

East Germany Is Only

By Joe Alex Morris Jr.
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BONN, June 8—Possibly the most uninformed people anywhere about the Watergate scandal live east of the Iron Curtain, with one striking—almost extraordinary—exception: East Germany.

Led by Moscow, the other nations in Soviet orbit have handled the Watergate affair discreetly.

The Soviet motivation for playing it down is obviously connected with party chief Le-

onid I. Brezhnev's forthcoming visit to Washington, where he will discuss economic relations with Mr. Nixon.

In this atmosphere of spotty reporting on Watergate, the East Germans stand out sharply. They have repeatedly hammered on the point that Watergate exposes what they call the rotteness of the whole democratic system and American way of life. A few examples:

- The Communist Party paper Neues Deutschland on

May 5: "Watergate is an example of that kind of democracy practiced in God's own country."

- East Berlin's National Zeitung, May 18: "The Watergate scandal proves very clearly what one must think of U.S. democracy, of the so-called free decision of the voters, and the criminal methods of diverse monopolistic groups which are, of course, carried out on the backs of the working people."

- Berlin Zeitung, May 3: "It

Bloc State to Relish Watergate

is an example that nothing is too filthy for the politicians in capitalist countries for pursuing their ends."

- Junge Welt, May 1: "It is a Waterloo for the people in the U.S. and elsewhere who still believe in the honesty and democratic nature of the imperialist system."

This radically different handling of Watergate by the East Germans has aroused considerable interest among observers of the Communist world. Interpretations differ in de-

tail, but most agree that it reflects East German nervousness about Brezhnev's efforts to improve relations with the Western bloc.

Brezhnev made a hurried trip to East Berlin and Warsaw before he visited Bonn last month apparently to assure his allies he would not make any deals behind their backs. In this context, his forthcoming visit to the other superpower is cause for even greater concern among the skeptics.

The East Germans, who see themselves on the front line of the confrontation with the West, are more concerned than other East European nations about the dangers of detente.

Brezhnev eased the irascible and aging Walter Ulbricht out of the East German party leadership two years ago and replaced him with a more amenable Erich Honecker in the hopes of reducing resistance there, but the East German handling of the Water-

gate affair appears to indicate the move was not wholly successful.

In principle, the East Germans are on fairly safe ground in knocking the American way of life. That it is inconvenient just now, when Brezhnev is trying to set up a sunny atmosphere for his forthcoming visit, goes without saying.

Some observers here view this as the first open conflict of interest between the Soviet Union and East Germany since Honecker took over.