

## *Weathering the Storms: East German Engineers in Zhengzhou, 1954–1964*

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### *Abstract*

The Zhengzhou Grinding Wheel Factory was a major project undertaken by German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany) in the early years of the People's Republic of China. It was a symbol of Sino–GDR cooperation and friendship between the two fraternal countries. To help build the factory, East German engineers came to Zhengzhou in 1954 and stayed until 1964, when the 10-year-long project was finally completed. They were the last group of foreign specialists remaining in China before the Cultural Revolution, and also comprised the few Europeans who experienced the Great Leap Forward, the Great Famine, and the ideological disputes between China and the Soviet bloc countries, which greatly damaged the project and were the primary reasons for the delay of its completion. The East German specialists weathered these storms and became tools of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands to maintain state relations with China. Their daily lives were deeply influenced by the development of and changes in Sino–GDR relations. Consequently, their attitudes towards the Sino–Soviet split are very complicated.

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