

With this and the following article Dialogue continues its special series on the Mormon experience and identity outside the usual Anglo-American cultural realm, under the supervision of guest editor Ethan Yorgason.

How Missionaries Entered East Germany: The 1988 Monson-Honecker Meeting

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On Thursday, March 30, 1989, eight missionaries and their new mission president, Wolfgang Paul, were driven from Hamburg, West Germany, to the German Democratic Republic (GDR). They expected a delay of several hours at the border but were amazed when the guards waved them through without the usual search of the cars. President Paul said, "After we crossed the border our joy was beyond description. President Schütze¹ could hardly contain himself. He honked the horn, blinked the headlights, shouted and cried for joy because after fifty years missionaries were again in his country."² Two of the missionaries were left that day in East Berlin, two in Leipzig, two in Dresden, and two in Zwickau. They were the first of twenty to enter the GDR over the next month. Prior to their entry, local members had served full-time or part-time missions, but the scope of their activities had been severely restricted, and only a few convert baptisms had taken place each year. The new missionaries began immediately to meet with members' friends. Three convert baptisms were performed in Dresden on Sunday, and a total of 569 took place in the last nine months of 1989.

Two months later, on May 26, ten young men from the GDR were

driven to the West German border where a long line of cars awaited the usual inspection. A guard noted the occupants' special passports and motioned for them to proceed directly to the gate. Passports were quickly stamped, the gate opened, and the group proceeded toward Frankfurt, from which they would fly to the Missionary Training Center in Provo, Utah.³

Why did the border open so smoothly for those two groups? The answer is found in a historic meeting in East Berlin on October 28, 1988, when Erich Honecker, chairman of the GDR's State Council (Staatsrat) and General Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party (SUD), said to President Thomas S. Monson, "Your requests are approved." In that one sentence, Chairman Honecker agreed to several requests that the Church had conveyed in earlier conversations and letters. President Schütze described them, "Missionaries in, missionaries out, more buildings, and more youth activities. [They] were the main four points. We didn't want much, and missionaries were the most important."⁴

This article details the events of 1988 that led to that meeting. However, some prior history is necessary. East Germany's ruling party was predominantly a Communist party with a different name. Based on Marxist-Leninist ideology, it viewed churches as former collaborators with governments that had suppressed Communism and oppressed the common man (workers and farmers). The party's goal was the creation of a future Communist society without churches. Since this goal could not be implemented immediately, the GDR's constitution provided (at least on paper) for religious freedom, the equality of all religious organizations and the separation of church and state, principles intended to eliminate church influence in political affairs until churches disappeared.

Faced with life under a totalitarian government, the LDS Church emphasized the GDR's Constitutional promise of religious freedom and attempted, with limited success, to achieve the same legal status held by the larger churches.⁵ Later, the Church also began to emphasize its traditional noninvolvement in political affairs. Its position concerning the separation of church and state distinguished it from the predominant Lutheran (*evangelisch*) Church,⁶ which criticized the government on a broad range of social and political issues.

While the GDR's activities succeeded in reducing the number of practicing Christians, party leaders eventually recognized that churches would not disappear in their lifetime. In a meeting with Lutheran leaders

on March 6, 1978, Honecker acknowledged that churches had a legitimate role in a socialist state. Among other concessions, he approved the construction of ten new Lutheran churches in localities where none had previously existed.⁷ Given the principle of equality of all churches, that decision became a factor in the government's suggestion the same year that the LDS Church build a temple in the GDR. Construction of new meetinghouses followed shortly thereafter.

Until 1969, the 5,000 LDS members in the GDR had been the responsibility of mission presidents who resided in West Berlin or Hamburg. In 1969, the Church established a separate Dresden Mission to oversee activities in the GDR. Its president, Henry Burkhardt, had served as a counselor to the previous mission presidents since 1952. In 1972, he was permitted for the first time to leave the GDR to attend general conference in Salt Lake City. During each subsequent annual visit, President Spencer W. Kimball told him that political solutions to problems such as those he faced in the GDR were generally ineffective—that the world changed only when individuals changed. President Kimball said, "If you want to see a change in East Germany, it must begin with you personally because you are the leader of the Saints there. You must befriend the Communists, which means you must have a change of heart. You must change your whole outlook and attitude. You cannot hold any grudges against them." Burkhardt, who had been harassed and jailed by his government, said, "It took a long time, from 1973 until 1976, before I came to realize that Communists were also children of our Heavenly Father, and that I should deal with them accordingly, in a friendly manner. From that time forth, miracle after miracle occurred in the history of the Church in this country. They became friendlier and more receptive to me, as a representative of the Church."⁸

In 1975 Elder Monson dedicated the country and prayed for divine intervention in governmental affairs: "Cause that Thy Holy Spirit may dwell with those who preside, that their hearts may be touched and that they may make those decisions which would help in the advancement of thy work."⁹ Three years later, the government suggested that a temple be built. It was officially announced in October 1982 and dedicated in June 1985.¹⁰ Stakes were organized in Freiberg (1982) and Leipzig (1984). The Church's next priority was to obtain permission for missionaries to enter the GDR and for its young members to serve missions abroad. Those am-

bitious goals could be achieved only with the full support of Chairman Honecker.

On February 2, 1988, almost nine months prior to the October meeting with the chairman, President Monson wrote in his journal, "I am happy that a breakthrough seems to be in the offing pertaining to having a limited number of full-time young elders from the West serve as missionaries in [the GDR]." ¹¹ His journal entry did not give a reason for that optimism, and political developments within the GDR at that time could be seen more as a reason for pessimism. However, the plan that led to the meeting with Honecker appears to have been built upon the events of late 1987 and early 1988 summarized below.

During the night of November 24-25, 1987, the GDR's secret police entered and searched the Zionskirche, a Lutheran church in East Berlin, confiscated papers and copying machines, and imprisoned a few individuals. The Zionskirche had allowed some of its members to use a basement room for a library, seminars, and other activities related to "environmental and peace" issues with financial support from a small West German political party. The group also distributed a newspaper critical of government policies. Following the raid, the government took action against a few lay members of Lutheran organizations and warned all churches to control their political activities. An official in the Secretariat for Religious Affairs later described the atmosphere of that time as a return to the 1950s and said that "a new style in party directives left no room for negotiation and conversation." Honecker told the Secretary for Religious Affairs, Klaus Gysi, to "solve the problem" by ending discussions with churches and, instead, "instruct, forbid and threaten" them. ¹²

As events following the Zionskirche raid unfolded, Jürgen Warnke, legal counsel to the Church's Frankfurt regional office, consulted with Manfred Wünsche, a private GDR lawyer who assisted the Church on legal matters. Warnke then wrote to President Hans B. Ringger, a Swiss citizen and counselor in the Europe Area Presidency on January 4, 1988. Warnke said that a degree of euphoria had been growing within the churches in the GDR over the possibility of social reforms, but the government was now sending strong signals that the limits of acceptable activity by churches and their organizations had been breached and must be restored. Warnke said, "Secretary Gysi has reconfirmed the government's basic church policy, but has emphasized that church organizations were expected to operate within those bounds in order to avoid serious conse-

quences." He agreed with Wünsche "that we must be more disciplined and not allow our own euphoria over our accomplishments to lead to violation of the limits placed upon us by the state."¹³

A Strategy to Approach Chairman Honecker

It appears that Church leaders came to see the crackdown against other churches as an opportune time to bring their requests to Chairman Honecker. The strategy was to emphasize the Church's traditional policy of noninvolvement in internal political affairs and to distinguish itself from the churches involved in political dissent. This strategy was coordinated with the Church's two major contacts within the GDR, attorney Manfred Wünsche and Günther Behncke, a division leader in the Secretariat for Religious Affairs. The secretariat was attached to the Council of Ministers and coordinated church issues. It had no operating authority and could only make recommendations, but it had considerable influence because everyone knew that important decisions regarding religious matters were made by the Chairman of the State Council, Erich Honecker. Therefore, in a matter as unprecedented as allowing missionaries from the West to enter the GDR, or for GDR youth to leave for missions abroad, the chairman's agreement was essential and had to be obtained before other officials raised objections.

Five weeks after Warnke's letter to Ringger, Burkhardt met with Behncke in the latter's office. During a discussion about an information brochure that the Church had submitted for approval several months earlier, Burkhardt told Behncke that the Church "operated in accordance with distinct principles concerning the relationship between church and state and required its members to do the same. Anything that was not consistent with these principles and teachings of the gospel has no place in the Church." In response, Behncke said, "Secretary Gysi would find it appropriate and helpful if the Church would express its position on this matter and how the members understand their rights and opportunities as citizens." He suggested that this information be conveyed personally to the secretary in a birthday greeting and added to the proposed information brochure.¹⁴

The suggested new text became the last three pages of a 26-page brochure published that year as *Die Kirche Jesu Christi der Heiligen der Letzten Tage stellt sich vor* ("The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Introduces Itself"). Similar text would appear later in the official *Erklärung der*

Präsidentschaft der Kirche Jesu Christi der Heiligen der Letzten Tage in der DDR ("Statement of the Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the GDR"), which was sent to Honecker prior to the October meeting. The drafting of the *Erklärung*, hereafter referred to as the "Statement," will be discussed below.¹⁵

The birthday greeting to Secretary Gysi began with expressions of appreciation for "improvements in the relationship between state and church" and for the "church building program, so visibly presented in the beautiful Freiberg Temple and the completed or soon to be completed meeting houses in Freiberg, Leipzig, Dresden, and Zwickau." Regarding the Church's relationship to the state, the letter to Gysi stated:

The position of the Church in relationship to secular authority always has been clear and distinct, . . . to respect and support that government, which secures to us the right of religious freedom and freedom of conscience. The members of the Church [in the GDR] understand very well that they have the opportunity to practice their religion, develop their individual personalities enjoy the blessings of the gospel, and live in accordance with Christian principles. . . . We do not support a connection between church authority and political influence. Therefore, we do not routinely take positions on current political events. Instead, the Church teaches and challenges its members in the GDR and throughout the world to become engaged in public affairs, to stand for freedom and right and to encourage the good in every form. We see significant similarities in your and our view of the absolute separation between state and church and in the equal treatment of all churches and religious organizations.¹⁶

I have found no written record of Gysi's response. Instead, on April 18, 1988, Burkhardt wrote directly to Honecker and requested an opportunity for President Monson, Elder Russell M. Nelson, and local leaders to meet with him in October.¹⁷ The short letter did not include any of the specific church-state issues contained in the letter to the Secretary. The meeting's only stated purpose was to thank Honecker "for the benefits associated with the implementation of the church building program, for the freedom to practice our religion according to the principles of our faith, and to discuss current problems of our time." The chairman responded five weeks later. He said he was "pleased to have an exchange of opinions with you and the other named gentlemen, which will give us the opportunity to discuss citizens' requests and other current problems."¹⁸

President Schütze emphasized the importance of approaching Honecker directly. He said, "We were told later by government officials,

that if we had gone through normal government channels, we would never have been successful.”¹⁹ In the course of several interviews, Günther Behncke described how the Church managed to reach Honecker directly, without going through “normal channels.” Manfred Wünsche had worked previously with Hans Ringger on legal matters. At the request of President Monson, Ringger now urged Wünsche to find ways to allow missionaries to enter and leave the GDR. Wünsche brought this request to Behncke’s attention in early January, 1988. The two of them discussed informally how this could be done. “Unofficially, we considered if it was possible or even thinkable, and we discussed how we could present it in a manner that Honecker would be agreeable.” Although neither man had direct ties to Honecker, Wünsche’s previous legal work for highly placed GDR officials, including sensitive family matters, provided him with options that might be used to bring ideas to Honecker without alerting officials who could raise obstacles to the proposals. Behncke said that Wünsche soon reported, “I have found a way to reach Honecker.” While he did not ask to know the details, Behncke concluded that Wünsche made contact with Honecker’s wife, Margot, because he had previously handled issues involving Honecker’s divorce from his first wife. (Margot Honecker was also the GDR’s secretary of public education [*Volksbildung*] at this time.) In any event, Behncke and Wünsche consulted with Church officials and arranged for their requests to reach Honecker directly but unofficially.²⁰

As noted above, the formal letter from President Burkhardt to Erich Honecker was very brief. In a 1991 interview, Behncke added further details:

Of course, the [GDR] Presidency, Manfred Wünsche, and I knew that the purpose of the meeting concerned specific issues: continuation of the building of meeting houses and the sending and receiving of missionaries. But we couldn’t jump into that immediately. We had to proceed in a political-tactical manner, and this was handled excellently by the Presidency, in that they first asked to meet with the Chairman to thank him for the fact that Mormons in this country could operate with the same rights as the Catholic and Lutheran churches. And that was an honest expression of thanks, because it was not the case in all countries that the Mormons had equal rights with other churches.²¹

However, while the letter was brief, Honecker already had been informed about the Church’s wishes and had signaled his agreement, not only to the meeting but to the requests. Otherwise, Wünsche would never

have recommended that a letter be sent. As Behncke put it, "Why would Honecker meet with them if he couldn't say yes to their requests?" But Behncke and Wünsche not only kept their informal contact with Honecker confidential, they also handled the formal letter in a comparable manner. Not even Gysi, Behncke's superior, was aware that the letter had been sent. When the request became known, some officials said that Honecker shouldn't meet directly with Monson. According to Behncke, they "felt the meeting should be with the third ranking man, the president of the Volkskammer [the lower house of Parliament], Horst Sindermann, a man of integrity. But he couldn't make decisions concerning the wishes of the Mormons." At that point, Behncke briefed Gysi on the matter and advised him to ignore the complaints, since Honecker had already written, "Agreed, EH" on the letter. Behncke said Gysi just grinned when he learned what had been accomplished without his knowledge.²²

The Official Statement and the Church's Requests

Two important documents were prepared in advance of the October meeting: the official "Statement" from the GDR Presidency about the Church's relationship to the state, which was published in newspapers the day after the meeting, and a list of the Church's specific requests, which Honecker approved at the meeting but which were not made public in the GDR. The form and content of those documents evolved between June and August 1988.

On June 22, 1988, the GDR Presidency reviewed a draft statement prepared by Manfred Wünsche, which focused on positive examples of the Church's relationship with the state. The presidency modified that draft to say that the present good relationship did not exclude the existence of problems that could and should be resolved, specifically in the areas of missionary and youth activities and public affairs. Care was taken to attribute the problems to local officials who prevented Church members from enjoying the benefits of the positive relationship that existed with the central government. The presidency also drafted a supplemental list of requests, which could be addressed at the meeting if the opportunity arose. The list included:

1. Missionary Work: Young GDR Church members should be able to go on missions abroad and missionaries from outside should be able to come to the GDR.
2. Youth activities: Church groups should be able to hold activities

outside of their meeting houses, including the use of camping and sport facilities and hostels.

3. Public affairs: Examples included a visitors' center near the temple; the importing and/or printing of Church literature; and use of public facilities for large Church meetings.

On June 27, 1988, the GDR Presidency reviewed additional changes to the "Statement" suggested by Warnke and Wünsche and added more specificity to the Church's requests. The "Statement" and requests were then translated into English and approved by the First Presidency. However, instead of being placed in a separate document, the Church's requests were added to two letters that officially transmitted the "Statement" to Honecker and the new Secretary for Religious Affairs, Kurt Löffler, on August 22, 1988.²³ While Löffler and Behncke fully understood the details of the Church's missionary proposal through informal communications, the description in the official transmittal letters was somewhat vague and certainly more modest than what was approved and implemented after the meeting. For example, the letter to Secretary Löffler said: "We could suppose, for example, that young members from Dresden would be assigned to Rostock or vice versa. Their time might also be served abroad. In that case, it would be based on reciprocity, so that a comparable young member from abroad would carry out his service here. Of course, there are many details to be resolved. We would be pleased, however, when a start could be made here."²⁴

The letter to Honecker said, "In our Statement, we have emphasized that we fully support the church-state policy of our country and are thankful for the assistance it affords us. If we were asked if we see opportunities where the relationship between state and church in our country could be further developed . . . there are certainly some things that would help our members, especially our younger members, to identify themselves with our country even more strongly than in the past." Following that introduction, the missionary request was described at greater length than in the secretary's letter, but within a very broad description of "missionary" activities that sounded much more like humanitarian services:

Many have, for example, assisted in projects in Latin America that have the goal of eliminating illiteracy, improving hygienic conditions, or increasing understanding of the basic principles of proper human nutrition. In European countries, the goal is to present the teachings and principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to do so especially through the

contribution of the missionaries to spiritual welfare and education by: a) strengthening the capacity of individuals for responsible service through high moral standards; b) maintaining health and the capacity to work by observing a positive lifestyle and through proper nutrition and; c) supporting families and thereby strengthening the foundation of a good society.²⁵

Regarding youth activities, the letter to Secretary Löffler said, "It has not been easy in the past to carry out camping or sporting activities. Indeed, a reservation for a camping place, youth hostel or sports place for activities with 100–200 participants is out of the question." The letter also referred to an upcoming Church youth camp in West Germany with participants from sixteen countries. "These gatherings serve world peace and cooperation among nations through common experiences and mutual understanding. It would be a positive experience for our youth if they could participate in this church camp under the flag of our country." The letter to Honecker addressed youth activities in less detail but emphasized that participation in youth gatherings abroad would "contribute to peace and cooperation among nations through common experiences and mutual understanding," a favorite political slogan of the GDR government.²⁶

The Statement

Since all of the Church's requests had been added to the transmittal letters, the "Statement" became solely a description of the Church's relationship to the state. Following are key sentences from that "Statement":

We respect you as the representative of our homeland and our state with which we identify ourselves, in which we live and work, in which we find joy. . . . The position of the Church . . . has always been clear and distinct, namely to respect and support governments that protect our right to exercise our beliefs.

The members of the Church recognize that they have been given the opportunity in our country to exercise their religion, to develop themselves as individuals, and to act in accordance with Christian ideals. . . . Generous decisions have enabled us to carry out our religious services and spiritual welfare activities at a high level in accordance with the basic principles of our Church.

Separation of church and state is a reality in the GDR and fulfills a longstanding goal of the Church. . . . It has been and continues to be a basic principle that we do not approve of ecclesiastical authority being used for political influence. The Church is not a political or social organization. It interacts with the surrounding society primarily through the experiences and activities of its members.

The Church is absolutely not open to anyone seeking to use it as a platform or a cover for opposition, or to pursue "special or group goals" that cannot be brought into harmony with the mission of the Church and its stated goals. . . . Young men in the church also accept their responsibility regarding military service.

[The] prerequisites for the preservation of world peace and understanding among nations are being created through the policies of the GDR. . . . [The Church] supports our government in its efforts toward co-existence, peace, and good relations. . . . [It is our] goal to promote the peaceful coexistence of mankind wherever God has placed us, especially through Christian living and in accordance with the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to contribute to the strengthening of our country in order to preserve peace.²⁷

Two weeks prior to the October meeting, Monson wrote to Honecker on behalf of the First Presidency. He said he was looking forward to the meeting and expressed hope that Honecker would be able to come to America and visit Utah in the future. He enclosed a short statement from the First Presidency that was consistent with the "Statement" of the Presidency in the GDR, but decidedly more reserved in tone and detail. It said in part: "We live in a time when men and women should stand together in peace and endeavor to protect the world around them. Our Church has learned in your country that many of these basic goals are commonly shared, which has led to trusting, constructive collaboration. . . . We are not politically active as a church and refrain from exerting political influence of any kind. Instead, we encourage our members to contribute to the improvement of the country in which they live and to foster good community relations."²⁸

The Briefing Document for Chairman Honecker

Secretary Löffler's office prepared a briefing document with an assessment of the "Statement" and the Church's requests, which was sent to Honecker's personal secretary on October 11, 1988.²⁹ Attachment 1 of that document contained Löffler's recommendations regarding the missionary and youth requests. Before preparing his recommendations, Löffler had sent the requests to Eberhard Aurich, secretary of the Central Council of the Free German Youth (FDJ). He told Aurich, "There cannot be any special rules for the youth activities of this church. . . . However, in the interest of a reasoned application of our state-church policy, it is necessary to determine whether some of the wishes of the Mormons can be accepted within the framework of the varied activities of the FDJ."³⁰

Aurich replied, "Sending individual persons abroad for missionary work is acceptable. Sending an organized youth group is not acceptable because that would demonstrate a political-organizational division of our youth, which would harm the GDR and the FDJ politically." His response reflected the FDJ's traditional insistence that all group activities involving youth were the responsibility of the FDJ, while sending individuals abroad was not relevant to the FDJ's mission. Regarding the request to use government facilities, Aurich said, "Young Mormons can use youth hostels, camping places, etc., [but] we cannot agree to reservations for group activities of a religious organization, since that would contradict the principle of the unity of the youth." He added that church-sponsored activities for youth should be limited strictly to religious events and be conducted at church facilities, while the youth should join FDJ for nonreligious activities. That instruction was also consistent with previous GDR policy. He did not support the request to send a group of Mormon youth to a scouting activity in West Germany, although sending an FDJ group that included Mormons might be acceptable.³¹

Secretary Löffler's own recommendations in Attachment 1 of the briefing document only partially followed Aurich's comments. The three issues he addressed were:

1. *Hostels and campgrounds*: Individuals can use these facilities and their programs, but church-related group activities or other religious practices such as common prayers, spiritual singing, or religious services are not allowed.

2. *Missionary work*: Sending an organized group abroad cannot be allowed . . . [but] sending individuals in the manner practiced by the Mormons can be allowed. Missionary activity within the GDR by retired persons, including retired persons from abroad, can be allowed, but only on condition that it take place in the church, for example, in caring for the elderly. Public missionary work (e.g., from door to door) is absolutely not allowed.

3. *Participation in an international camp*: Since the participants are exclusively Mormons, the operation of the camp is considered an internal matter. The participation of a small group, including adult leaders, can be permitted.³²

Conspicuous by its absence was any reference in the briefing docu-

ment or in Aurich's letter to young missionaries from abroad entering the GDR. While Löffler and Behnke knew this permission was the Church's primary goal, the written request had been vague, and the briefing document did not address the issue at all. When asked about its absence, Günther Behncke said: "Allowing missionaries to enter the GDR was not a significant problem, but letting young men leave the GDR to serve missions abroad was a very big problem since many people wanted to leave the GDR."³³

Attachment 2 addressed the "Statement":

The comment that the Church is not a political or social organization, although it interacts with its surrounding social environment, is an important statement regarding state-church policy. . . . The "Statement," which was preceded by other politically descriptive statements in recent years, such as its [the Church's] position on the basing of the MX missile, reflects a continuing process in which the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has described its position within a socialist society.³⁴

Attachment 4 described the government's view of the Church's relationship to the state:

In accordance with Church principles, members are taught to be loyal to the state, to respect and adhere to socialistic laws, to perform the duties of citizens and be diligent and honest workers. As a result, no politically relevant problems in the state-church relationship exist at either the central or local level. The leading representatives of the Mormon church in the GDR have unambiguously declared themselves in favor of the socialistic peace policy, including the necessity of military measures to protect our socialistic accomplishments. Mormons to date have not avoided their military obligations or training and would not find support for such from the church leadership.³⁵

Attachment 5 contained suggested responses that Honecker might make during the meeting, including the following: "I agree with you that real Socialism fulfills not only the ideals of Communists but also meets Christian goals and values. . . . The challenges of the present and the future require that we not be thrown back into confrontation."³⁶

The Meeting

President Monson wrote at length in his journal about the historic meeting on October 28, 1988, including these brief concluding comments: "[Honecker] proceeded to acknowledge our requests and said that

in the future all of our young people could meet together in youth conferences, using state facilities if necessary, for he trusted our young people and admired them. This was a great compliment. He then reviewed my request for missionaries and simply said, "Permission granted."³⁷

When Honecker said, "Permission granted," to what had he agreed and what did the Church think had been approved? Some of the documents cited above imply that the GDR's response to the Church's requests were still being developed after Honecker had accepted the meeting invitation, and the Church's letters of August 22 assume that future negotiations would be needed to address details. They simply said, "We would be pleased, however, when a start could be made here." A small "start" is exactly what appears to have been anticipated in secretariat documents written prior to and immediately after the meeting. One internal document written before the meeting said, "The exchange of young members on the international level is conditionally possible, but a general decision is not appropriate at this time. In the absence of relevant experience, the numbers should be limited at first to 3-5 persons."³⁸ A second example is Günther Behncke's own meeting summary, in which he wrote that Honecker had approved the requested missionary activity. A handwritten note on one copy of that summary states, "4-6 persons at first."³⁹ However, such a severe limitation on the number of missionaries was not evident in the negotiations that took place a month after the meeting, as described later.

Reaction of Church Members

The evening television news on October 28 included a long report about the meeting. Since very few Church members knew that the meeting was scheduled, the news was a total surprise. One member said, "It went through the ranks of the members like a wildfire. It was amazing. For more than twelve minutes that evening, the news was just about our Church." While the news coverage was extensive, it was also incomplete. It included photographs of the participants, Monson's presentation of a gift to Honecker, and references to the "Statement," which was printed in full in newspapers the next day; but there was no mention of the Church's requests or any indication that requests had been approved. Members learned about the new opportunities for missionary and youth activities gradually as details were resolved.

Matthew Heiss and Jeff Anderson, representatives of the LDS

Church History Department, conducted oral history interviews in 1991 and 1993. They asked members about their reaction to the news of the meeting. I have summarized representative comments from fifteen interviewees in the following three paragraphs:

A sigh of relief went through our ranks. . . . I fought to hold back the tears when I heard about it for the first time, tears of joy. . . . We felt recognized, something that was withheld from us all those years. . . . It filled me with pride. Finally, we could appear in the daylight. . . . I felt that I was recognized as a Christian and no longer restricted to a backyard church in a former factory building. . . . Normally, one would not sit together at the same table with such a man. But I thought that the time had come and it will be good for us. . . . Many things were not totally clear to me, but I try to be obedient. I have come to understand that it was right.

I ran into a wave of rejection from my colleagues who had always respected me. . . . Many outside the Church said, "Now you are crawling to the Communists. You made some kind of compromise with them." . . . There were many members who didn't understand that a leader of the Church would appear with the Chairman. . . . We had some problems, especially with the young people. . . . I could not call it good. It was not the right time.

People came to the temple grounds, especially from the Lutheran Church, and said, "You say you are Christians, but you don't do anything. You know that we have to fight for our freedom." It was hard for us to explain that freedom was actually something different from what they were trying to do. . . . President Monson acted under inspiration, otherwise he would not have done that. But it left the image that we had knelt down before a socialistic government.

Each member of the Church Presidency in the GDR commented on the reaction to the meeting during interviews in 1991:

President Burkhardt: I often received threatening phone calls and was asked how we, as a church, could fraternize with the Communists like that. I had to put up with that for a while. I received letters that were not written with the nicest tone, because people believed that I was the one who had initiated or was desirous of this contact. But I had the inner satisfaction that President Monson wanted this connection. And it was good. There were some members among us who did not agree. But they were not the most active members. Among the active ones, there were only a few who were not convinced that such an association was good. Many took the position, "We will wait and see what comes out of this meeting, whether it was worth it."⁴⁰

President Apel: Some members asked us after the [fall of the regime], "Why were you with Erich? You sold yourselves." I see it entirely differ-

ently. There were hardly any government leaders in any Western country that did not have contact with Erich Honecker, who didn't visit him, shake his hand, or sit at banquets with him. And so we said to ourselves, "We must try to obtain as much as possible without denying our faith."⁴¹

President Schütze: Naturally, there was some criticism. . . . Some members were disturbed and asked why we should associate with the Communists now and seek their help. Many members and nonmembers also had a problem with the fact that Western money was being used to build meeting houses in East Germany, in other words, that the Church was giving money to the Communists. But we had another goal, or better said, the Lord was pursuing a different and very specific goal, namely, that people would become interested in the gospel. In the dedicatory prayer that President Monson spoke in the Dresden area, he said, in my own words, "Lord, let the people develop an interest in the gospel." That is exactly what happened. It brought a great amount of publicity. The Church leaders presented their standpoint very officially and our wishes were answered. The Church did not compromise or sell itself. There were no other agreements made, in any form.⁴²

Did the Church Compromise Itself?

Although President Schütze said that "the Church did not compromise or sell itself," his comment reflects the fact that many people outside the Church, and a few within it, saw Monson's meeting with Honecker as having done exactly that. The meeting with Honecker was generally viewed as giving support to the regime, which it undoubtedly did; but most members, even those who had some doubt about the wisdom of the meeting, expressed hope that it would result in improved conditions for the Church.

The LDS Church History Department interviewers in 1991 and 1993 did not specifically ask about the "Statement." However, in my own interviews and informal conversations with members, their description of the media coverage of the meeting often included expressions of personal embarrassment or anger over the content of the "Statement" and other Church publications of that period. Examples of specific text that troubled them included the expressions of loyalty to the government and the description of GDR policies as contributing to "world peace," "understanding among nations," and "peaceful coexistence." Those specific words often appeared in traditional Communist propaganda and were used by all Soviet-dominated countries engaged in furthering Communism worldwide. Therefore, members were accused by colleagues who

read the "Statement" of having made common cause with the Communists.

The meeting with Erich Honecker surprised and concerned members who had grown accustomed to frequent and strong anti-Communist statements by Elder Ezra Taft Benson and other Church leaders during the administration of President David O. McKay (1951-70). However, a new tone and approach to Communism emerged shortly thereafter during President Kimball's administration, as he placed more emphasis on developing personal and friendly relations with socialist governments. His repeated counsel to President Burkhardt is one such example. In 1977, after visiting Poland, he came to Dresden and spoke to 1,400 members on the Twelfth Article of Faith. President Burkhardt recalled that the talk impressed a government official who had been invited to attend the meeting.⁴³ Finally, in 1979, President Kimball ended previous efforts to bring members to the Swiss Temple and accepted the GDR's unexpected offer to build a temple there. In short, while the president of the United States was demanding that the Communists tear down the wall, the president of the Church was finding ways to open doors through the wall.

President Burkhardt's implementation of President Kimball's advice was not an easy task because government officials were well aware of the Church's earlier anti-Communism statements. Nevertheless, Burkhardt and his counselors attempted to speak the language of the GDR when that could be done without violating the Church's principles and teachings. For example, the GDR's propaganda campaigns frequently complained about the West's "militarism" and atomic weapons. In 1981, the First Presidency, under President Kimball's leadership, issued a statement that opposed President Ronald Reagan's MX missile-basing plan and said, "We repeat our warnings against the terrifying arms race in which the nations of the earth are presently engaged. We in particular deplore the building of vast arsenals of nuclear weaponry."⁴⁴ Church leaders in the GDR quoted portions of that document during a meeting in which Secretary Gysi had criticized representatives of all churches for not actively supporting the government's international "peace initiatives." After the meeting, Gysi requested and was given the complete text. A favorable article with quotations from President Kimball appeared thereafter in the newspaper *Neue Zeit* headlined: "Our Fathers Proclaimed Peace—Mormons Protest against Building the USA-Intercontinental MX."⁴⁵

Günther Behncke said that Erich Honecker was aware of and quite impressed by the Church's position on the "peace" issue.

Statements with the "peace" theme continued after the meeting with Honecker. In 1989, the Church published a thirty-two-page pamphlet about its history in the city of Leipzig. A section entitled "Church and Society" included quotations from Doctrine and Covenants 98, a revelation that instructed the Saints to "renounce war and proclaim peace." GDR Church leaders also used quotations from President Kimball's 1976 *Ensign* article in which he wrote that a reliance on armaments for security was a form of idolatry.⁴⁶ Those teachings provided a firm basis for the antiwar statements written by Church leaders in the GDR.

The GDR's official state-church policy included two principles that government officials emphasized but didn't always practice: separation between church and state and equal treatment of all religious organizations. It was in the Church's interest to support those principles and they did so in the "Statement" and in other documents over the years. Church leaders also referred to related principles in Doctrine and Covenants 134 and the Twelfth Article of Faith.

But did those principles apply to Communist governments and Communist leaders, and should the Saints in the GDR respect the laws of that land and the officials chosen under its laws? Most members answered in the affirmative. One said that the *Articles of Faith* by James E. Talmage "was in every home and branch, and it was applied as written. Regardless of whether someone lived in a kingdom as a Swede, in a presidential democracy as an American, or in a socialistic state as we did, there were no extra guidelines or directions."⁴⁷

Church leaders in the GDR often stated that members were taught to be loyal citizens of the country in which they lived. This emphasis on "responsible citizenship" is also found in President Monson's correspondence from this period. Following the October meeting, he invited Secretary Löffler to visit Utah. In two letters to Löffler, he linked Church teachings with good citizenship. In one he said he looked forward to hosting Löffler and his wife so they could visit Church headquarters and see how it was striving to "raise our members to be good citizens." In the second, he said the visit would enable the secretary to see how we encourage our members "to be good citizens."⁴⁸

It should be noted that the "Statement" had been translated into English and sent to the First Presidency for approval. It is possible, but not

likely, that the political significance of specific terms with special implications in Communist literature such as "world peace," "peaceful co-existence," and "understanding among nations" was not evident in the English translation. It is more likely that their inclusion was intentional or that they were not considered significantly more problematic than the rest of the "Statement" or the meeting itself. Following the meeting, President Monson was quoted in the *Church News* as saying: "Obviously, there are differences of belief that separate us, but there are many more things that unite us."⁴⁹ Those words echo similar language that appeared in Honecker's briefing document: that common goals "tie us together more than our differences in philosophy of life or religious confession separate us."

Why Did Honecker Approve the Church's Requests?

The most common explanation about why Honecker met with Church leaders and approved their requests is that he wanted an invitation to visit America. An official visit would enhance his international prestige and help him obtain additional Western capital. Perhaps he hoped that the Church's influence might lead to such an invitation. Church leaders in America probably were convinced that Honecker wanted to visit America. In his report of the October meeting, Günther Behncke noted that Monson twice expressed his hope that Honecker would soon visit the United States, assuring him that he would be a welcome guest in Utah as part of such a visit.⁵⁰

The government's perception of the Church's influence in America, and thus its potential role in winning an invitation for Honecker to visit the USA, is seen in the following 1993 interview with Gottfried Richter, a Church leader in the GDR:

Over the years, the attitude of state officials toward our church changed, . . . which I saw in the file that the Stasi [secret police] kept on me. At first, they wrote, "This church is closely tied to the USA. Some leaders are in the service of the American government. . . ." In later years, however, they wrote that members of the Church in the GDR are loyal to their country. They said that members "clearly restrict themselves to the principles of the church. There is no evidence that they engage in polemics against the state, and the operative-political importance to us of this church and its leaders has increased with the building of the temple in Freiberg." A member of the Secretariat once told me, "We don't judge your church here based on the number of its members, but according to the influence it has

in the USA and increasingly in the world. . . ." They knew that the church had influence—for example, its opposition to the MX proposal.⁵¹

While he did not dispute the idea that the Church was influential in America, Günther Behncke did not share the belief that a visit to America was Honecker's primary or immediate goal. His view of Honecker's motives deserves attention. He said:

Many people wanted to hear that these things only happened because Honecker wanted to crack open the door to a visit to America. Of course, he had been to all of the major powers of that time except America and England. Certainly he would like to go there, too, for reasons of good relations between neighbors and in the interest of peace. But [was] that the determining factor in this case? I would say almost 100 percent, no. In that case, events would have proceeded in a quite different manner.⁵²

Behncke explained that Honecker was a realist in foreign policy matters. He knew that America and England would never invite the head of the GDR for a state visit when relations between the two major Western countries and the Soviet Union were improving, especially since, at that moment, relations between the GDR and the Soviet Union were strained. He knew that the GDR was a very small pawn in a much bigger chess game between the major powers.⁵³

Nor was money a significant reason for receiving the Church leaders. Behncke has been quoted as saying that anything paid for with Western money was approved. However, that statement has been taken out of context. Moreover, it was made in connection with the special construction program that already was bringing in Western money for the building of churches, and every meetinghouse requested by the Church had already been built or planned by 1988. While many GDR agencies were searching for projects that would bring more Western money into the country, the possibility of a financial gain by approving the Church's youth and missionary requests does not appear in any known GDR documents.

While theories about money and a visit to America may be relevant to some of Honecker's policies, they are not relevant to the meeting with President Monson or the approval of the Church's requests in 1988. Instead, we should look more closely at internal developments in the GDR at that time. Honecker faced a serious crisis in early 1988. Dissent was growing, and his state-church policy was in danger of collapse following the crackdown he had instigated over the Zionskirche affair. Moreover, a

prolonged and visible battle with the Lutheran Church would generate negative publicity abroad and threaten any foreign policy goals he entertained. Soon, he would have to back off from the newly harsh policy, which would inevitably be seen as a victory for the Lutheran Church and the dissenters.

A meeting with President Monson offered several opportunities for Chairman Honecker to enhance his image abroad and strengthen his hand at home. Behncke said that if he was known abroad as a *Kirchenfresser* (someone who eats churches) why not be seen discussing "world peace" with representatives of a church from the most powerful country in the world, whose leaders were known as anti-Communists, even as *Kommunistenfresser*, who more recently had spoken out against the arms race, and whose influence had ended the U.S. government's plan to station a system of nuclear missiles in Utah and Nevada? (The Russians had stationed their own SS-20 missiles in the GDR, which did not please Honecker since he did not want the GDR to be a potential target of a Western attack.) Simultaneously, he could demonstrate to a meddling Lutheran Church that he could and would make significant concessions to a church whose local leadership did not interfere in the GDR's internal affairs and whose members lived exemplary lives and practiced their religion without problems in a socialist state.⁵⁴

In light of Honecker's problems in 1988, the pre-meeting briefing document prepared by people who knew his goals and concerns takes on greater significance. Attachment 4 said that members of the Church "are taught to be loyal to the state, to respect and adhere to socialistic laws. . . . As a result, no politically relevant problems in the state-church relationship exist at either the central or local level." Attachment 2 said that the "Statement" contained "politically unambiguous remarks concerning the place of the Church and its members in a socialistic society [and] its identification with the state and state policies. [Moreover] the comment that the Church is not a political or social organization, although it interacts with its surrounding social environment, is an important statement regarding state-church policy." And Attachment 5 suggested that Honecker tell his visitors, "The challenges of the present and the future require that we not be thrown back into confrontation."

That last sentence is a key to Honecker's motivation and to the Church's strategy, because he *was* being thrown into confrontation by the Lutheran Church. In contrast, the LDS Church repeatedly emphasized

that it followed strict principles concerning the relationship between church and state and did not permit its members to use the Church as a platform or cover for political opposition. That position was confirmed in the "Statement."

Moreover, we have direct evidence of Honecker's personal reaction to the "Statement." On one copy found in government files, certain passages were underlined while other extant copies have no such underlining.⁵⁵ Günther Behncke explained the significance of the underlining: "Honecker received fairly thick documents that we had prepared from what the Church had sent to us. I don't know if he read it all, but his State Secretary [Löffler] was there in his office when he read it and had marked all the passages where Honecker had said, 'Donnerwetter, das ist schön.'⁵⁶ We naturally underlined those passages."⁵⁷

The underlined passages included this sentence: "The Church is not a political or social organization [and] the Church is not open to anyone seeking to use it as a platform or a cover for opposition."

Results of the Meeting

Obtaining permission for expanded missionary activity was the primary reason why LDS Church leaders pressed for the meeting with Honecker. The arrival of missionaries from the West cannot be addressed in detail here, but some of the subsequent events are summarized below:

President Monson (November 3, 1988): We will have to move with care but also without delay in taking advantage of the opening that is now before us. . . . We would begin missionary work on a small scale and then hopefully move upward in number.⁵⁸

President Burkhardt: We had our first follow-up meeting with Secretary Löffler in November. President Ringger was, naturally, a bit sly. I probably would not have been so bold on this matter, but in that meeting we came to speak not of 10 missionaries but rather of 10 pairs. We explained to him that missionaries are never allowed to be alone, but always go in pairs. So we remained with the number ten, which could be increased later. Herr Löffler accepted that as quite understandable . . . but the 10 who would come in were 10 pairs.⁵⁹

When we met with him again less than four weeks later, we again spoke about the missionaries. Herr Löffler said, "Yes, 20 missionaries." Brother Ringger said, "Yes 20 pairs, since our missionaries always go out in pairs." Herr Löffler had always spoken to Erich Honecker about 20, but not 20 pairs. But Brother Ringger spoke about 20 pairs, and that would be

40 missionaries. . . . It was not long before we had more than 100 missionaries here.⁶⁰

Günther Behncke: Concerning the missionaries, that was a touchy subject: "Let Americans into the GDR? They are our archenemy!" We had agreed in advance to start with a relatively small number. We agreed that ten missionaries from the GDR could go out and ten could come in. But you know, the request of the presidency after the meeting was quite different. We were together with Herr Löffler, Herr Ringger, and Henry Burkhardt in Tabarz in Thüringen. I can tell you that not just 10 missionaries entered but at least tenfold. And it went very well.⁶¹

Behncke later elaborated on the negotiations in Tabarz. He said that Honecker, as head of state, could not be and was not involved in details. He had given his representatives considerable latitude over the numbers of missionaries, and they exercised it. However, Behncke was especially impressed by a new attitude evident during those negotiations. He said that the Church's representatives (Ringger and Burkhardt) exhibited increased self-confidence after their meeting with Honecker. "I had the impression," he said, "that we were suddenly equal partners. We worked together in a very friendly manner to make the best decisions. I found it very pleasant."⁶²

In summarizing the reaction of Church members to the Monson-Honecker meeting, I have reserved one comment from a member who still holds a very negative opinion of the meeting. He called the meeting "completely incomprehensible! The government was already tipping. There was opposition everywhere. People could see more and more that it couldn't go on further, and right then Church representatives came and compromised themselves with those people. That was depressing for us here. It severely damaged the Church. Our lowered reputation was apparent in the missionary work."⁶³

This comment raises an important point. Did negative reactions to the meeting adversely affect the newly authorized missionary activity? It is possible, but no data exist to show how many people refused to talk with the missionaries because of their opposition to the meeting. However, the following facts relevant to the meeting's positive results are known.

While the missionaries were not officially allowed to go door to door or initiate contact with persons on the street, they were not totally limited to meeting with members' friends. Despite occasional warnings from the police, they employed a variety of methods to circumvent official restrictions and initiate discussions with people on the street. An average

of about seven convert baptisms had taken place annually in the years prior to 1989. After the arrival of the missionaries from the West, 569 convert baptisms were recorded in the last nine months of 1989. While baptisms continued at a high rate into 1990, Wolfgang Paul, the new mission president, said that, soon after the border between East and West Germany opened, "we noticed that people were not so interested in the missionaries, in the Book of Mormon, etc., because suddenly other things were there that attracted them. Earlier, everything from the West was worthy of pursuit and had great significance. But now they had more options."⁶⁴ Missionary activities also became more difficult after 1990 because the flood of goods and services from the West caused many factories and businesses in the GDR to close, and people began to focus more on finding or retaining employment.

Would the numerous converts baptized in 1989 or early 1990 have joined the Church later if missionaries had not entered before the demise of the GDR? It would have taken at least several months to find living quarters and assign missionaries to work in the eastern cities. Since baptisms declined soon after the border opened, it must be assumed that the total number of converts would likely have been significantly lower if missionaries had not arrived when they did. It is true that some of the earliest converts left the Church or became inactive and that some members were disturbed by problems associated with the flood of new converts, who often joined within days or weeks of being exposed to the missionaries. However, the converts also brought new life and rewarding challenges to the wards and branches in the GDR.

Günther Schulze, bishop of the Dresden Ward, who was called to that position in December 1989, recalled in 1993 that about 250 converts had joined his ward since the arrival of the missionaries, while almost 200 members (including some converts) had left for the West to find employment. Among the converts who remained in Dresden were many young people who desired to fulfill a mission for the Church. In fact, six of the converts had already returned from full-time missions by 1993 and four more were currently serving missions. These young people had been well integrated into the ward, but none had saved money for missions and none had family support. While it was difficult to support so many missionaries financially, Bishop Schulze said, "I am very thankful that these young people had the desire to serve a mission."⁶⁵ Every bishop in the former GDR would agree today with Bishop Schulze and would welcome

both the challenge and the opportunity to prepare ten or more converts for missions.

Conclusion

This article has presented the background and circumstances that led to the meeting between President Thomas S. Monson and Chairman Erich Honecker in October 1988. While a basis for the concessions obtained from the government through that meeting can be traced back to President Spencer W. Kimball's 1973 advice to President Henry Burkhardt to befriend GDR officials, the specific plan to expand the Church's missionary activity appears to have developed after the November 1987 police raid on the Lutheran Zionskirche and the subsequent crackdown on churches involved in political dissent. Although Jürgen Warnke's letter of January 4, 1988, advised that "we must be more disciplined and not allow our own euphoria over our accomplishments to lead to violation of the limits placed upon us by the state," a bold strategy was developed and became evident only five weeks later when President Burkhardt emphasized the Church's policy of noninvolvement in the affairs of state, and Günther Behncke responded by asking Burkhardt to convey that policy directly to Secretary Gysi. Subsequent Church correspondence included frequent reference to scriptural passages from the Doctrine and Covenants, the Twelfth Article of Faith, and related statements by Church leaders that denounced war, promoted peace, and emphasized respect for government.

Following the meeting, members developed several theories about Honecker's motives for meeting with Church leaders and approving their requests. Many of those theories are represented by one member's effort to explain the meeting:

The price [for the entry and departure of missionaries] was to declare that we Mormons could live with Socialism; but we *had* to live with Socialism. We had no alternative. The suspicion of our critics, that we entered into a pact with the government is an overreach. . . . Did the [government leaders] feel that they were so strong, or perhaps they were so weak, that they couldn't deny the requests of our leaders? Was it the decrepit status of the old men in the party's Central Committee that made them so unexpectedly reasonable? Or did Erich Honecker wish to receive an invitation to the USA via the Mormon Church? Was this an opportunity for [the GDR government] to prove to the ever-watching world that they were not the bogeymen that they were judged to be?

One thing is sure, we did not present a political threat to them, at least

not directly. Mormonism would never grow into a mass movement. This Church simply demands too much self sacrifice, or at least a high degree of self discipline, from its members. But the GDR's politicians saw the results, and that is what the Deputy State Secretary for Religious Affairs, Herr Kalb, expressed at the dedication of the Freiberg Temple: "We have seen that Mormons are not involved in property crimes. There is almost no divorce among you. Your young men never drink alcohol during their Army service, which is astounding to us. These are the kind of people we want to produce. The fruits are good." Was that what brought us a special status in the last years and months of the GDR?⁶⁶

The above questions and theories all have some validity, but they are not a sufficient explanation of what happened. The evidence shows that the Church's support for the principle of separation of church and state and noninvolvement in government affairs coincided with the government's need for a public relations event that would counteract the negative publicity associated with its crackdown against other churches. By granting significant concessions to a small church that did not meddle in affairs of state or permit anti-government activities within its buildings, Chairman Honecker could poke a finger in the eye of the larger, openly critical churches, especially the Lutheran Church, and simultaneously show the outside world that his government was not antireligious.

The October 1988 meeting was a success for both parties. The Church received immediate concessions regarding its missionary and youth activities, while Honecker could show the world that a church could function successfully within a socialist state and that its leaders shared his goal of peaceful coexistence. The long-term results are difficult to evaluate since Honecker's government collapsed at the end of 1989 and the GDR was brought into the Federal Republic of Germany the next year. However, the success of the Church's missionary program in 1989-90 far outweighed any initial negative reactions to the meeting. I, therefore, find Günther Behncke's conclusion useful. He said, very loosely translated, that the Church received "something for nothing" (*Leistungen ohne Gegenleistungen*)—that is, it received services or benefits without being obligated to provide something in return. The Church simply stated the principles of church-state relationships that it had always practiced, thanked Honecker for what it had already received (the temple, new buildings, etc.), reminded him that its members consistently fulfilled their obligations as citizens and Christians, and requested its rights under the GDR's constitution (equality with other churches, freedom to worship, and the

ability to share their religious convictions with others through missionary activities).

As a final note, each of the ten young men who left the GDR in May 1988 for missions abroad were told that future mission calls would depend on their nonpolitical conduct abroad and their return to the GDR upon the completion of their service. Each promised, as a condition of his selection, that he would return. All ten did return, but to a Germany that neither they, those who called them, nor those who permitted their departure had anticipated.

Notes

1. Manfred Schütze, a GDR citizen, had been president of the Leipzig Stake since 1984.

2. Wolfgang Paul, interviewed by Matthew K. Heiss, October 24, 1991, Friedrichsdorf, Germany, typescript, 16–20, James H. Moyle Oral History Program, Archives, Historical Department of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City (hereafter LDS Church Archives). A West German citizen, he was president of the Germany Hamburg Mission when called to preside over the new GDR mission. I am the translator of all quotations from German in this article.

3. Henry Burkhardt, interviewed by Raymond M. Kuehne, February 25, 2003, Freiberg, Germany. Burkhardt, a GDR citizen, led the Church in that country since 1952, first as a counselor to mission presidents residing in West Germany and, after 1969, as president of a new Dresden GDR Mission. In 1984 that mission was closed after all members had been assigned to the Freiberg (1982) and Leipzig (1984) stakes. He then became president of the Freiberg Temple and also president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the GDR. The two stake presidents were his counselors in that GDR presidency.

4. Manfred Schütze, interviewed by Matthew K. Heiss, October 9, 1991, Berlin, Germany, typescript, 25, Moyle Oral History Program.

5. The Church was recognized as an institution, but *Rechtsfähigkeit* (the ability to act for itself in legal matters) was not confirmed until May 1985, prior to the dedication of the Freiberg Temple. Previously, buildings “owned” by the Church were recorded in the name of members as trustees for the Church.

6. Officially, “Evangelical” applies to an association of protestant churches that had legal corporate status in nineteenth-century Germany. I use the more common English designation, Lutheran.

7. The GDR had previously implemented a program whereby historic churches destroyed in the war could be rebuilt with Western currency from abroad. The 1978 agreement extended that program to areas of new construction where no church had previously existed. However, Western money was still required.

8. Burkhardt, Interview, February 25, 2003.

9. Thomas S. Monson, *Faith Rewarded: A Personal Account of Prophetic Promises to the East German Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 36. Monson was assigned in 1968 to oversee the Church's activities in the GDR.

10. Raymond M. Kuehne, "The Freiberg Temple: An Unexpected Legacy of a Communist State and a Faithful People," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 95–131.

11. Monson, *Faith Rewarded*, 126.

12. Dr. Horst Dohle, author of *SED und Kirche, Vol. 2, 1968–1989*, interviewed by Hans-Joachim Beeskow of the *Berliner LeseZeichen*, June 1997, www.berliner-lesezeichen.de (accessed February 2, 2006).

13. Jürgen Warnke, Letter to Hans B. Ringger, January 4, 1988, photocopy in my possession.

14. File memorandum, GDR Presidency, February 11, 1988, Freiberg Temple Annex Archive, Freiberg, Germany (hereafter cited as Freiberg Archive). It was common practice in the GDR for organizations to send formal greetings on birthdays and other special occasions to government leaders.

15. The statement, as printed in all major GDR newspapers the day after the meeting, had the following full title: *Erklärung der Präsidenschaft der Kirche Jesu Christi der Heiligen der Letzten Tage in der DDR anlässlich der beantragten Begegnung mit dem Vorsitzenden des Staatsrates der DDR—Erich Honecker am 28. Oktober 1988*.

16. Henry Burkhardt, Frank Apel, and Manfred Schütze, Letter to Klaus Gysi, March 3, 1988, photocopy in my possession.

17. Henry Burkhardt, Letter to Erich Honecker, April 18, 1988, "Selected Documents 1954–1988," Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (hereafter cited as SAPMO-BArch), MS 13798, fd. 11, 112–13, LDS Church Archives.

18. Erich Honecker, Letter to Henry Burkhardt, May 24, 1988, "Selected Documents 1954–1988," SAPMO-BArch, MS 13798, fd. 11, 114–15, LDS Church Archives.

19. Schütze, Interview, October 9, 1991, 24.

20. Günther Behncke, Interviewed by Raymond M. Kuehne, June 20, 2005 and May 8, 2006, Berlin, Germany.

21. Günther Behncke, Interviewed by Matthew K. Heiss, October 20, 1991, Berlin, Germany, typescript, 13, Moyle Oral History Program.
22. Behncke, Interview, May 8, 2006.
23. File Memoranda, GDR Presidency Meetings, June 22, 27, and August 19, 1988, Freiberg Archive.
24. Henry Burkhardt, Letter to Kurt Löffler, August 22, 1988, "Selected Documents from the Staatssekretär für Kirchenfragen Collection 1950-1990," SAPMO-BArch, MS 13918 (hereafter cited as MS 13918), fd. 16, 408-9, LDS Church Archives.
25. Henry Burkhardt, Letter to Erich Honecker, August 22, 1988, MS 13918, fd. 16, 410-11.
26. Ibid.
27. The full statement was printed in major GDR newspapers. Photocopies in my possession.
28. Thomas S. Monson, Letter to Erich Honecker, October 14, 1988, MS 13918, fd. 16, 432-37.
29. Briefing Document for Chairman Honecker, October 11, 1988, MS 13918, fd. 16, 420-30.
30. Kurt Löffler, Letter to Eberhard Aurich, August 31, 1988, MS 13918, fd. 16, 412-13.
31. Eberhard Aurich, Letter to Kurt Löffler, September 26, 1988, MS 13918, fd. 16, 415-17.
32. Briefing Document for Chairman Honecker, 422.
33. Behncke, Interview, May 8, 2006.
34. Briefing Document for Chairman Honecker, 424.
35. Ibid., 427.
36. Ibid., 428.
37. Monson, *Faith Rewarded*, 133-35.
38. No author, "Concerning the Intentions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Regarding Aspects of Their Church Activity," n.d., MS 13918, fd. 16, 399.
39. Günther Behncke, Meeting Summary, November 1, 1988, MS 13918, fd. 16, 442-46.
40. Henry Burkhardt, interviewed by Matthew K. Heiss, October 24, 1991, Friedrichsdorf, Germany, typescript, 28-29, Moyle Oral History Program.
41. Frank Apel, interviewed by Matthew K. Heiss, October 15, 1991, Freiberg, Germany, typescript, 17, Moyle Oral History Program. Apel was president of the Freiberg Stake.
42. Schütze, Interview, October 9, 1991, 25-27.

43. Burkhardt, Interview, October 24, 1991, 17. The Twelfth Article of Faith states: "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law."

44. "First Presidency Statement on Basing of the MX Missile," May 5, 1981, *Ensign*, June 1981, 76.

45. "Our Fathers Proclaimed Peace—Mormons Protest against Building the USA-Intercontinental MX," *Neue Zeit*, July 16, 1981, unpaginated photocopy of clipping in my possession.

46. Spencer W. Kimball, "The False Gods We Worship," *Ensign*, June 1976, 2-6.

47. Rolf-Thomas Lehmann, interviewed by Raymond M. Kuehne, October 12, 2003, Görlitz, Germany.

48. Thomas S. Monson, Letters to Kurt Löffler, November 11, 1988, SAPMO-BArch, DO 4/987, 29-31; photocopies in my possession.

49. "German Democratic Republic Grants Rights for Missionary Service," *Church News*, November 12, 1988.

50. Günther Behncke, Meeting Summary, November 1, 1988, MS 13918, fd. 16, 442-46.

51. Gottfried Richter, interviewed by Matthew K. Heiss, June 22, 1993, Freiberg, Germany, typescript, 12, 13, 18, 29, Moyle Oral History Program. Richter was a counselor in the Dresden Mission presidency from 1969 to 1984 and later was responsible for public relations.

52. Behncke, Interview, June 20, 2005.

53. Behncke, Interview, May 8, 2006.

54. *Ibid.*

55. The underlined copy of the "Statement," SAPMO-BArch, DO 4/987, 42-44; photocopy in my possession; compare to the unmarked copy: Statement, MS 13918, fd. 16, 408-10.

56. "Donnerwetter" is literally "a thunderstorm." That exclamation can be used negatively, as in "damn it," but most often positively, as in the British "by Jove!" The latter tone applies here. "Das ist schön" means, "That's good."

57. Behncke, Interview, June 20, 2005.

58. Monson, *Faith Rewarded*, 137.

59. Burkhardt, Interview, October 24, 1991, 29.

60. Burkhardt, Interview, February 25, 2003.

61. Behncke, Interview, October 20, 1991, 15.

62. Behncke, Interview, May 8, 2006.

63. Gerhard Müller, interviewed by Matthew K. Heiss, June 16, 1993, Halle, Germany, typescript, 22, Moyle Oral History Program.

64. Paul, Interview, October 24, 1991, 20, 34.

65. Günther Schulze, interviewed by Matthew K. Heiss, July 19, 1993, Dresden, Germany, typescript, 44, 46, Moyle Oral History Program.

66. Gerd Skibbe, *Memoirs*, n.d., unpaginated; typescript of selected passages copied with permission in Freiberg, Germany, November 2003.