Minister Heinz Hoffmann, argued that it was pointless to negotiate with the West any longer and that all the West understood was force. As Gromyko noted: "To continue negotiations would simply mean that we would be continuing and contributing to the deception of the world's peoples."

With the ongoing deployment of new nuclear missiles in West Germany this hard-line group grew in strength and became increasingly intolerant of the opposition that continued to be voiced in East Germany. The Russian hard-liners and their supporters, particularly in Czechoslovakia, accused East Germany of caving in to Western foreign policy to serve its own ends. As punishment for such opposition, East Germany was slated in May of 1984 to receive even more Soviet missiles than had originally been planned, while Czechoslovakia, faithful to the Soviet hard-line, was spared.

Yet it is virtually unthinkable that Honecker would have had the courage to voice his convictions so loudly had he not been well aware that the dispute between the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union reflected a quieter but no less intense dispute going on within the Soviet Union itself between the hard-line Gromyko faction, with its media organ Pravda, and the dovish faction led by Andropov and now by Defense Minister Dmitri Ustinov, with its organ Izvestia. By July, 1983, when Pravda had begun its final campaign against Honecker’s visit to West Germany—the first ever for an East German leader—Izvestia had begun to come out in favor of Honecker. Though Honecker, who has to worry about hawks in his own Politburo, was finally forced to give in to the combined and repeated pressure of the hawks, the ultimate battle for control of Soviet policy—and for determining its relationship to its allies—is far from over. At present it appears that Honecker’s cancellation and his subsequent concessions to the Soviet hard-line, including articles in the Soviet press, are no more than token moves. The outward display of unity hides a reality that is far more turbulent and far less monolithic than it appears.

Meanwhile, the squabble between East Germany and Hungary on the one side and the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia on the other displays a level of disagreement that can only be surprising for Western observers, accustomed to shows of fraternal solidarity. It is surprising too that in some ways Honecker has shown more courage in defying the wishes of his alliance than has his Western counterpart, Helmut Kohl, who is also confronted by strong internal opposition and a peace movement that refuses to go away. The outward display of unity hides a reality that is far more turbulent and far less monolithic than it appears.

Excursus 4

Lucy Komisar on Honduras Update

Only months ago Honduras was one of America's most compliant allies. Today, U.S.-Honduran relations are at a low point, and Hondurans both in and out of government are vigorous in expressing suspicion, resentment, and anger at the Americans for their failure to give Honduras an economic boost or show concern for its interests in return for use of the country as a de facto military base, as a staging ground for the anti-Sandinista guerrillas, and as a training site for Honduras's traditional enemy, El Salvador.

The first signs of a change came with the ouster of Armed Forces head Gustavo Alvarez Martinez on March 31. During General Alvarez's tenure the United States had completed or obtained agreement to build or improve eleven airstrips and four base camps for joint military exercises. Some of the facilities were also used to supply the "Contras" fighting in Nicaragua. But many Hondurans believed that Honduras had sold itself too cheaply—what, after all, was it getting in return?—and that the agreements it had made were damaging, even endangering, the country. They also chafed at the pressures exerted by U.S. Ambassador John Dimitri Negroponte and were embarrassed at the international reputation they had gained as lackeys of the United States. When the U.S. failed to pressure El Salvador to accede to Honduran demands in their border dispute, Hondurans asked themselves if they mightn't be training men they would be fighting one day, as they had in 1969. When the U.S. Congress refused to vote more aid to the Contras, Hondurans wondered if they weren't to be left holding the bag, forced to deal with some fifteen thousand guerrillas with nowhere else to go. There was an additional flurry of concern when, at about this time, the U.S. held several meetings with high Nicaraguan officials. Surely a deal was being hatched behind Honduras's back and the U.S. was going to make its exit, as it had in Vietnam and Lebanon.

Now the military, which is a deciding force in foreign policy matters, is asserting Honduras's national interest and insisting that the U.S. pay attention. It has ordered most of the anti-Sandinista guerrillas out of the country and told them to close their offices in Tegucigalpa, the capital. It has refused a U.S. request to allow the Contras to return to Honduras as refugees, if necessary, to enter camps run by the
United Nations. It has said that joint military exercises with the United States must be scaled down to reduce the drain on the Honduran budget. It has announced that Salvadoran soldiers will no longer be trained at the U.S.-run Regional Military Training Center on the north coast. And it has refused a U.S. request to move the Salvadoran refugee camps away from the border—which, it is charged, often serve as a sanctuary for guerrillas—until there has been progress in settling the Salvadoran-Honduran border dispute. This latter, according to a military source in Honduras, was "an ace for us" in bargaining with El Salvador over the border. "The camps are a nuisance for the U.S. and El Salvador. If we move them we do a favor for them and nothing for us. If El Salvador accepts the border [that Honduras proposes], we will move them."

On Honduras's border with Nicaragua to the southeast, Honduran civilians and soldiers have been killed or wounded by mines set by the Sandinistas at the border crossings used by the Contras or by shots fired from the frontier. Several thousand livestock have been stolen by Sandinistas or by Contras. "We want to send the bill for the cattle to Negroponte," said the same military source.

Ambassador Negroponte is the object of much of the Hondurans' resentment because of his heavy-handedness—many call it arrogance—in obtaining compliance with U.S. wishes. There was a flap when newspapers reported that he had met in April with officials of the Foreign Ministry to discuss the position Honduras would adopt at a meeting of the foreign ministers of Central America and the Contra countries. The ministry hurriedly issued a statement asserting that the government's foreign policy is made by national authorities and reflects national interests. "We have put up with tons of infamy, calumny, and disinformation about what is going on in this country, which has doubtless hurt the image of this land," said La Prensa, a newspaper that is a voice of the business community. Compare that with what the Nicaraguans get from the Soviets, it stated rhetorically.

At a Rotary Club meeting in Tegucigalpa recently, Juan Ramón Molina, a retired colonel who served as minister of the interior, head of the security forces and commander of the army's special tactical group during a previous military government, seemed to be speaking for others in a room full of businessmen and retired military officers when he stated: "The United States has considered that the intervention of marines at any time can solve political problems with military solutions in twenty-four hours. They have considered us controlled countries. Honduras could get into an adventure with Nicaragua or El Salvador. All we would get are lots of dead. It won't help our development. The country that is occupied will get the aid of the United States. We will remain in the same economic position." In October, Foreign Minister Edgardo Paz Barnica announced his government's intention to redefine its relations with the United States, deemphasizing military ties and seeking more economic assistance.

U.S. diplomats have tried to placate the Hondurans, but many in the country have come to distrust Washington. La Prensa's judgment is that the United States "doesn't have permanent enemies or friends, just permanent interests," and it counsels Honduras to take a lesson from others who thought they could rely on this ally. Said a government minister: "The fundamental problem is that there's no security in the North American policy. No power is interested in the interests of a small country."

There is little to contradict the minister's assertion that the U.S. is unconcerned with the country's long-term problems. A case in point is Washington's attitude toward efforts at land reform in Honduras, where, as elsewhere in Central America, a small group owns most of the land and landless or small-plot-holding peasants eke out a bare subsistence living. True, the Honduran Government is not enthusiastic about such efforts—the family of President Roberto Suazo Córdova are among the large landholders, for instance. But it would be difficult for a Washington policy analyst to avoid the conclusion that a solution to the land problem is crucial to the country's future stability and well-being.

Where agrarian reform is concerned, one might have expected Honduras to be relatively advanced, since the first such law was passed in 1962. Although this was soon blocked by the military, the peasants' support of a military coup in 1972 was rewarded two years later with a new land-reform law. The system worked for a while, but then the Agrarian Reform Institute (INA) ran out of easily expropriated land and did not dare touch what belonged to the powerful and the military, though many had staked out national land to which they had no title. After the election of the current, civilian government in 1981 land reform started up again. But in the years since only 11,330 of an estimated 150,000 needy peasant families (who comprise nearly a quarter of this country of 4 million) have received land—125,000 acres in all. Peasants tired of INA's failure to act on their petitions began to invade land in the 1960s, and such invasions have increased in the last few years. In 1984 alone, several thousand peasants, members of three national campesino unions, moved onto more than fifty properties, demanding title to the lands they occupy. Four peasants have been shot to death by landlords this year. Several hundred have been jailed under the government's antiterrorism law. And security forces dispatched by INA or cooperating with landowners have ejected hundreds of others. But the peasants keep coming back.

"The pressure of the military and the wealthy is preventing the law's application," contends Augusto Suárez, former deputy director of INA, noting that the government has given neither money nor public support to the program and has cut INA's budget. The United States, the country's main lender, does not show the same enthusiasm for land reform in Honduras that it has shown in El Salvador. Suárez believes the U.S. distrusts the program because grants of land are made to groups, not to individuals. A U.S. AID official confirms that the U.S. Government will not subsidize loans to peasant cooperatives, citing its opposition to undercutting commercial financial institutions and its belief that peasants have to operate under real world conditions.

Yet Washington took a different stand on government aid to private groups last year when a strong wind destroyed a plantation belonging to United Brands—the former United Fruit, which changed its name after it was implicated in the 1975 "Banangate" bribery scandal. According to Suárez, "Ambassador Negroponte pressured the Honduran government to give the company fiscal incentives to plant what was lost" and had personally attended meetings on the matter.

Lucy Komisar, a journalist who writes about foreign affairs, recently returned from three months in Honduras.