a "temporary, and likely quite short" vestige of the Cold War.¹¹¹ The Poles would not stop the Hungarians from leaving, but they did not yet seem likely to help them do so, either.¹¹² East Germany was particularly preoccupied with how events were perceived in Moscow. On the one hand, East Berlin's diplomats insisted that only "neconfrontationalist thinking" assumed the alliances would continue to exist.¹¹³ On the other, their superiors eagerly and

105. Vojtek Béla Kupper, "A Varsói Szerződés elhagyását célzó eddigi lépések és további elképzelések" [Measures taken thus far and future considerations regarding leaving the Warsaw Pact], July 27, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 94.

106. Kupper, "A VSZ-tagságunk megszüntetésének koncepciója és annak egyes biztonságpolitikai összefüggései" [The concept of terminating Warsaw Pact membership and some of its security-policy implications], June 25, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 95.

107. Sándor Jolsvai, "Jelentés a VSZ együttműködés mechanizmus-csoport üléséről" [Report on the Warsaw Pact working group on cooperation mechanisms], March 5, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 94.

108. Kupper, "Javaslatok az új magyar regionális biztonságpolitika első lépéseire és a követendő menetrendre" [Recommendations for first steps and an agenda for the new Hungarian regional security policy], July 4, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 95.

109. Skubiszewski, "Notatka informacyjna o naradzie Doradczego Komitetu Politycznego państw-stron Układu Warszawskiego w Moskwie."

110. Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], "Polityczne założenia stanowiska delegacji polskiej w Komisji do spraw zmian w funkcjonowaniu Układu Warszawskiego" [Political bases for the position of the Polish delegation to the Commission for Changes in the Functioning of the Warsaw Pact], July 5, 1990, BAZI MSZ, zespol 37/1992, wiązka 1, teczka 8992.

111. Kupper, "Konzultáció a lengyel külügyminisztériumban a Varsói Szerződésből való kilépésről" [Consultations at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact], July 10, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 95.

112. *Ibid.*

113. Wieczorek, "Entwurf für verteidigungspolitische Leitlinien im deutschen und europäischen Einigungsprozess" [Draft defense policy guidelines for the German and European unification processes], June 11, 1990, MA, DVW 1/43751.

explicitly anticipated reaping the rewards of NATO and EEC membership after unification.

The question of future Soviet policy came to the fore again in the summer of 1990. Gorbachev's reforms had unleashed changes in Eastern Europe that were positive at the time, East Germany's top foreign policy officials warned, but could lead to new problems. Complete disarmament was not feasible, nor was abandoning the state's right to join security (and other) alliances. European security structures should focus on predictability. Thus, when they discussed the two most likely ways forward, East German officials saw a clear favorite. On the one hand, only Moscow preferred a collective security architecture that rendered NATO and the Warsaw Pact irrelevant. (These schemes tended to call for unified Germany to be a temporary member of both alliances, which the East Germans deemed absurd.) On the other, NATO members preferred to update their alliance for new realities, and to East Berlin this was the only feasible way forward. Perhaps a pan-European security organization would come to fruition, but until then, unified Germany's place was in NATO.¹¹⁴ President George H. W. Bush and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl had already publicly endorsed a unified Germany within NATO.¹¹⁵ The East Germans had been warned by top Soviet policymakers, however, that everyone remaking Europe needed to conceive of "a possible post-Gorbachev period" in Soviet politics, in which Moscow would undo its arms reductions and, left unsaid, its political reforms.¹¹⁶ Keeping Moscow out of Europe could thus have disastrous consequences, the Soviets warned. But so too, Eppelmann noted to Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, could binding Eastern Europe to Moscow.¹¹⁷

Starting to Dismantle, July–December 1990

At the June 1990 summit in Moscow, Eastern Europe's position was clear: the Pact should be abolished if it could not be reformed to represent all equally rather than be a tool of Soviet domination.¹¹⁸ "The politicization of the Warsaw

114. MfAV, "Konzeption für den Meinungs austausch mit den zivilen Staatssekretären/ Stellvertretern der Minister am Rande der Komiteesitzung am Abend des 13.06.1990" [Concept for the exchange of views with civilian state secretaries and deputy ministers on the sidelines of the committee meeting on the evening of June 13, 1990], June 1990, MA, DVW 1/43735.

115. Sarotte, *Not One Inch*, 69–75.

116. Eppelmann-Mazowiecki memorandum of conversation, May 22, 1990, MA, DVW 1/44501.

117. *Ibid.*

118. Cornel Ionescu, "Poziții exprimate la consfătuirea Comitetului Politic Consultativ (Moscova,

Treaty is its last chance,” the East Germans concluded. But they would not be the ones to initiate this process of shifting the alliance’s focus from military to political issues—they were on their way out.¹¹⁹ In fact, nobody would. When talk began of imbuing the civilian secretary general position with authority to act on behalf of the organization (à la NATO), Poland made it clear that Warsaw would not host any of the infrastructure of its eponymous alliance. Such infrastructure would have to be in Moscow, which would reinforce the Pact’s reputation as a Soviet-dominated institution.¹²⁰ Hungary was explicit: “We want to not only be Eastern Europeans, but to integrate into the whole of Europe.”¹²¹ Czechoslovakia’s Havel concurred. His country’s policy was “firmly rooted in a European future.”¹²² Broader institutions like the CSCE were welcome to Prague, but they were a complement to joining the West, not a substitute for it.

After the Moscow summit, Pact members kept meeting to discuss how to reform the alliance. But from the first meeting, it was clear that only the Soviets and, to a much lesser extent, the Bulgarians had any interest in retaining it. Everyone else wanted to dismantle the Warsaw Pact. They were happy to see NATO and other Western institutions survive in perpetuity. Though Hungary’s representatives repeatedly stated that Budapest wanted out of the Pact, Czechoslovakia and Poland resisted any effort to reform the Pact—especially the politically minded reform needed to keep it viable—and thus condemned it to death.¹²³ Shortly thereafter, Hungary’s foreign minister vis-

7 iunie 1990) cu privire la revizuirea caracterului, funcțiilor și activității Tratatului de la Varșovia” [Positions expressed at the Political Consultative Committee meeting (Moscow, June 7, 1990) on changing the character, function, and activities of the Warsaw Pact], June 19, 1990, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 196, vol. 3.

119. MfAV, “Thesen zum Warschauer Vertrag” [Theses on the Warsaw Pact], June 13, 1990, MA, DVW 1/44501. This shift from a military to a political basis for the Warsaw Pact ran parallel to conversations in NATO about developing and burnishing the political, as opposed to the military, credentials of the alliance to make German unification more palatable to the Soviet Union. See: Timothy A. Sayle, *Enduring Alliance: A History of NATO and the Postwar Global Order* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), 216–248.

120. Jolsvai, “Jelentés a VSZ együtműködés mechanizmus-csoport üléséről.”

121. Ionescu, “Poziții exprimate la consfătuirea Comitetului Politic Consultativ (Moscow, 7 iunie 1990) cu privire la revizuirea caracterului, funcțiilor și activității Tratatului de la Varșovia.”

122. Havel remarks, Moscow, Soviet Union, June 7, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 162.

123. Kupper, “A VSZ kormány meghatalmazott ideiglenes bizottság első üléséről készült jelentés” [Report on the first meeting of the provisional committee authorized by the governments of the Warsaw Pact], July 19, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 95; Vladimír Lukaščík, “Zpráva o průběhu a výsledcích řádného zasedání Politického poradního výboru členských států Varšavské smlouvy” [Report on the course and results of the scheduled meeting of the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee], July 12, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 162.

ited Prague and confirmed that the Czechoslovaks were increasingly certain that the Pact's collapse would be a good thing.¹²⁴ Meanwhile, Hungary's ministry of defense declared it would no longer participate in joint military exercises, preferring instead to spend its diminishing training budget on confidence-building measures with NATO countries.¹²⁵ It was no surprise, therefore, that NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner planned to visit Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland on his first trip to Eastern Europe.¹²⁶ The Hungarians had already been meeting with NATO leaders. Foreign Minister Géza Jeszenszky stressed to Wörner "our commitment to Western values, our Europeanness, and the coincidence of Hungarian and European interests."¹²⁷ In fact, the Hungarians' drive to quit the Warsaw Pact and to keep the United States in Europe was rooted in its pan-European orientation. "Hungary is interested in creating a pan-European security system based on well-functioning European organizations," Jeszenszky concluded.¹²⁸

Moscow wanted to transform the Pact into "a treaty of member states, equal in rights, established on a democratic basis"—a political alliance—and would accept abandoning all of the Pact's military components in order to make at least that happen.¹²⁹ The rest of the alliance wanted out. Budapest's delegation declared that NATO was no longer the adversary (by now boilerplate in Pact circles). In fact, they observed, NATO members were doing the most to help the states of Eastern Europe address their political challenges in the wake of 1989. The "cardinal element" of Hungarian foreign policy going forward would be good relations with all Europe, not just the eastern half.¹³⁰ The

124. Vladimír Kubát, "Informace o průběhu a výsledcích oficiální návštěvy ministra zahraničních věcí Maďarské republiky Gézy Jeszenszkého v ČSFR 27. a 28. srpna 1990" [Information on the course and results of the official visit of Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs Géza Jeszenszky to Czechoslovakia, August 27–28, 1990], September 7, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 163.

125. Lajos Kondor, "Elgondolás a VSZ katonai szervezetből történő kiválásra" [Idea for secession from the Warsaw Pact's military structures], July 25, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 95.

126. Sandru to Neagu and Petrescu, July 14, 1990, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 193.

127. Külügyminisztérium, "Jelentés a Minisztertanácsnak dr. Jeszenszky Géza külügyminisztér és Manfred Wörner NATO-főtitkár, s Peter Corterier, az ÉAK főtitkára közötti megbeszélésekről" [Report to the Council of Ministers on discussions between Foreign Minister Géza Jeszenszky and NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner and North Atlantic Assembly Secretary General Peter Corterier], July 5, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 98.

128. *Ibid.*

129. Ion Ciubotaru and Petrescu to Adrian Năstase and Neagu, July 16, 1990, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 191.

130. Külügyminisztérium, "A VSZ kormány meghatalmazott ideiglenes bizottság első ülésén elhangzott felszólalások" [Speeches made at the first meeting of the provisional committee authorized by the governments of the Warsaw Pact], July 27, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 96.

Warsaw Pact had become “anachronistic,” the Hungarian delegate declared. “So, it’s time to dismantle it!”¹³¹ Prague and Warsaw also stressed the importance of building good relations with NATO, which would be easier to do from outside the Warsaw Pact. “We proceed from the premise that today the NATO states are our partners, and not, as it was previously thought, opponents,” the Polish delegate concluded. “Poland has no political goals that distinguish us from NATO.”¹³²

Gradually, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland began to work together. A meeting of the three in August 1990 revealed that Warsaw was in fact much more open to destroying the Pact than its representatives had shared in alliance-wide forums. “The government must now demonstrate that it is leading Poland towards sovereignty and independence,” they explained, “[and] will not allow Poland to come under Soviet rule again.”¹³³ Meanwhile, Moscow’s motives were also becoming clearer to the three countries. The Soviets wanted to maintain the facade of great-power status by holding on to their own alliance (opposite the United States’ NATO) and to influence political developments in Eastern Europe, especially Germany. They also sought to maintain a physical buffer zone with the West. Prague’s representatives bemoaned this “maximalist” and “unrealistic” Soviet position, but they understood that Gorbachev needed to save face both internationally and at home, particularly with his increasingly restive generals.¹³⁴ Hungary was more concerned about its own future, and continued Pact membership could become an obstacle to Budapest’s “European aspirations.”¹³⁵

By late 1990, the Soviet Union was collapsing—at least economically, maybe even politically. That disintegration threatened to undo not only Gorbachev’s gains at home but also Eastern Europe’s new foreign policy course.¹³⁶ Closer ties with NATO were essential, and when Secretary General Wörner visited Prague in September 1990, his hosts were eager to demonstrate their growing

131. Ibid.

132. Ibid.

133. Kupper, “Magyar-lengyel-csehszlovák kormány meghatalmazotti konzultáció a VSZ felülvizsgálatáról folyó tárgyalások kapcsán” [Hungarian-Polish-Czechoslovak governmental consultations in connection with the ongoing negotiations over revising the Warsaw Pact], August 22, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 96.

134. Ibid.

135. Külügyminisztérium, “Varsói konzultáció a VSZ felülvizsgálatáról” [The Warsaw meeting on revising the Warsaw Pact], October 17, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 96.

136. Marie Košťálová and Bambas, “Zpráva k návrhu Stabilizačního plánu pro střední Evropu a SSSR” [Report on the draft Stabilization Plan for Central Europe and the USSR], September 28, 1990, AMŽV, MV, karton 164.

closeness to the Atlantic alliance and the wide space for relations between Prague and Brussels. Czechoslovakia did not want to see NATO disbanded or diminished, and in fact welcomed a continued U.S. presence in Europe. Doubtful that Gorbachev would succeed in his massive program of reforms in the Soviet Union, Prague needed to hedge against a new regime in Moscow, which it doubted would be more liberal than that of the embattled Soviet leader. As such, NATO could gradually take on some pan-European functions, and Czechoslovakia would participate straight away in the Atlantic alliance's nonmilitary elements such as economics, ecology, and energy. At a time when many were talking about the CSCE as a replacement for both NATO and the Pact, Czechoslovak policymakers made it clear that it was at most a complement to NATO, and certainly not a substitute.¹³⁷ Now was not the time to build fragile new institutions with a fragile quasi-democratic Soviet Union. NATO could help span the "deep ditch of social and economic disparities," in West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher's memorable formulation, which remained where the Berlin Wall had stood.¹³⁸ NATO would not only shape security structures but also mitigate the threat of economic collapse in Eastern Europe, which would be democratization's undoing.¹³⁹

When Wörner visited Warsaw, his Polish hosts heralded the "far-reaching convergence of the basic political goals of Poland and . . . the most important political and military alliance in the world today."¹⁴⁰ With NATO on Poland's border after German reunification, this was a critical relationship for Warsaw, not only in and of itself, but also as a vehicle for Poland's aspirations to join other Western European institutions.

At the next meeting to discuss the Pact's future, in September 1990, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland were more of a united front, though Budapest still wanted to dismantle it the fastest. All worked together to block a

137. Bušniak, "Informace o průběhu a výsledcích oficiální návštěvy generálního tajemníka NATO Manfreda Wörnera v ČSFR 5.–9. září 1990" [Information on the course and results of the official visit of NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner to Czechoslovakia, September 5–9, 1990], September 25, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 164.

138. Václav Rožboud and Eichinger, "Informace o průběhu a výsledcích pracovní návštěvy ministra zahraničních věcí SRN H.-D. Genschera v ČSFR dne 2.11.1990" [Information on the course and results of the working visit of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany Hans-Dietrich Genscher to Czechoslovakia, November 2, 1990], November 16, 1990, AMZV, MV, karton 164.

139. *Ibid.*

140. Nowak to Witold Gruszka, "Ocena wizyty Sekretarza Generalnego Sojuszu Atlantyckiego p. Manfreda Woernera w Polsce" [Assessment of the visit of NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner to Poland], September 17, 1990, BAZI MSZ, zespól 35/1992, wiązka 2, teczka 8703.

Soviet proposal to make the dissolution of the Pact contingent on the creation of a new pan-European security system (they saw NATO as playing that role) and to expand the Pact's political organs to represent its members in dealing with NATO (they had every intention of doing that by themselves). The Polish government expressed concern about undermining Gorbachev's position at home with aggressive moves that might precipitate his ouster, undoing all the progress achieved over the last year.¹⁴¹

Hungarian diplomats celebrated having persuaded their Czechoslovak and Polish counterparts to "catch up." Together, they kept working within the regular Pact reform meetings to strip out any statements in documents that the Warsaw Pact had any value or future. By the end of 1990, only Bulgaria wanted to continue military cooperation with the Soviet Union.¹⁴² The most the Pact's other non-Soviet members would allow was a consultative body focused on the processes of disarmament in general—and Soviet military withdrawal from Eastern Europe in particular. In other words, they would support only policies that would weaken the Pact's existence over the longer term.¹⁴³

Final Blows, January–July 1991

As 1990 came to a close, NATO Secretary General Wörner stressed that the new Europe must be built with the Soviet Union as a member so long as it continued its reform trajectory.¹⁴⁴ But that future became less certain after the violence in Vilnius, Lithuania, at the very beginning of 1991, which prompted many Pact members to accelerate their efforts to break apart the alliance lest the Soviets use force elsewhere—perhaps even beyond their crumbling borders.¹⁴⁵ Although Gorbachev declared his willingness to "participate on equal

141. Kupper, "Jelentés a Varsói Szerződés tagállamainak a VSZ felülvizsgálatával megbízott Kormány meghatalmazotti Ideiglenes Bizottsága 2. üléséről" [Report on the second session of the temporary committee tasked with reviewing the Warsaw Pact in Warsaw], September 27, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 96.

142. István Körmeny, "Jelentés a VSZ Kormány meghatalmazotti Ideiglenes Bizottság harmadik, Varsói üléséről" [Report on the third session of the temporary committee of Warsaw Pact government representatives in Warsaw], October 25, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 96.

143. Ministerul Afacerilor Externe [Ministry of Foreign Affairs], "Poziție privind consfătuirea extraordinară a Comitetului Politic Consultativ al Tratatului de la Varșovia asupra viitorului acestui trata" [Position regarding the extraordinary meeting of the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee on the future of the treaty], February 5, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 196, vol. 3.

144. Külügyminisztérium, "Jelentés Manfred Wörner NATO-főtitkár magyarországi hivatalos látogatásáról" [Report on the official visit of NATO Secretary General Manfred Wörner to Hungary], December 10, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 98.

145. Ciubotaru to Neagu and Constantin Ene, January 23, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 190; Bílý, *Varšavská smlouva*, 465.

terms” with the rest of the Pact’s members to dismantle the Pact, they were not interested in continuing the relationship, even on more equitable terms.¹⁴⁶

Moscow was thus supposed to take the final step in November 1990 at another Political Consultative Committee meeting. Thanks to the Eastern Europeans, Moscow’s efforts to reform the Pact had failed. But the Soviets put off what was now seen as inevitable. In Budapest, observers posited two reasons for why Moscow postponed the summit. First, Gorbachev did not want the rapid pace to lead the world to conclude that the smaller Eastern European states had forced his hand (which they had). Second, he wanted to avoid dismantling the Pact in Budapest on November 4, the anniversary of the Soviet invasion in 1956 to prevent Hungary from leaving it.¹⁴⁷

As the Pact collapsed from within, its members observed NATO’s “transformational tendencies” as it began acting like a pan-European institution that was not just focused on security issues. Given the unpredictability of Soviet policy, and against the backdrop of the vivid images of the Soviet military cracking down on Lithuanian independence in January, there was enormous value in an established entity with a more-or-less predictable superpower at the helm for the nations of Eastern Europe.¹⁴⁸ Thus, at the Visegrád Castle in Hungary, the leaders of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland met to coordinate a “common approach to European structures.”¹⁴⁹ Their first objective was to “work for the swift termination of the Warsaw Pact” and “develop cooperation with NATO . . . in a common spirit.”¹⁵⁰ Their goal was not to build new institutions, but “coordinating their efforts to integrate into [existing] European institutions.”¹⁵¹

Ultimately, Gorbachev did not participate in the end of the Warsaw Pact.

146. Gorbachev to Iliescu, February 1, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 196, vol. 2.

147. Dávid Meiszter, “A VSZ PTT ülésének elhalasztása” [Postponement of the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee meeting], October 24, 1990, MNL OL, fond XIX-J-1-j, év 1990, doboz 96.

148. Miroslav Polreich and Dalibor Gřešák, “Koncepte přístupu ČSFR k vídeňským jednáním 22 zemí Varšavské smlouvy a NATO o konvenčních ozbrojených silách a 34 zemí procesu KBSE o opatřeních k posílení důvěry a bezpečnosti v Evropě” [Concept for Czechoslovakia’s approach to the Vienna negotiations on conventional armed forces of the 22 countries of the Warsaw Pact and of the 34 countries of CSCE process on strengthening confidence and security in Europe], January 11, 1991, AMZV, MV, karton 166.

149. Pavel Bílek, “Informace o připravovaném setkání nejvyšších představitelů ‘3’ ve Visegrádu” [Information on the forthcoming meeting of the top-level representatives of the ‘3’ at Visegrád], February 13, 1991, AMZV, MV, karton 166.

150. Bílek, “Informace o průběhu a výsledcích setkání nejvyšších představitelů ČSFR, PR a MR ve Visegrádu” [Information on the course and results of the meeting of top-level representatives of Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary at Visegrád], February 21, 1991, AMZV, MV, karton 166.

151. Bílek and Kubát, “Informace o připravovaném setkání nejvyšších představitelů ČSSR, PR a MR ve Visegrádu dne 15. února 1991” [Information on the forthcoming meeting of top-level repre-

The embattled Soviet leader did not want to sign his name on the document marking the formal end of Moscow's sphere of influence, hard won in World War II.¹⁵² Nor would he have relished listening to all of the Soviet Union's allies denounce the security system that Moscow built. Not only had the Cold War frozen development in Eastern Europe, of which the shambolic Romanian economy was a prime example; it had also stymied the natural development of relations among states within the continent, decried Romanian Foreign Minister Adrian Năstase. Now, he concluded, Romania had its eyes on relations with NATO in particular.¹⁵³ Viktor Valkov, foreign minister of Bulgaria, still expressed concern about his country's security, but he saw no need to continue membership in the Pact because Bulgaria could not rely on it for help. Furthermore, without the "image of the enemy," the logic behind politico-military alliances no longer held.¹⁵⁴ NATO had had staying power because it prioritized the political over the military. The Warsaw Pact did not. It could not be reformed and was only an obstacle to its members' foreign policy aspirations. Poland's Skubiszewski similarly observed that the realities of the 1990s were not those of the 1950s. The Pact failed to meet the security and political needs of its members—not that it ever really had, as a mere facade of cooperation. Poland wanted a "New Europe," which looked much more like the continent's west than its east.¹⁵⁵ Jeszenszky spoke of not only the impossibility of justifying the Warsaw Pact in the current era but also Hungary's ambitions: "full integration into the general European system in the fields of politics, economics, security, and law."¹⁵⁶ Institutions such as NATO and the EEC, he insisted, were about not just common markets or common defense but also common values. Dienstbier similarly declared Czechoslovakia's intention to further integrate with Western Europe, its natural home, and with NATO.¹⁵⁷

sentatives of Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary at Visegrád on February 15, 1991], February 14, 1991, AMZV, MV, karton 166.

152. Năstase and Victor Stănculescu, "Raport privind participarea la Consfătuirea extraordinară a Comitetului Politic Consultativ al Tratatului de la Varșovia la nivelul miniștrilor afacerilor externe și miniștrilor apărării" [Report on the extraordinary meeting of the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee at the level of foreign and defense ministers], March 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 196, vol. 1.

153. Năstase remarks, Budapest, Hungary, February 25, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 196, vol. 1.

154. Valkov remarks, Budapest, Hungary, February 25, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 196, vol. 1.

155. Skubiszewski remarks, Budapest, Hungary, February 25, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 196, vol. 1.

156. Jeszenszky remarks, Budapest, Hungary, February 25, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 196, vol. 1.

157. Dienstbier remarks, Budapest, Hungary, February 25, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 196, vol. 1.

Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh had the unenviable job of representing the Soviet Union at the gathering. Shevardnadze's successor as of the end of 1990, Bessmertnykh began with a reminder that the Warsaw Pact had been a key part of the post-World War II security structure in Europe, which "gave us all decades of peace," though he acknowledged that it had not been without turmoil.¹⁵⁸ He called on NATO to follow the Pact's lead and dismantle itself as well. Pointedly, Bessmertnykh warned that if any of the countries in the audience were to become NATO members, it would have "negative consequences" for the strategic situation in Europe.¹⁵⁹ Bessmertnykh's speech landed with a thud. So too did Lushev's. The outgoing Supreme Commander of the Unified Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact praised the soon-to-be-defunct alliance at length, concluding that his tenure—coming to an end with the abolition of his position—had been a success.¹⁶⁰

With the decision taken, its members began preparing for a "funeral for the Warsaw Treaty, which like all funerals, would be unpleasant."¹⁶¹ In Prague in July 1991, the Pact's members gathered to implement the decisions of the preceding February and abolish it. They did not do so with heavy hearts. Czechoslovakia was already negotiating an association agreement with the EEC and opening its markets to free trade. As Eastern Europe celebrated its newfound sovereignty, Prague willingly relinquished some to Brussels in the name of European integration.¹⁶² For President Zhelyu Zhelev of Bulgaria, the dissolution of the Pact was the logical culmination of the events of 1989 and the ensuing transformation of European politics. It had been based on "unequal and undemocratic cooperation."¹⁶³ Now, Bulgaria was engaged in "building a united and free Europe" without institutions that had as much historical baggage as the Warsaw Pact—NATO and the EEC, by contrast, were Sofia's future.¹⁶⁴ That theme recurred. Iliescu declared that Romania

158. Bessmertnykh remarks, Budapest, Hungary, February 25, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 196, vol. 1.

159. *Ibid.*

160. Năstase and Stănculescu, "Raport privind participarea la Consfătuirea extraordinară a Comitetului Politic Consultativ al Tratatului de la Varșovia la nivelul miniștrilor afacerilor externe și miniștrilor apărării."

161. Ciubotaru to Neagu and Ene, April 19, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 197.

162. MZV and MZO, "Návrh směrnice pro další jednání o části dohody o přidružení ČSFR k Evropským společenstvím týkající se vytváření zóny volného obchodu" [Draft directive for further negotiations on the association between Czechoslovakia and the European Community for the creation of a free-trade zone], March 18, 1991, AMZV, MV, karton 167.

163. Zhelev remarks, Prague, ČSFR, July 1, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 195.

164. *Ibid.*

was “for a united, peaceful and democratic Europe, for a general European security and cooperation system.”¹⁶⁵ Reaching out to NATO was his top priority to that end. Havel celebrated the end of Europe’s unnatural division, “damaging totalitarian ideology,” the “hegemony of the great powers,” and “unjust alliances.”¹⁶⁶ He did not hide what was next for his country: “Our goal is to integrate Czechoslovakia with Western Europe,” which was a “natural” reflection of political, economic, and cultural affinities between Czechoslovakia’s people and the West.¹⁶⁷ “We are guided by the conviction that we must build an indivisible Europe,” Poland’s Prime Minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki explained, with “room for all states.”¹⁶⁸ But that meant full sovereignty, and certainly did not mean Eastern Europe embracing neutrality or becoming a “buffer zone.”¹⁶⁹ Antall, again representing Hungary, acknowledged the “moral victory” of reform in the Soviet Union that had enabled the meeting in Prague to dismantle the Pact.¹⁷⁰ Abandoning the Warsaw Pact was “clearing [the] way to Europe” and would speed Budapest’s entry into the continent’s networks, particularly NATO, the core of Europe’s security architecture, and the EEC, the engine of European politics. “The doors of Europe are open” to those who share its values, Antall summarized. “Everyone . . . must move forward on the European path.”¹⁷¹

Vice President Gennadii Ianaev represented the Soviet Union in Prague. He conceded that the future belonged to European integration and cast the Pact as part of that process. “The years of the Warsaw Pact’s existence were years of peace in Europe,” he declared—in Prague of all places.¹⁷² Now its members were continuing that peace-loving legacy by adapting to new realities. NATO, Ianaev maintained, with its nuclear weapons and rapid reaction forces, no longer had a reason to exist either. He concluded by reassuring his audience that the Soviet Union had no “imperial inklings.”¹⁷³

Czechoslovak diplomats commended themselves for working with Poland

165. Iliescu remarks, Prague, ČSFR, July 1, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 195.

166. Havel remarks, Prague, ČSFR, July 1, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 195.

167. *Ibid.*

168. Bielecki remarks, Prague, ČSFR, July 1, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 195.

169. *Ibid.*

170. Antall remarks, Prague, ČSFR, July 1, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 195.

171. *Ibid.*

172. Ianaev remarks, Prague, ČSFR, July 1, 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 195.

173. *Ibid.* Less than two months later, Gennadii Ianaev would be one of eight Communist hardliners behind an attempted coup to remove Gorbachev from power and undo his reform policies, which suggests that he was not being entirely honest about his intentions. See: Taubman, *Gorbachev*, 602–619.

and Hungary to “eliminate one of the last relics of the Cold War.”¹⁷⁴ The future belonged to Western institutions like NATO, even if it too was born of the Cold War. Already, agreements were being signed to send Czechoslovak officers to the U.S. International Military Education and Training program to learn how Washington managed its national security apparatus.¹⁷⁵ Moscow expressed its dissatisfaction with these developments to the Czechoslovak delegates, who conceded that the Soviet Union could still “significantly influence the situation” in Eastern Europe, even though it was “no longer a military and political hegemon.”¹⁷⁶ They would have to take Soviet views into account—while resisting Moscow’s efforts to “neutralize” Eastern Europe. But they would also need to balance against the Soviet Union by developing and deepening relations with the United States, NATO, the EEC, and the other institutions that they saw as crucial to the post-Cold War international system.¹⁷⁷ In fact, most wondered if the Soviet Union itself would survive, as Gorbachev and his reforms appeared “exhausted.”¹⁷⁸

The communiqué produced in Prague endorsed a “pan-European process of creating new security structures.”¹⁷⁹ But its signatories individually did not. They wanted to make the burgeoning cooperation with NATO “permanent, and preferably contractual.”¹⁸⁰

174. Lukaščík, “Návrh na odeslání posledního zasedání Politického poradního výboru členských států Varšavské smlouvy v Praze dne 1. července 1991” [Proposal to hold the last meeting of the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee in Prague on July 1, 1991], June 19, 1991, AMZV, MV, karton 168; Lukaščík, “Informace o průběhu a výsledcích posledního zasedání Politického poradního výboru Varšavské smlouvy v Praze dne 1. července 1991” [Information on the course and results of the last meeting of the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee in Prague on July 1, 1991], July 17, 1991, AMZV, MV, karton 169.

175. Antonín Stareček, “Návrh na sjednání Dohody mezi vládou České a Slovenské Federativní Republiky a vládou Spojených států amerických o podmínkách školení československých odborníků v Mezinárodním vojenském vzdělávacím a výcvikovém programu Spojených států (IMET)” [Proposal for the negotiation of an agreement between Czechoslovakia and the United States on the training of Czechoslovak experts in the U.S. International Military Education and Training program (IMET)], June 18, 1991, AMZV, MV, karton 168.

176. MZV, “Informace o současných vztazích se SSSR a zaměření dalšího postupu” [Information on the current state of relations with the USSR and foci for future progress], May 22, 1991, AMZV, MV, karton 168.

177. Jan Kochrda and Miloslav Had, “Informace o současných vztazích s USA a zaměření dalšího postupu” [Information on the current state of relations with the United States and foci for future progress], May 17, 1991, AMZV, MV, karton 168.

178. MZV, “Informace o současných vztazích se SSSR a zaměření dalšího postupu.”

179. Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee communiqué, July 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 195.

180. Kubát, “Návrh na vyslání delegace na setkání nejvyšších představitelů ‘3’ v Krakově” [Proposal to send a delegation to the meeting of top-level representatives of the ‘3’ in Krakow], October 2, 1991, AMZV, MV, karton 170.

Conclusion

The largely peaceful revolutions of 1989 fostered the end of the division of Europe and the dawn of a new, post-Cold War international system. But though the system was new, the institutions on which it was built were not. International institutions like NATO and the EEC with their roots in the West endured, and the countries of Eastern Europe wanted in.¹⁸¹

They were able to do so, of course, only with the acquiescence of these institutions' members. Much has been made of remarks by U.S. President George H. W. Bush in 1990 that Washington must not "let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat. . . . We prevailed," Bush summed up the Cold War's end, "they didn't."¹⁸² British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher made the same point, albeit more delicately, when she insisted on the need to "bring the new democracies of Eastern Europe into closer association with the institutions of Western Europe . . . to overcome divisions between East and West in Europe."¹⁸³

Archival records in Bucharest, Budapest, East Berlin, Prague, and Warsaw show that these states had as much interest in overcoming those divisions as did Brussels, London, and Washington. Eastern Europe had agency; in fact, its states wanted to go further, faster. The expansion of Western institutions into the former territory of the Eastern bloc was not simply a Western project to cement the gains of the end of the Cold War. Rather, the states of the crumbling Warsaw Pact promptly recognized that the international system was changing, that the post-Cold War order would be built on international institutions, and that, by and large, those institutions already existed in Western Europe.

In this process of rapid transformation and adaptation, four themes stand out in Eastern European policy. First, these states wanted to demonstrate their sovereignty by breaking out of—and breaking apart—the Warsaw Pact. Second, they sought the prosperity and security promised by deeper integration with the rest of Europe, including but not limited to NATO and the EEC. Third, they were skeptical of ideas such as an expanded CSCE that included the Soviet Union (or, after December 1991, the Russian Federation), wary of a revisionist Moscow having a say in their future prosperity or security. Fourth,

181. Ene and Ion Diaconu, July 1991, ANIC, fond TV, dosar 198.

182. George H. W. Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 253.

183. Thatcher remarks, Aspen Institute, Colorado, "Shaping a New Global Community," August 5, 1990, <https://www.margarethatthatcher.org/document/108174>.

they adapted at speed. In just over two years, Eastern European policymakers were confronted with such a steady stream of new information that their preferences could not help but evolve quickly.

The key concerns that crystallized in policymakers' minds at the very beginning of the 1990s, even when they were members of the Warsaw Pact, persisted over the ensuing decades. Their eventual NATO membership was not inevitable, but it was the culmination of their own efforts, since 1989, to break out of the Pact and cement their ties with the West.