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Review Article

“Farewell without Tears”: Diplomats, Dissidents, and the Demise of East Germany*

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I have lost my homeland, this gray, narrow, ugly land. This beautiful land . . . the land of my anger. (KONRAD WEISS [Eastern German filmmaker and dissident], 1990)

I

On October 2, 1990, one hour before the German Democratic Republic (GDR) ceased to exist, its first and last anti-Communist prime minister, Lothar de Maizière of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), aptly described the occasion as a “farewell without tears.” Recalling the scene in his “as told to” memoir, Helmut Kohl (also a Christian Democrat) observes that de Maizière thereby renounced any feeling of nostalgia for the East German state. Minutes later, however, de Maizière privately declined Kohl’s invitation to join the West German chancellor at the window of the Reichstag building in showing himself to the crowd awaiting re-

* Principal works referred to in this article are the following: John Borneman, *After the Wall: East Meets West in the New Berlin* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), pp. x + 258; Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe’s Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York: Random House, 1993), pp. 680; Hans-Dietrich Genscher, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Siedler, 1995), pp. 1087, *Rebuilding a House Divided: A Memoir by the Architect of Germany’s Reunification* (New York: Broadway Books, 1998), pp. 580 (translated and abridged ed. of the foregoing); Michail Gorbatschow (Mikhail Gorbachev), *Wie es war: Die deutsche Wiedervereinigung* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1999), pp. 222; Konrad Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. xx + 280; Helmut Kohl, “*Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit*,” ed. Kai Diekmann and Ralf Georg Reuth (Berlin: Propyläen, 1996), pp. 488; Charles Maier, *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. xx + 441; Dirk Philipsen, *We Were the People: Voices from East Germany’s Revolutionary Autumn of 1989* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. xiv + 418; Elizabeth Pond, *Beyond the Wall: Germany’s Road to Unification* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1993), pp. xvi + 367; Philip Zelikow and Condoleeza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. xviii + 493 (paperback ed. with a new preface). Except when annotated, page references to these books are given parenthetically in the article’s text. Unless otherwise noted, references to Genscher’s memoirs are to the English edition. For recent literature on West German foreign policy before unification, see also Noel D. Cary, “Reassessing Germany’s *Ostpolitik*. Part 1: From Détente to Refreeze,” *Central European History* 33, no. 2 (2000): 235–62, and “Reassessing Germany’s *Ostpolitik*. Part 2: From Refreeze to Reunification,” *Central European History* 33, no. 3 (2000): 369–90.

unification. It was Helmut Kohl's moment, not de Maizière's—as the latter clearly knew.

De Maizière's small but poignant act of self-effacement affords a glimpse of the roller coaster of feelings—from exhilaration to bewilderment, from jubilation and self-empowerment to the dawning suspicion of a new subordination—on which the broader East German population was riding. Kohl remarks in this preliminary memoir (written while he was still in office)¹ that other East Germans probably shared their prime minister's sudden awareness at this moment of mixed and very personal emotions. Determined, however, to savor the memory of his greatest political triumph, Kohl delves into the matter no further (pp. 480–81).

By 1998, the Eastern romance with Helmut Kohl had long since cooled. In September, federal elections ended the Kohl era and brought to power the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Green Party in a coalition led by a Social Democratic chancellor, Gerhard Schröder. Kohl's defeat was greater in magnitude in Eastern than in Western Germany.² As Eastern polls have consistently shown, this outcome did not mean that Easterners regretted reunification (which in any case has been less turbulent in almost all respects than the politics of domestic integration in the postunification Germany of the 1870s). Still, after promising Easterners “blooming landscapes” in 1990, Kohl could not quickly deliver. Nor was this shortfall the only difficulty. More important at times has been the perception of Western arrogance, incomprehension, and insufficient respect for the dignity and the experience of Eastern Germans. For Easterners seeking to vent their frustration, Kohl seemed the appropriate target.

Developments both before and after the federal election of 1998 have heightened the impression that de Maizière's assertion of a tearless farewell was premature. Already in 1994, the ex-Communist Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), heir to the former ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED), garnered 19.8 percent of the Eastern vote. By 1998, its share was 21.6 percent. That fall, the PDS entered a state government (that of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern) for the first time since unification. Twelve months later, four other state elections virtually eliminated from Eastern parliaments the smattering of former dissidents who were aligned with the Western Greens. These elections produced devastating setbacks for the SPD, which lost roughly one-third of its representation in the contested Eastern areas, fell behind

¹ Kohl is said to be preparing another memoir for publication late in 2001.

² This was true in at least four senses. (1) The differential between votes for the parties in Schröder's incoming coalition versus those in Kohl's government was greater in the East (39.2 percent vs. 30.6 percent) than in the West (49.6 percent vs. 44.1 percent). (2) The Christian Democrats' drop-off from 1994 was greater in the East (from 38.5 percent to 27.3 percent) than in the West (from 42.1 percent to 37.1 percent). (3) The SPD garnered thirteen seats beyond its proportional allotment by winning direct mandates—twelve of those extra seats in the East. (The SPD's proportional results were 35.1 percent in the East and 42.3 percent in the West.) (4) The former Communists, whose share of the vote was negligible in the West, continued to draw roughly one-fifth of the Eastern vote. See the tables in Russell J. Dalton, “A Celebration of Democracy: The 1998 Bundestag Election,” *German Politics and Society* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 4. Complete results for all parties in each federal state are available at <http://www.bayern.de/lfstad/BW98>.

the PDS for the first time in Thuringia and Saxony, and got half as many votes as the PDS in the Eastern part of Berlin.³

Yet, these developments do not necessarily demonstrate nostalgia for the old East Germany (*Ostalgie*). The fact—though not the magnitude—of the SPD's electoral losses in 1999 was normal: the dominant federal party usually suffers off-year election losses, and the SPD also lost two elections in Western states. The Eastern election dates coincided with what proved to be the trough in the SPD's poll results between 1998 and late 2000. The SPD's losses reflected exasperation with the SPD's internal wrangles over Chancellor Schröder's attempts (along with his British counterpart, Tony Blair) to update the party's image to fit a postindustrial society. Schröder had to use nearly half the year between his election and the Eastern state elections just to wrest control of his government's agenda from his own party's chairman, the populist finance minister Oskar Lafontaine. While the chancellor spoke of a "New Middle" and an end to the knee-jerk expectation of government programs for every problem, Lafontaine—himself unloved in the East because of his tepid attitude toward reunification during his run for the chancellorship in 1990—capped several months of infighting by dramatically resigning. Lafontaine ostentatiously proclaimed that his heart (presumably unlike Schröder's) was not yet up for bid on the stock exchange but continued to "beat leftward."⁴

At first paralyzed by its internal disputes, the government then moved to cut spending and to downsize certain social programs. This agenda was being implemented amid continued Eastern unemployment of around 18 percent, and just as the differential between Eastern and Western youthful unemployment reached its largest level in seven years.⁵ With a member of the traditionally antimilitarist Green party holding the post of foreign minister, the Kosovo crisis further strained the coalition's base of leftist support. Meanwhile, the SPD seemed to be caught in a scissors. On the one hand, it tried to defuse the PDS's Eastern drawing power by hinting of drawing it into additional state governments. On the other hand, these flirtations provoked some of the former dissidents who had founded the Eastern SPD in 1989, including Markus Meckel and Richard Schröder (no relation to the chancellor), to organize a campaign against collaboration. Social Democratic dues-paying membership in the Eastern states declined, and some local party organizations dissolved altogether.⁶

³ State election results are available at each state's website. For the East-West breakdown in Berlin's 1999 election, see *Der Spiegel*, no. 39 (September 25, 2000), p. 34.

⁴ Lafontaine (March 14, 1999) is quoted in *Der Spiegel*, no. 40 (October 4, 1999), p. 130. For polling trends during Schröder's chancellorship, see *Der Spiegel*, no. 42 (October 18, 1999), p. 42, and no. 33 (August 14, 2000).

⁵ See data in *The Economist* (May 27–June 2, 2000); and *Der Spiegel*, no. 34 (August 21, 2000), p. 34. *Der Spiegel*, no. 35 (August 30, 1999) expected the SPD's "orientation controversy" and budget cuts to produce "dramatic defeats, especially in the East" (pp. 22–25). After the elections, Saxon Minister President Kurt Biedenkopf (CDU) thought that the impression of governmental confusion had been more important than the cuts: *Der Spiegel*, no. 43 (October 25, 1999), p. 30.

⁶ *Der Spiegel*, no. 45 (November 2, 1998), pp. 112–15; *Der Spiegel*, no. 49 (November 30, 1998), pp. 64–65; *Der Spiegel*, no. 50 (December 7, 1998), pp. 38–41.

With both the SPD and the Greens in the federal government, oppositional voters needed another outlet. Yet, the PDS's share of each state's (and East Berlin's) vote in the fall of 1999 varied only marginally from its corresponding local share in the previous year's federal election. And though the extreme right-wing German People's Union (DVU) narrowly cleared 5 percent of the vote in Brandenburg and thereby entered the legislature, far-right parties entered no other state legislature and had no showing anywhere to compare with the DVU's 12.9 percent seventeen months earlier in Saxony-Anhalt. The biggest beneficiary of the swing of 1999 was actually the CDU. It retained its absolute majority in Saxony, added another in Thuringia, entered the formerly exclusively Social Democratic government of Brandenburg, and nearly doubled its share of the vote (in comparison with the federal election) in both parts of Berlin.

After the state elections, Eastern (and Western) politics were further complicated by revelations of secret slush funds and illegal political contributions to Kohl and his party during his long chancellorship. This huge scandal led in 2000 to the elevation of Angela Merkel to head the CDU—the first Easterner (and first woman) to chair a major cross-regional party in unified Germany. But it also revealed the arrogance in power, and the subsequent insulation from reality, of the former chancellor. Having seemingly persuaded himself that his historic international role ought to immunize him from domestic legal accountability, Kohl has combined stonewalling with elaborate rationalizations based on self-serving claims about the postunification economy. “Take a little trip out there sometime, to the [Eastern] Chemistry Triangle,” he intoned before the parliamentary committee investigating the scandal, “and you really will find blooming landscapes.”⁷ This way of drawing connections cannot have helped the Eastern reputation of either the CDU or the project of unification under the rule of law.

Pending further electoral tests in the Eastern states, the full effect of these very recent developments remains to be seen. Yet, with the CDU suffering under this cloud while the SPD and the Greens have seemed to be struggling at times in the government, the wonder is that neither the extreme right nor the PDS has advanced in Eastern polls. Indeed, with some local variations, the PDS's standing has been remarkably constant since 1994.

The PDS itself presents quite a variegated picture. It was probably natural in the rhythm of a revolution that disappointment with its fruits would lead at some point to a degree of romanticizing about the past. Nevertheless, among the PDS's often young voters (as opposed to the party's aging and diminishing membership), *Ostalgie* is limited—if by *Ostalgie* is meant the desire to return to the better days of yore. The PDS, it has been said, is the party of unification's losers.⁸ Yet, some leaders of the party have been struggling to present a different face. According to Helmut Holter, the PDS's first ministerial appointee (in Mecklenburg-Vorpom-

⁷ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, no. 149 (June 30, 2000), p. 2.

⁸ For example, Daniel F. Ziblatt, “Putting Humpty-Dumpty Back Together Again: Communism's Collapse and the Reconstruction of the East German Ex-Communist Party,” *German Politics and Society* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 1–29, esp. 20.

mern), “I have seen reunification from the beginning as a chance—for the German Left.”⁹

Beyond its unreconstructed core constituents, three factors have brought additional voters to the PDS. The first factor—only partly ideological and selectively nostalgic—is the desire to “rescue” or to “renew” the concept of socialism by separating its allegedly egalitarian social achievements (full employment, universal health care) from the undemocratic political system in which they occurred. The second factor is the party’s pose as the lone authentic champion of Eastern regional interests. The third factor is its makeover in some locales into a latter-day alternative-oriented grassroots civic movement.¹⁰ But perhaps most essential in keeping the PDS alive has been the desire of its voters to make a statement that their lives before 1989 (or the lives of parents and role models) were not for naught—and that Western disrespect for Eastern life experiences gathered under the old regime must end.¹¹

In that sense, the PDS, the heir to the party that turned all East Germans into children, is posing as the agency that can best press the claim of its grown-up children against their second infantilization under Western auspices in reunified Germany. The question is whether, in doing so, the PDS perpetuates rather than breaks the cycle of infantilization. The party has frequently seemed at war with itself over its role—so much so by April of 2000 that its ambivalently reformist leaders, Gregor Gysi and Lothar Bisky, announced their resignations. The PDS draws far fewer votes than comparable parties elsewhere in Eastern Europe. This is partly because it faces more effective (and more trusted) opposition and partly because it has reformed less. But whether or not the PDS ultimately develops into a responsible instrument of social melioration and democratic integration, voters who have recently rallied to it seem to have done so largely in the expectation or desire that it will.¹² If it does not, then its current electoral plateau may turn out to be the party’s zenith before a slow decline.

In short, although the postunification difficulties should not be understated, neither should they overshadow the magnitude of what has been achieved. The politics of resentment were surely less important in prompting the Eastern rebuff of Helmut Kohl in 1998 than the politics of accountability (perhaps together with the proposition that it was time for a change—the same proposition that decided the out-

⁹ Quoted in *Der Spiegel*, no. 46 (November 9, 1998), p. 60. For another example, see the rosy portrait of Christine Ostrowski (PDS) in *Der Spiegel*, no. 11 (March 15, 1999), pp. 50–52. A middle-aged Bundestag deputy who calls the past decade the happiest of her life, Ostrowski is said to eschew *Ostalgie* and (in her words) to find “democracy fun.” She is cast as a “winner in the *Wende*-roulette.”

¹⁰ Ziblatt; Gero Neugebauer and Richard Stöss, *Die PDS: Geschichte, Organisation, Wähler, Konkurrenten* (Opladen, 1996).

¹¹ For some examples of this theme, see *Der Spiegel*, no. 41 (October 5, 1998), p. 46; *Der Spiegel*, no. 43 (October 19, 1998), p. 52; *Der Spiegel*, no. 11 (March 15, 1999), pp. 46–47; and *Der Spiegel*, no. 40 (October 2, 2000), pp. 32–33.

¹² In a recent poll, 63 percent of Easterners (compared with 34 percent of Westerners) saw the PDS as “a normal, democratic party.” *Der Spiegel*, no. 39 (September 25, 2000), p. 32.

come in the West). And despite some recent electoral volatility, two-thirds of Eastern voters continue to find good reasons to place their trust in the two major Western parties. In material terms, more than one trillion marks of public funds have been transferred to the East, and private investment too has steadily grown. Internal emigration—formerly one-sided from East to West—was nearly balanced by 1997.¹³ Despite economic dislocations and widespread resentment of Western condescension, few Eastern Germans would prefer to turn the clock back. Throughout the decade, large majorities have told pollsters that they hold a positive view of reunification. In late 2000, *Der Spiegel* found a larger percentage of Easterners than Westerners holding this view (70 percent positive to 19 percent negative about unification in the East, vs. 65 percent positive to 21 percent negative about unification in the West).¹⁴ Even more striking, when Easterners were asked whether reunification has brought them mostly advantages, both advantages and disadvantages, or mostly disadvantages, the percentages have shifted markedly since 1990 in favor of advantages.¹⁵ This is true despite the lack of comparable improvement in Easterners' assessments of their personal economic situation.¹⁶ Apparently, Easterners continue to believe that unification has had important non-material advantages.

In light of this assessment, it is worth remembering that the reunification process itself, and not just its aftermath, was domestically contested in both German states. Like Otto von Bismarck, Helmut Kohl will probably be treated more kindly by diplomatic historians than by students of some of the more subterranean aspects of his domestic politics.¹⁷ But the decision to implement reunification by rapidly extending the Western liberal order to the East was as much a domestic as an international project, and any evaluation of that undertaking must keep in mind the relative prospects of the civic alternatives.

II

Now that Germans have again “dropped the pilot,” it is perhaps timely to sample a decade of accounts of the consummation of their union. Much debate since unification has swirled around what might be called the “terms of endearment.” Was unification a respectable (re)marriage, or a violation of one partner’s inno-

¹³ Timothy Garton Ash, “Goodbye to Bonn,” *New York Review of Books* (November 5, 1998), pp. 41–42.

¹⁴ *Der Spiegel*, no. 40 (October 2, 2000), p. 31.

¹⁵ The numbers in each of the three categories in 1990 were 23 percent, 54 percent, and 21 percent; in 2000, they were 47 percent, 36 percent, and 16 percent. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁶ On a five-point scale from very good to very bad, the percentages in 1990 were as follows: 2, 42, 40, 14, 2; in 2000, they were 4, 47, 37, 9, 3. *Ibid.*, p. 33. When Easterners were also asked in 1990 to evaluate the “idea of socialism,” 71 percent valued it “much” or “very much,” while 28 percent valued it “not much” or “not at all.” In 2000, the numbers were nearly reversed (32 percent vs. 63 percent). *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁷ For a sensible early appraisal of Kohl’s now tangled domestic legacy, see M. Anne Sa’adah, “Power in Helmut Kohl’s Republic: The Two Faces of German Democracy,” *German Politics and Society* 18, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 91–109.

cence? Should Bonn have been less insistent, the post-Communist GDR more coy? Did the latter really love her suitor, or only his outward image? Indeed, which partner really was the suitor, and which was being pressed to declare its true intentions?

This debate has much to do with freedom and manipulation. On one side of the question stand Kohl and the man who was both his partner and his rival, the longtime foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher. Supporting Kohl and Genscher are additional “insider” analysts in Bonn and Washington.¹⁸ Perhaps surprisingly, they have been joined on many aspects of this central question by the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Although Western actions in this view were certainly purposeful, they were by no means incongruent with Eastern popular aspirations—regardless of what difficulties might have come later. And those difficulties were less the result of Western actions than of the immensity of the Communist legacy. On the other side of the question stand analysts such as Gregg Kvistad,¹⁹ John Borneman, and Dirk Philipsen. Although they do not deny the importance of the Communist legacy, they insist that what took place in 1990 was a violation rather than a marriage—a coarse, self-interested, and arrogantly (or ignorantly) single-minded Western takeover.²⁰

Standing between these camps (but closer to the former than the latter), a more differentiated group of analysts finds a balance between the roles played by Eastern

¹⁸ In addition to the book by Zelikow and Rice (White House staff members of the National Security Council [NSC] under President George Bush senior), see the following: Horst Teltschik (Kohl’s security advisor), *329 Tage: Innenansichten der Einigung* (Berlin, 1991); Richard Kiessler and Frank Elbe (Genscher’s closest aide), *Ein runder Tisch mit scharfen Ecken: Der diplomatische Weg zur deutschen Einheit* (Baden-Baden, 1993); former secretary of state James A. Baker with Thomas M. DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War, and Peace, 1989–1992* (New York, 1995); Robert Hutchings (another NSC staff member), *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War: An Insider’s Account of U.S. Policy in Europe, 1989–1992* (Washington, D.C., 1997); and George Bush and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York, 1998). On German unification, the account of Bush and Scowcroft is largely based upon that of Zelikow and Rice.

¹⁹ Gregg Kvistad, “Parties and Citizens in the Western German Reunification Debate,” *German Politics and Society* 30 (Fall 1993): 34–48.

²⁰ Yet another category of works (not considered here, but consulted by Zelikow and Rice) consists of memoirs (besides Gorbachev’s) by Soviet and East German Communists. Among the more important of these memoirs are the following: Valentin Falin (Brezhnev’s ambassador to Bonn, then head of the international department of the Central Committee), *Politische Erinnerungen* (Munich, 1993); Wjatscheslaw Kotschemassow (Kochemasov, Soviet ambassador to East Berlin), *Meine letzte Mission: Fakten, Erinnerungen, Überlegungen* (Berlin, 1994); Egon Krenz with Hartmut König and Gunter Rettner, *Wenn Mauern fallen: Die friedliche Revolution—Vorgeschichte, Ablauf, Auswirkungen* (Vienna, 1990); Julij Kwizinskij (Yuli Kvitsinsky, Gorbachev’s ambassador to Bonn), *Vor dem Sturm: Erinnerungen eines Diplomaten* (Berlin, 1993); Hans Modrow, *Aufbruch und Ende* (Hamburg, 1991); Pavel Palazschenko (interpreter), *Assignment Gorbachev and Shevardnadze* (State College, Penn., 1997); Günter Schabowski, *Das Politbüro* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1990), and *Der Absturz* (Berlin, 1991); Eduard Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom* (New York, 1991); Anatoli Tschernajew (Chernyaev, Gorbachev’s closest aide and foreign policy advisor), *Die letzten Jahre einer Weltmacht: Der Kreml von Innen* (Stuttgart, 1993). See also two studies by Hannes Adomeit: “Gorbachev, German Unification and the Collapse of Empire,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 10, no. 3 (August–September 1994): 197–230, and *Imperial Overstretch: Germany in Soviet Policy from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Baden-Baden, 1998).

expectations regarding Western intervention and the nature of the intervention itself. Prominent in this camp are two senior historians of Germany, Konrad Jarausch and Charles Maier, as well as the respected journalist Elizabeth Pond. These analysts recognize some of the ways in which the Western political bulldozer may have overwhelmed the fragile political flower that was blooming in the East. However, they also emphasize a certain gap between Eastern popular decisiveness and Western hesitancy—until (but in some ways even beyond) the GDR's first free election campaign in February and March of 1990. Most categorical here is Pond. The momentum for unification, she asserts, really was coming from the East. Pressed by the influx of large numbers of Easterners with no end in sight, Chancellor Kohl and his government put unification on an ever-faster track. But rather than manipulating Eastern opinion, Kohl was usually trying feverishly to keep up with it.²¹

Not surprisingly, Kohl's memoir, emphatically titled "I Wanted Germany's Unity," suggests that the self-styled "chancellor of German unity" would sooner risk being seen as manipulative than as having been driven by events he could not guide. To be sure, Kohl insists—and Gorbachev concedes (Gorbachev, pp. 83, 88–89, 98–99, 170–71)—that prounification sentiment was not instigated among the Eastern public by Western "meddling" (Kohl, p. 171) or, as charged by Gorbachev's rival, Yegor Ligachev, "provocative action" (Kohl, p. 89). But Kohl is just as concerned to maintain that it was not imposed by default upon the West because of the pressure of uninhibited emigration. Rather, Kohl welcomed the pressure from "our compatriots" (pp. 129, 133, 134, 164, 219, 222, 247, 297) and "fellow citizens" (p. 218), "the Germans in the GDR" (p. 95): it was a weapon in the arsenal of those who "wanted German unity." A natural indication of the historic national bond, this pressure was also an expression of the connection between unification and the Easterners' aspiration for freedom. Reunification, Kohl is intent upon saying, was a *chosen* course, in East *and* West. The form it took—fast-track constitutional accession by the former GDR instead of an all-German constituent assembly—was both the solution to the problems caused by the failures and crimes of the former Communist regime and an affirmation of the historic mission of the "freest and most humane state in German history" (p. 292): the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Kohl wanted no "other Republic" but the "tried and true" one (p. 291) of the 1949 West German constitution (the Basic Law). His effort to assure that unification took this form was to him the mark not of presumptuousness but of statesmanship, wisdom, and respect for the lasting achievements of the past.

Although Kohl credits the Eastern population with initiating and propelling the events that led to German unification, he is unabashedly proud of having channeled both the Eastern and Western processes of choosing. In his memoir, he stoutly defends his controversial decision in late November of 1989 to propose a ten-point stepwise unification plan (with no provocative or potentially constraining timetable), a decision made without consulting either his coalition partners in Bonn

²¹ See also W. R. Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin: The Cold War Struggle over Germany* (New York, 1999).

(including Foreign Minister Genscher) or his Western allies. This move came three weeks after the opening of the Berlin Wall. It was timed to follow the first cries for unification at East German demonstrations and to precede the summit in Malta between Gorbachev and the new American president, George Bush. Kohl's unilateral action caused much irritation in NATO capitals as well as anger in Moscow, and Genscher dwells in his own memoirs on how he managed only with difficulty to overcome the negative consequences abroad of this seeming German *Alleingang*. But Kohl argues contrarily that, however irritating his move might have been for outsiders (and however anxiety producing for the timid at home), this was the moment when "the German Federal Chancellor" (p. 167) had to offer a "guiding direction" (p. 158) and could "not permit the initiative in the direction of German unity to be taken out of his hand" (p. 167). Kohl felt "entirely certain that our compatriots in the GDR were waiting for such a word" (pp. 163–64).

Consistent with this position, Kohl is not in the least defensive about his own or his Western party's massive participation the following winter in the first free elections in East Germany. This participation was in defiance of a ban on "guest speakers" and other interference from the West, as imposed by the main forum for dialogue between dissidents and Communists, the Round Table. Kohl unselfconsciously recounts how eagerly and assiduously the local branches of the Western CDU undertook direct local action in the East. He even finds it fitting to comment on the shot in the arm that this experience gave to a party languishing in the comparatively routine political work of the West. As Jarausch notes, all Eastern groups with Western counterparts denounced and then flouted the Round Table's ban. They justified themselves by saying that the ban was illiberal in principle; in practice, it would permit the Communist party to use its entrenched institutional power and vastly superior resources to control the instruments of persuasion during the campaign. But those Eastern dissidents who lacked connections to Western parties justifiably resented their interference.

The first task in the campaign, Kohl reports, was to find Eastern partisan partners, worrying less about purity of record than about electoral prospects. Aided by its Western counterpart, the Eastern SPD was widely perceived to have a head start. Suppressed as an independent party in 1946 (when many Eastern Social Democrats had joined in founding the soon-to-be Communist-controlled SED), the SPD was refounded by dissidents in the fall of 1989. By contrast, the Eastern CDU was still undergoing its own cleansing process in early 1990. Purged by the Soviets in 1947 and 1948, it had been until recently one of the small and tainted "bloc parties"—that is, a front for collaborators with the SED regime.

In February of 1990, Kohl prevailed upon some Western-sympathizing but (in Kohl's telling view) self-important dissident groups to drop their scruples about those whom they called the "red sox" and to join forces with the revitalized and newly anti-Communist East CDU in an electoral "Alliance for Germany." Kohl pulls no punches in summarizing the Alliance's message in the campaign: "to say to the people in the GDR, 'You must vote for the partner that Helmut Kohl needs in East Berlin in order to be able to take the correct steps on the road to German unity'" (pp. 289–90).

Campaigning hard for fast-track accession, the Alliance for Germany rolled to a stunning landslide victory on March 18. After the election, Kohl sent his close aide and national security advisor, Horst Teltschik, to help the new East German prime minister, de Maizière, write his first government policy speech.²² Later, Kohl saw to it that the GDR's new government did not backslide regarding fast-track unification and NATO membership. To him, these steps were not manipulative but constituted the difference between reacting to events and exercising leadership.

Unification in this form was thus a managed process; yet, far from being imposed upon Easterners, it meant, in Kohl's view, keeping faith with them. Kohl has only contempt for those Western Leftists who throughout the 1980s had urged accession to the so-called Gera demands made by East Germany's Communist leader, Erich Honecker. These demands included the recognition of a separate East German citizenship (which would have ended the automatic issuance of Western passports to East Germans) and the termination of the Federal registry of crimes committed by the GDR's border guards. Kohl calls the decision by some SPD-governed states to cease contributing to the registry "one of the most shameful chapters in the history of the old Federal Republic" (p. 28). He is just as caustic about the "crudeness" with which chancellor candidate Lafontaine and other Social Democrats—in marked contrast to the party's elder statesman, former chancellor Willy Brandt—"mobilized prejudices" (p. 202) and tried throughout most of the 1990 election year to "whip up" West German sentiment "against their fellow countrymen from the GDR" in an "infamous scare-campaign" that opposed unification and begrudged Easterners the costs (pp. 260–61). Kohl offers no comment, however, on his own misleading minimizing of those costs.

Although Kohl laments that even some members of his "own party" succumbed to the small-minded idea of sacrificing the historic task of national unity in the name of penny-pinching (p. 261), the SPD bears the brunt of his criticism. This "disgrace" (p. 374) was nearly matched by the "arrogance" (p. 335) shown by Western politicians from the Green party whose reaction when the GDR's voters endorsed fast-track unification on March 18 was that the Easterners had been bought off by materialism. Kohl had easily parried this thrust in 1990 as an affront to the dignity of the Easterners. "Those who sit here on the warm sofa of the affluent society," he had retorted, "should not . . . criticize the voters in the GDR who, after forty years on the shadowy side, . . . are now simply striving . . . to cross over to the sunny side of German history" (p. 335). "Freedom," adds Kohl in his memoir, "is indivisible, and . . . the right to choose one's own profession or to own property go with it." To émigrés who tried to escape "with nothing but a plastic bag in their hands, I certainly cannot impute primarily materialistic motives" (pp. 59–60).

At his historic meeting with Gorbachev in July of 1990 (where the Soviet leader eventually conceded NATO membership for a unified Germany), Kohl cited Bis-

²² Teltschik by his own and other accounts was a central figure in unification diplomacy. Revealingly, Genscher slights Teltschik in his memoirs. Teltschik is listed only six times in the index of Genscher's 1,087-page German edition, and not at all in the shorter English edition. On one occasion, Genscher vehemently attacks Teltschik without naming him (*Rebuilding*, pp. 345–46).

mark: “One cannot accomplish something oneself; one can only wait until one hears the step of God echoing through the events, and then attach oneself to His coattails—that is all” (p. 422). Kohl thus modestly associated himself not only with God but also—under the circumstances, more provocatively—with Kohl’s willful predecessor and fellow chancellor of German unification, who also said: “One cannot possibly make history, although one can always learn from it how one should lead the political life of a great people in accordance with their development and their historical destiny.”²³ If it was true that either the German mark would come to the Easterners or they would come to it, the same thing might have proved somewhat less inescapably true of NATO membership, or of the Basic Law. This was where historical contingencies especially came in. Helmut Kohl cannot claim simply to have “made” this history. What he does claim, however, is already a great deal: the trend of events was humane; he felt himself (and his chief international partner, the elder President Bush) in tune with its exigencies; he glimpsed the chance to shape its contingencies; and he used that chance to the hilt—to “lead . . . in accordance with . . . historical destiny.” For better or for worse, one is hard-pressed to deny him these claims.

III

In a much longer, career-encompassing memoir, former foreign minister Genscher takes greater pains than Kohl does to insist that he virtually masterminded the crafting of an external context that facilitated and fulfilled popular aspirations and yet also that he manipulated nobody. Like Kohl, Genscher declares that he was emphatically committed to unification throughout his career even when others were not. Also like Kohl, he maintains that unification “started from below” (p. 303) and realized an ideal that “was more firmly embedded in many East Germans than it was in a number of West German citizens” (p. 292). But Genscher goes beyond Kohl in insisting that West German leaders, and particularly Hans-Dietrich Genscher, scrupulously avoided constraining the choices of East Germans. Genscher’s task was not so much one of willfully channeling the process as one of painstakingly removing the surrounding impediments.

This difference by no means inclines Genscher to minimize his own role. To the contrary: professing to have been at all times prescient, Genscher claims to have sensed or foreseen all, prepared (i.e., facilitated) everything, but foreclosed nothing—except foreign fears (astutely anticipated or countered) and potentially debilitating premonitions. He is naturally proud to have been feted in his East German hometown of Halle (he was an early émigré) as the “architect of German unity” (p. 350), a phrase repeated in the subtitle of the English translation of his memoirs. Genscher—the *Ossi* who chose to be a *Wessi*—styles himself as both the empowered personification of Eastern popular aspirations and the clever Western diplomat who (as he blandly states) was adept at “resolving issues that seem

²³ Quoted in Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany*, vol. 1, *The Period of Unification, 1815–1871* (Princeton, N.J., 1990), p. 2.

to be unsolvable" (p. 342). Although unification was the Easterners' triumph, it was thereby also doubly his own.

Like Kohl, Genscher is eager to claim that his own party—in his case, the small but pivotal Free Democratic Party (FDP)—was the true party of national unity. No other party, he notes proudly, had so consistently sported such a preponderance of Easterners among its top leaders in the old Federal Republic, including (besides himself) Erich Mende (from Upper Silesia), Wolfgang Döring (Leipzig), and Wolfgang Mischnick (Dresden). "Unification," Genscher bluntly declares, "was not a priority" historically for the CDU and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU)—"nor for the SPD, for that matter" (p. 24). The Union parties (CDU and CSU), he asserts, had been bereft of creative ideas about the German question under the longtime postwar chancellor, Konrad Adenauer. They had subsequently resisted the new Eastern policy (*Ostpolitik*) of constructive engagement, or (as phrased by the Social Democrat Egon Bahr) "change through rapprochement," that had been pursued by the coalition of SPD and FDP under Chancellors Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt between 1969 and 1982 (with Genscher, since 1974, as foreign minister). Then, after the SPD's leftward swing caused the FDP to change coalition partners in 1982, the Kohl-Genscher government simply continued the ideas of the Schmidt-Genscher years. The one constant, according to Genscher, was the championing of national unity by the FDP.

Contrary both to Kohl and to Adenauer's leading scholarly biographer, Hans-Peter Schwarz, Genscher thinks that Adenauer was "not particularly troubled" (*hat . . . nicht sonderlich darunter gelitten*) by his failure to reconcile Western integration with German unity—as his "helpless reaction to the building of the Wall" showed. Genscher "constantly asked" himself as a young man if Adenauer even wanted unity. Adenauer's post-Wall suggestion of a ten-year moratorium on the German question in return for humanitarian improvements was an idea that Genscher found "dangerous"; it could have made the partition of Germany permanent.²⁴

²⁴ Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 91–93. On Adenauer's various ideas after 1956 for an interim German settlement, see Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Adenauer: Der Aufstieg: 1876–1952* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 690–710; *Adenauer: Der Staatsmann: 1952–1967* (Stuttgart, 1991), pp. 161–68, 228–34, 419, 425–37, 478–88, 497–98, 559–60, 750, 767, 773, 843–46, 850–53, 894–95; *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Bd. 3, *Die Ära Adenauer 1957–1963* (Stuttgart, 1983), pp. 378–82; Rudolf Morsey and Konrad Repgen, eds., *Adenauer Studien*, Bd. 3, *Untersuchungen und Dokumente zur Ostpolitik und Biographie* (Mainz, 1974); and Hans Globke, "Überlegungen und Planungen in der Ostpolitik Adenauers," in *Konrad Adenauer und seine Zeit 1*, ed. Dieter Blumenwitz, Klaus Gotto, Hans Maier, Konrad Repgen, Hans-Peter Schwarz (Stuttgart, 1976), pp. 665–72. Schwarz's vivid two-volume biography demonstrates the untenability of the frequent domestic charge that Adenauer was never serious about reunification. See Schwarz, *Adenauer: Der Aufstieg*, esp. pp. 690–710, 854, 887; Schwarz, *Adenauer: Der Staatsmann*, passim; also Wolfram Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy* (New Haven, Conn. 1989), chap. 5; and Garton Ash, pp. 51–52, 212. The chancellor never denied, however, that his government did not view reunification as (in Defense Minister Franz Josef Strauss's words) "the highest goal at any price." "Better to be free in one part of Germany," Strauss summarized in his memoirs, "than to be under a totalitarian system again in one unified Germany." Franz Josef Strauss, *Die Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1989), p. 146 (paperback ed.). Ad-

Genscher also had little use for what he deemed to be hard-line anti-Communist posturing by his frequent tormentor, the colorful longtime chairman of the CSU, Franz Josef Strauss. Amid a raucous debate in the Bundestag in March of 1958 over nuclear weapons and defense policy, the forty-three-year-old Strauss, then defense minister, stated that German freedom took precedence over German unity and speculated flamboyantly that, even if the Federal Republic were to offer both to leave NATO (as the SPD advocated) and to accept a separate “Austrian status” for the GDR, the Soviets would find a way to reject the “offer.” By scoffing that the Soviets were so unreasonable as to reject his trial balloon regarding the status of East Germany even if it were linked to the (for him and Adenauer) unthinkable regarding West Germany, Strauss covered his tracks. But his premise—that the priority of freedom over unity might be compatible with a separate GDR—was in keeping with Adenauer’s covert dangling to the Soviets of an “Austrian solution” for the GDR (with West Germany staying in NATO) during these very days.²⁵

In an article, Genscher, then thirty-one, retorted that “giving up German unity as the goal of our policy is unacceptable.” Genscher pointed out that any solution that accepted partition, even in return for internal individual liberties, still entailed a lack of free choice, since the East Germans, if asked, would immediately choose Western-oriented unification. Eight years later, Strauss criticized Genscher for seeking to remove the self-imposed constraints on Bonn’s Eastern diplomacy by transforming the West German claim to be the sole legitimate representative of all Germans (*Alleinvertretungsanspruch*) from a “legal doctrine” to a merely “political claim.” Genscher’s juxtaposition of these two incidents in his memoirs (German ed., pp. 94–95) seems intended to suggest that his later policy of tempered engagement with the Communist regimes demonstrated greater fealty to German unity than Strauss’s posturing.

Like the Social Democratic chancellors of his era,²⁶ Genscher was (and remains) convinced that only in a framework of eased relations between the blocs could progress on the German question have followed. Adenauer’s hard-line “policy of strength,” in Genscher’s view, only “cemented the political status quo”; both in

enauer is similarly quoted in Schwarz, *Adenauer: Der Aufstieg*, p. 841. Adenauer and Strauss always insisted that the Soviet notes of 1952, which offered unification on condition of neutrality, were not (as their critics charged) a “lost opportunity” to achieve a sovereign reunified Germany but a maneuver to destroy Franco-German rapprochement and leave Germany ultimately supine: Schwarz, *Adenauer: Der Aufstieg*, p. 910; Strauss, p. 204. “The lost opportunity legend,” Strauss later recalled having stated in 1958, “is the stab-in-the-back legend of today” (Strauss, p. 166). In Adenauer’s view, bypassing the chance to attach Germany to the West would have been the true “lost opportunity” of 1952: Konrad Adenauer, *Erinnerungen 1953–1955* (Stuttgart, 1966), p. 88.

²⁵ Strauss, *Erinnerungen*, pp. 202–4; Schwarz, *Adenauer: Der Staatsmann*, pp. 406–7, 419, 425–37; see also Mark Cioc, *Pax Atomica: The Nuclear Defense Debate in West Germany during the Adenauer Era* (New York, 1988), pp. 46–50, 62–65; and Jens Hacker, *Deutsche Irrtümer: Schönfärber und Helfershelfer der SED-Diktatur im Westen*, expanded ed. (Frankfurt, 1994), pp. 232–36.

²⁶ See Helmut Schmidt, *Die Deutschen und ihre Nachbarn: Menschen und Mächte II* (Berlin, 1992), pp. 17–18, 94–95, 539–40 (paperback ed.); and Willy Brandt, *My Life in Politics* (New York, 1992), pp. 370–74.

conception and in practice, it “gradually revealed itself to be weak” (German ed., p. 93). The “utter helplessness” of the West during the Eastern-bloc suppressions of 1953 (East Germany), 1956 (Hungary), 1961 (the Berlin Wall), and 1968 (Czechoslovakia) demonstrated the point. “We simply could not,” writes Genscher, “allow such helplessness to recur” (English ed., pp. 68–69). Moreover, West German leadership in crafting “a policy that allowed for peaceful transformations . . . increased the country’s clout” (pp. 68–69) until it became the “most important partner” of *both* superpowers (pp. 256, 263, 266). From this position, and (in Genscher’s telling) quite according to plan, West Germany could facilitate the changes of 1989–90 in an orderly manner.

“Cooperation,” Genscher concludes, “did not stabilize the socialist systems, but rather—on the contrary—created the framework conditions under which they could peacefully change themselves.” Thus, “all efforts to improve the German-German relationship were correct” and “should not be retrospectively discredited” (German ed., pp. 489–90). According to Genscher, then, “change through rapprochement” really happened. Gorbachev agrees (Gorbachev, pp. 49–52).

Kohl is somewhat more equivocal. He is remarkably anxious in his memoir to deny that he was ever an opponent of the “policy of relaxation,” even before he became chancellor. He asserts that the rise in the numbers of Easterners who were allowed to visit the West (partly in response to new government-guaranteed bank loans under Kohl) undermined Honecker’s insistence that partition was permanent. But he is also intent upon crediting the Union parties with seeing to it that Brandt’s *Ostpolitik*, whose momentum in German-German relations might have rendered the nation’s partition permanent, remained only a *modus vivendi* (pp. 19–22, 30–31).²⁷

As Timothy Garton Ash has shown, the truth about the *Ostpolitik* is even more complex. Rather than encouraging change, rapprochement bolstered the hubris with which the Eastern regimes resisted change. There is an enormous difference between saying (with Genscher) that the *Ostpolitik*—consistent with the expectations of its framers—succeeded because it encouraged a willingness to change, and saying that the *Ostpolitik*—contrary to its framers’ expectations—encouraged or permitted a debilitating avoidance of change until the change could only be all-embracing. Genscher’s assertion that cooperation did not stabilize socialism is made without any discussion as to whether *détente* may have prolonged internal repression or lent the regimes a drawn-out economic reprieve. His argument is based instead on further assertions (no doubt more justified) about the eventual

²⁷ For the relative positions taken by Kohl and others in his party before they came to power, see above all Clay Clemens, *Reluctant Realists: The West German CDU/CSU and West German Ostpolitik* (Durham, N.C., 1989); also Michael Lemke, *CDU/CSU und Vertragspolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in den Jahren 1969–1975: Kontinuität und Wandel christdemokratischer Ost- und Deutschlandpolitik* (Saarbrücken-Scheidt, 1992); Strauss, *Erinnerungen*, esp. pp. 157, 490–552, 564; Schmidt, *Deutschen*, pp. 91, 546, 552; and Cary, “Reassessing, Part 1,” pp. 256–62. As A. James McAdams (among others) has pointed out, relations between the two Germanies actually improved after Kohl replaced Schmidt—but not (in McAdams’ view) to the relative power advantage of the FRG at the time. See McAdams, “Inter-German Detente: A New Balance,” *Foreign Affairs* 65 (Fall 1986): 136–53.

usefulness of his accumulated diplomatic capital with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and the importance of the stipulations of the Helsinki Final Act (1975) and the resultant “CSCE process” (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe) as a framework for unification. This way of assigning emphases is neither illegitimate nor surprising for a diplomat. But one need not accept its one-sided implications.

In particular, Genscher seems unwilling to face the issue of whether his manner of cultivating contacts and relationships with the Eastern regimes might have contributed to the popular demoralization felt especially in East Germany before the emergence of Gorbachev in the later 1980s. Genscher is considerably less fawning than Brandt and Schmidt when describing Eastern leaders in his memoirs,²⁸ but he does honor his East German counterpart Oskar Fischer as “sincere” in “his efforts to help solve humanitarian problems” (p. 102, see also p. 347). This statement again begs one of the main questions explored by Garton Ash: given the sheer length of time that the *Ostpolitik* was pursued, did familiarity with one’s Eastern interlocutors not breed a certain tendency to exculpate? “It is quite difficult to work with people over many years,” writes Garton Ash (p. 213), “and still regard them as criminals. For if they are criminals, what am I doing shaking their hand and paying them compliments and hard currency?” Genscher is surely correct that the diplomatic atmosphere in which the changes of 1989–90 occurred benefited from the years of détente. But that is different from insisting that “all efforts” to improve German-German relations were necessarily correct, or implying that such efforts did not cause any collateral damage worth mentioning, or asserting that any other policy would have been categorically incorrect.

Indeed, not rapprochement but resistance to Soviet pressure was the immediate stimulant to the changes in the bloc. This Genscher does not deny, although he tempers its significance. Believing that détente had to be built on Western strength, he switched coalition partners in 1982, when the SPD showed signs of rejecting its own defense policy. But Genscher’s calibrations in East-West relations nearly always seemed to be based on determining the dose of firmness to add to the cup of conciliation, not the other way around.

According to Genscher (German ed., p. 452), Schmidt’s sudden partisanship on budgetary issues in September of 1982, which precipitated the breakup of the coalition of SPD and FDP, was a vain effort by the chancellor to mollify his own party so that it would continue to swallow NATO’s so-called two-track resolution. NATO had adopted the resolution in 1979 in response to Schmidt’s warnings about Soviet deployment of a new class of multiply targetable intermediate-range nuclear

²⁸ See especially Brandt’s obsequious defense of the Polish Communist architect of martial law, General Wojciech Jaruzelski (“a patriot to his fingertips” who was “not in the least servile to his mighty neighbor to the east”), in Brandt, pp. 439–40. Schmidt stated that he “was fond” of Brezhnev and “felt equally attached” to the intractable foreign minister, Andrei Gromyko: Helmut Schmidt, *Men and Powers* (New York, 1989), p. 56. Despite East German violations of the Helsinki accords, Schmidt painted Honecker as “a reliable contractual partner” who just needed to be told about human rights abuses so that he could respond: Schmidt, *Deutschen*, pp. 47–48. On the “misunderstood” Jaruzelski (p. 569) and his predecessor, Schmidt’s “genuine personal . . . friend” (p. 537) Edward Gierek, see Schmidt, *Deutschen*, pp. 537, 543, 552, 567–69, 573, 585.

missiles (the SS-20s). The two-track resolution called for comparable Western deployments (“track two”) if negotiations (“track one”) did not lead to a Soviet build-down by 1983. According to both Schmidt and Genscher, Western warnings that the SS-20 deployments threatened the continuation of détente failed to impress the pre-Gorbachev Soviet leaders because they anticipated that Western public opinion would block Western deployments. To Schmidt, Soviet actions were obtuse: the leaders seemed not to comprehend the consequences of their actions. Gorbachev implies much the same thing. By contrast, Genscher holds that the SS-20s were “clearly designed to rupture” transatlantic security ties.²⁹

“It became more and more clear to me,” Genscher reports, “that NATO’s two-track resolution could no longer be realized with the SPD” (German ed., p. 456). He was surely correct. In the fall of 1983, with the SPD out of power, 386 of the 400 delegates to the party’s convention in Cologne followed the urgings of Brandt and Bahr rather than Schmidt and voted to oppose deployment of the Western missiles. Four years later, with the missiles deployed, Gorbachev agreed to the breakthrough treaty on intermediate nuclear forces (INF) that ended the post-détente chill and began the period of unwinding the Cold War. Genscher cites Gorbachev himself regarding the centrality of the missile issue for the subsequent changes in Europe.³⁰ Nevertheless, Genscher continues to insist that in the long run only détente, not confrontation, could have facilitated peaceful transformation (which was the only kind, in his view, that the Soviets would ever have allowed).

In the last analysis, of course, no one can know what would have happened had the West not pursued détente. Lacking the incentive of Western economic aid, Communist regimes might well have responded to heightened economic problems with even greater repression—beginning perhaps in Poland, where Soviet intervention might have seemed as logical in the 1970s as it had elsewhere in Eastern Europe in 1968, 1961, 1956, and 1953. It is harder to say whether such a course would have speeded or slowed the ultimate collapse than it is to say that the collapse would have been correspondingly more violent.

In the event, unification unfolded not from one or the other of Bonn’s two postwar approaches to foreign policy but from a specific aspect of the sequential interaction between them.³¹ Whereas Adenauer hoped that Western-embedded German strength would persuade the Soviets to choose the benefits that might flow from honoring German aspirations, Brandt calculated that a long-term German policy of Eastern reassurance would commit the Soviet bloc to a process of reform. Adenauer’s premise proved truer than Brandt’s did: reform finally came from external pressure and internal crisis, not from external reassurance. But as Gorbachev seems to confirm, Bonn’s twenty years (and Genscher’s sixteen years) of steady

²⁹ Schmidt, *Men and Powers*, pp. 72–77, 92–95; Gorbachev, *Wie es war*, p. 59; Genscher, *Rebuilding*, pp. 162–66, quotation on p. 154.

³⁰ Genscher, *Rebuilding*, pp. 164–65, 188–89. See also Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York, 1995), pp. 443–44; and Jeffrey Herf, *War by Other Means: Soviet Power, West German Resistance, and the Battle of the Euromissiles* (New York, 1991). Contrast Brandt’s discounting of the significance of the missiles: Brandt, pp. 323, 371.

³¹ For a fuller discussion, see Cary, “Reassessing, Part 1,” and “Reassessing, Part 2.”

confidence building did encourage the Soviets to stay the course once the unexpected repercussions of reform became manifest. In this sense, the *Ostpolitik* contributed to the relatively nonviolent way in which Communism collapsed.

IV

In contrast to Genscher, analysts such as Dirk Philipsen insist that what happened to East Germans was very much a manipulation and an unwanted or (at best) dimly understood Western takeover. When the Eastern demonstrations began, the slogan was, "We are the people." Unification, many observers reported, seemed hardly on people's minds; even after the Wall fell, what people at first said they wanted was internal freedom and reform.³² Then, spurred on by Kohl's sensational ten-point plan and his subsequent calculated decision (in service of an ever more ambitious agenda) not to succor the reform-Communist prime minister Hans Modrow, the topic seemed to shift. Somehow, "We are the people" became "We are one people." Manipulating Eastern expectations with conditional promises of Western largesse, Kohl, the master politician, allegedly stole the people's revolution. Reconfiguring events, he turned a push for freedom into precipitant unification. In the end, contends Philipsen (p. 6), "We are the people" had become "We were the people."

In a more radical analysis, Gregg Kvistad writes that "the Bonn regime" contrived to take over not just the GDR's first free election campaign but also the image of the East German citizen as revolutionary hero. By "*choosing* the Federal Republic and all of its existing institutions" over not only the GDR but also any new kind of regime, this Eastern citizen-hero provided the Western "Parteienstaat" with a populist source of "external legitimation" that it had "previously lacked." To neutralize any resulting populist threat to itself, the "Parteienstaat" then immediately consigned the revolutionary hero to "history, to a regime that no longer existed."³³

There is truth in the notion of Western psychological expropriation *ex post facto* of the aura of revolution (although one need not be quite so cynical about the motives). East Germany's bloodless revolution, Genscher states in a far from untypical formulation (pp. 291, 327), was the gift of the Eastern part of the nation to the German history of freedom. Kohl writes (and spoke) similarly (pp. 96, 218, 335). The revolution, notes Pond (pp. ix, 1, 201), was variously seen as the redemption for 1949, 1933, 1918–19, and 1848. It was "the answer to the bad conscience of the West Germans, who had never seized democracy for themselves, but had been handed it as a gift by their Western conquerors and occupiers" (p. 202).

³² See, e.g., the lively eyewitness account by Robert Darnton, *Berlin Journal, 1989–1990* (New York, 1991).

³³ Kvistad (n. 19 above), pp. 46, 47. Kvistad's use of the term "Parteienstaat" (state based on parties) is presumably meant to underscore a parallel between the dominance of elitist partisan bureaucracies in both German regimes: the Western multiparty state ("Parteienstaat") as well as the Eastern single-party state ("Parteistaat").

Kvistad goes too far, however, when he faults Genscher for his “astonishing claim” in early 1990 that East Germans thought in terms of the Western parties and had aligned themselves accordingly. “Within three months of the fall of the Wall,” Kvistad asks rhetorically, “could East Germans really ‘think’ in the idiom of western German party politics?” The East German dissident Rainer Eppelmann would seem to have the answer: thanks to West German television, “most GDR citizens” had long ago “joined the Federal Republic in the evening and thought and lived in categories of SPD, CDU, and FDP.” Of course, there is a difference between vicariously orienting oneself according to these alignments and fully understanding the practical repercussions. Kvistad is certainly correct that Western leaders and the public showed “a profound incapacity and/or unwillingness to understand the political vulnerability of the East German citizenry.” But one would be rather more hard pressed to demonstrate that Easterners would not have favored what Kvistad calls “the transfer of the FRG’s political history, institutions, and processes to the GDR” were it not for Western presumption and manipulation.³⁴

Such a demonstration seems to be what Dirk Philipsen and John Borneman are after. Philipsen’s book is based on interviews with part of the initial leadership stratum of the revolution. By contrast, anthropologist Borneman, in an early post-unification account (1991), provides narratives, not interviews, about the meaning of the experience of November 9 (the night the Wall fell) for a handful of everyday Eastern individuals who were allegedly selected according to the premise that, by examining the “exceptional,” one reveals the range. Evidently, the range in the GDR was bounded by unquestioned systemic allegiance and dysfunctional marginality—two extremes that both resulted in craving the security of the Wall. Although there is value in illustrating that a certain measure of conscious ambivalence was marginally present already amid the euphoria of November 9, generalization from such a (non)sample is extremely hazardous (and hackneyed authorial comments about capitalism’s woes do not help). Some (occasionally paradoxical) traits depicted here have since become almost stereotypical parts of the postunification *Ossi* image: celebration combined with anxiety and disappointment; contextual helplessness conjoined with the internalized habit of fatalistic self-reliance; psychocultural disorientation; and bifurcated homelessness combined with an often nonpolitical sense of loss. To question how these traits have been understood would be to break the mold, and perhaps it is time to do so. Nevertheless, Borneman’s book has its place, if too much is not claimed for it. As snapshots and conveniently selected life stories, Borneman’s narratives are suggestive studies of individual alienation as two worlds crossed in space and time.

More revealing are the interviews carried out by Philipsen. In contrast to what he sees as historiographical neglect of the grassroots council movement of 1918–19 and the liberation or “antifa” committees of 1945, Philipsen aims to “restore” for “the historical record” the “core beliefs and independent activism” behind the “revolutionary transformation” (p. 7). To this end, he conducted 106 interviews, nineteen of which are excerpted and discussed in his book, in search of “those East Germans who actually ‘made history’” (p. 23). Included are excerpts with

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 40–41; Eppelmann quoted in *Die Zeit* (March 2, 1990), as cited in Maier, p. 210.

ten leading dissidents, three reform Communists (including Hans Modrow and André Brie), and six grassroots working-class leaders (four of them sometime party members).

Philipsen's interviews (on which more below) are intelligently conducted and unusually revealing. In his commentary, however, Philipsen seems curiously inattentive to the dissonance between his own emphasis on finding the genuine democratic actors and his assertive lack of interest in what he calls the "silent majority" (p. 23)—a particularly unfortunate phrase in light of the extraordinary level of participation in the election rallies of early 1990, as well as the huge percentage of the adult population that was involved in the Berlin and Leipzig demonstrations the previous autumn (not to mention the hundreds of thousands of émigrés). Focusing on those who, by virtue of having "played an important role," could explain the "expanded democratic potential" of 1989 (pp. 13, 19), Philipsen explores what he calls the "missed . . . opportunity" (p. 280) for greater "democracy" primarily with dissident elites or ex-Communists who, contrary to the democratic majority in the March 1990 elections, "wanted to hold on to an independent GDR" (p. 12). As primary source material, the interviews are invaluable. But when Philipsen joins some of his protagonists in their view that a "dramatic shrinkage" of the democratic horizon followed the events of 1989 due to "post-revolutionary" Western manipulation (p. 6), he has in effect assumed what needs to be proved.

Democratic shrinkage and Western manipulation may well be simply the wrong conceptual categories. As Pond notes, the preponderance of evidence suggests that the Western parties' "takeover" of the March campaign actually heartened most Eastern voters. They knew and trusted the leading Western politicians more than their own, and Kohl's and Brandt's appearances at Eastern rallies reassured the voters that the leaders of the new Eastern parties were not Communist "pawns" (p. 198). Some East German dissidents and some West German intellectuals joined the Communist reformers in being appalled by this Western intervention; the Eastern dissident Bärbel Bohley remarked that the voters were "behaving like sheep" while "fondly imagining" they were participating in their "first free elections" (quoted on p. 200). But Pond rather mercilessly puts down this put-down by recalling Berthold Brecht's remark of 1953 that the GDR's leaders (and apparently, now, also the dissidents) "needed to elect a new people." According to the West German writer Hans Martin Enzensberger (quoted on p. 206), ordinary East Germans, unlike his fellow intellectuals, were displaying "insight and common sense in an extremely tense and potentially dangerous situation." Pond's wry but matter-of-fact conclusion (p. 199) is, "East Germans fretted that they might get left behind in the unfamiliar Western free-for-all, but they calculated that the one thing worse than being exploited by West Germany would be not being exploited by West Germany."

V

In tracing the diplomacy of German unification, Helmut Kohl's conversational memoir offers no major revelations. Yet, the suspense and excitement that it conveys are qualities that Hans-Dietrich Genscher, by insisting on his own prescience,

must eschew in his book. Apart from a few descriptions of domestic politics (particularly about the change of government in 1982), there is remarkably little additional substance in the German edition, even though, at 1087 pages, it is twice as long as the later English edition. Nor does length impede Genscher from glossing over and obscuring some matters.

A case in point is the backing and filling on the Western side in early 1990 about the future status of the former GDR in the NATO alliance. Both Genscher and (briefly) American Secretary of State James Baker offered the Soviets assurances that NATO would not extend its “forces” and “jurisdiction” eastward.³⁵ The Soviet failure to seize upon these assurances allowed the West to get a better deal later, as Soviet leverage deteriorated.

Genscher says nothing in his book about his reported early flirtation with the idea of dual alliance membership for the united Germany, and he is not entirely consistent regarding his adherence to the supposedly cherished principle of avoiding special security arrangements that would have had the effect of limiting German sovereignty. Significantly in this respect, his blurring of statements in which he seemed to imply that the territory of the former GDR might be neutralized and even demilitarized shrouds the degree of his earlier pliancy from all but the already fully informed.³⁶ These are unfortunate faults in a book one of whose strengths lies in depicting the way in which Shevardnadze openly explored different ideas with Genscher in working toward a solution to a problem (NATO membership) that threatened the entire project of German unity. As Gorbachev again makes clear in his own book (pp. 120, 133, 186), his hope was that a more deliberate timetable toward German reunification would permit the simultaneous replacement or reorganization of the alliance system via a new security structure based on CSCE. Ironically, Genscher is so intent upon dodging the charge that he was less than staunch in resisting this idea that he renders it harder for the historian to decipher the extent to which Genscher’s willingness to engage Shevardnadze in exploratory thinking may have helped move the Soviets toward the final outcome.³⁷

Considerably more informative and scrupulously documented is the account of the diplomacy of German unification by two former staff members of the National Security Council in the elder Bush’s White House, Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice. Using classified as well as published sources in German, English, and Russian, Zelikow and Rice reverse the lamenting tone of Philipsen even as they transpose the accents placed by Pond. Accepting the notion that Kohl (and to a lesser degree Genscher), in close partnership with Bush, guided events and shaped East German public opinion, they indeed find cause here for celebration.

Far from viewing Bonn’s fast-track takeover of the GDR and continued membership in NATO as inevitable or even likely from the standpoint of late 1989,

³⁵ See Baker (n. 18 above), pp. 233–34; Gorbachev, *Wie es war*; pp. 102 and (regarding an assurance also from Kohl) 107; and esp. Zelikow and Rice, pp. 174–254.

³⁶ Compare, e.g., Genscher, *Rebuilding*, p. 337, with Zelikow and Rice, pp. 175, 184, 223.

³⁷ As late as March 3, Genscher stated: “the alliances will increasingly become elements of cooperative security structures in which they can ultimately be absorbed.” Quoted in Zelikow and Rice, p. 225.

Zelikow and Rice identify a series of parameters whose impact under less sure-handed leaders might have led to a different and (in their estimation) universally less fortunate outcome. Had Kohl and Bush not tamed wrongheaded resistance from London and Paris, had they not stepped up the pace (overruling Genscher)³⁸ when resistance to reunification within Gorbachev's circle became apparent, then Gorbachev might have managed to regain the public initiative. With more time, he might have reined in his hard-liners, then crafted a proposal bold enough to capitalize on popular aspirations in both Germanys in order to procure a timely quid pro quo for the Soviets. Possibilities floated within Soviet diplomatic circles included unifying Germany before changing the existing four-power arrangements or resolving the alliance issues, or permitting German membership in NATO if Germany withdrew from NATO's joint command structure (like France) and either banned foreign troops or prohibited nuclear weapons (foreign and domestic) on its territory. But amid the rush of events, all such proposals became rearguard actions, and Soviet policy making fell into disarray. Skillfully combining pressure with mollification, Western statesmen thus turned Gorbachev's hard-liners into a paralyzing asset even as those Western statesmen tried to reinforce the Soviet leader's domestic position via limited financial aid and reforms in NATO's defense posture.

According to Zelikow and Rice, Kohl "turn[ed] away from the spirit of *Ostpolitik*" (p. 66) in the late summer of 1989, after Hungary's hesitation about permitting East Germans to cross its newly opened border with Austria led thousands of would-be émigrés to seek asylum in Bonn's Eastern-bloc embassies. Whereas "*Ostpolitik* dictated that [the FRG] should not seek momentary advantage at the expense of lasting good relations" with East Berlin (p. 65), Bonn, forsaking the usual reassurances, began to press the GDR for immediate and far-reaching reforms. As the emigration crisis worsened and other citizens took to the streets to mock the regime ("We are the people/And we are staying here"), Kohl returned to Adenauer's policy of "change through strength." On November 8 (one day before the Wall fell), Kohl demanded "thoroughgoing" political reform, including abandonment of the Communist "power monopoly," independent parties, and free elections. "With these words," the authors write, "Kohl applied maximum pressure on the GDR, making it clear that Bonn—not Berlin and not Moscow—would decide when political reform in the East was sufficient to warrant the FRG's largesse." Citing Adenauer's call "for a free and united Germany in a free and united Europe," Kohl concluded: "We have less reason than ever to be resigned to the long-term division of Germany into two states" (p. 95).

Had Kohl not consistently pressed his advantage, had he not rebuffed Modrow's belated attempts to enter into confederation negotiations, had he continued to act on Brandt's old premises of "change through rapprochement" and not destabilizing or isolating the GDR, then incomplete unification, limited sovereignty, a ban or

³⁸ See Zelikow and Rice, esp. pp. 240–56; the new preface to their 1997 edition, where they characterize Genscher's memoirs as "short on candor"; and Philip Zelikow's friendly but somewhat exasperated review of the memoirs in "After the Wall: Bonn's Longtime Foreign Minister Writes of the Struggle of Reunification," *The New York Times* (March 1, 1998), sec. 7, p. 33.

restrictions on alliance membership, or a lingering Russian military presence in Germany were, the authors hold, likely outcomes. Thus, abandoning the *Ostpolitik* was crucial to what they deem to be the desirable form that unification ultimately took. Unification to them was a Western achievement that was beneficial to the East German people and that won their passionate endorsement. Furthermore, it was managed in a manner consistent with the interests of all Europeans—including the Russians, who benefited from having a satisfied nonnuclear Germany constrained by its ties to the United States.

If Kohl's application of pressure is to be considered the abandonment of the *Ostpolitik*, then Brandt—but not Bahr or the SPD's subsequent chancellor candidate, Lafontaine—can also be said to have abandoned it at this time. In fairness, however, it should be noted that Kohl's policy shift was facilitated by the effects of the *Ostpolitik* itself. Among those effects was the very existence of West German embassies in the Eastern bloc. Another was the nature of Bonn's financial leverage over such a state as Hungary, whose desire to please Bonn resulted in its fateful September decision to cease rebuffing East Germans without exit visas. By adverting the Eastern regimes to Western credits, détente provided alternative means to satisfy Adenauer's premise that the Eastern states' own interests would eventually dispose them to opt for West rather than East Germany. As Garton Ash notes (and as Henry Kissinger, if not Bahr, had intended), détente's carrots had always been potential sticks.

It is nonetheless the case that the sticks had to be wielded in order to have their effect—and that Brandt now joined Kohl in his willingness to wield them. This came as a surprise to Gorbachev, who told Honecker's protégé and successor, Egon Krenz, that Brandt's socialist beliefs would cause him to oppose the disappearance of the GDR (Zelikow and Rice, p. 88). It may not be too harsh to say that one difference before November of 1989 between the SPD's *Ostpolitik* and Kohl's lay in the degree to which the so-called stability commandment (the idea that change in Eastern Europe could come only by reassuring the Communist leaders) was thought to mean just staying Bonn's hand, or also that of the Eastern dissidents and populations.³⁹ In March of 1978, Chancellor Schmidt had warned that “a serious domestic crisis of the GDR, on which some people seemingly speculate, particularly in the . . . [CDU/CSU], could not bring the state unity of our nation one centimeter closer.” In September of 1989, Bahr went further: “If our demands amount to taking away their state from the people over there, then they will certainly not allow it.” Bahr thus confused what had been an assessment of the regime (domestic popular pressure would lead to repression and therefore should be avoided) with an assessment of the people (outside pressure would lead to domestic popular rejection and should therefore be avoided). By contrast, Kohl's security advisor, Horst Teltschik, responded: “But the population of the GDR can of course themselves put this state into question. If one day they really can . . . [and they] decide for an Anschluss, . . . then we cannot be against it.”⁴⁰ Of course, the key

³⁹ For the phrase “stability commandment,” see Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name*, pp. 180, 524–25 (expanding on a usage by Eberhard Schulz).

⁴⁰ Quoted by Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name*, pp. 181, 204, 536.

phrase was, “If one day they really can.” Once it was possible to believe that popular pressure might not be contained by brutality, the stability commandment, in both its forms, became obsolete. Despite Brandt’s earlier rather brusque behavior toward Eastern-bloc dissidents,⁴¹ this point ultimately proved clear to him, if not to Bahr and others in his party.

If one accepts Zelikow and Rice’s view that the situation regarding unification and (even more) its architecture was subsequently quite open, then proposals for exploring alternate ways to construct post–Cold War European relations, such as were made in 1990 by some Social Democrats in both German states, deserve examination. Zelikow and Rice only briefly sketch these options, although more particulars emerge in their endnotes. Some elements are reminiscent of the hodge-podge of fragmentary ideas discussed on the Soviet side.

Senior Social Democratic leaders—Brandt, Hans-Jochen Vogel, Karsten Voigt, Horst Ehmke, and others—contemplated a qualified form of all-German membership in NATO for an interim period, during which new all-European security structures would be developed. On February 3, 1990, West Berlin’s mayor, Walter Momper, proposed limiting NATO’s interim jurisdiction only to Western Germany, at the same time permitting as many Soviet troops to remain in the ex-GDR as there were Western troops in the old Federal Republic (for how long is not clear) (pp. 177, 432). On March 7, Ehmke told Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger that the interim period of united German membership in NATO might be no more than one to two years, after which NATO would dissolve (pp. 225, 436). This was one day after Gorbachev publicly reiterated that any role in NATO for a reunified Germany was “absolutely out of the question” (quoted on p. 225).

Already on February 19, a joint statement of the SPD-East and SPD-West had proclaimed that “a future united Germany should belong neither to NATO nor to the Warsaw Pact” (quoted on pp. 202–3). Following up, the SPD on March 9 formally called for replacing both alliances with transitional security arrangements leading to new structures based on CSCE (p. 229). Under this scheme, the four occupying powers would have retained their rights in unified Germany until the new security structures were operative, and unification would have proceeded slowly, via a new constitutional convention—an option offered by Article 146 of

⁴¹ Like many other practitioners of détente (including Kissinger, Schmidt, Genscher, and occasionally Helmut Kohl), Brandt tended to snub the dissidents for fear of aggravating his relations with the leaders of the Eastern regimes. But this approach, if ever appropriate, was no longer so in the circumstances of the 1980s. As foreign minister during the Prague Spring, Brandt recalled in his post-Wall memoirs, his concern was “not [to] lay any further burdens” on Communist governments; he “could not help” Eastern dissidents who had “expected something of the Western alliance which it had not been created to provide” (Brandt [n. 26 above], pp. 209, 207). This cold logic contrasts strangely with Brandt’s almost impassioned defense of General Jaruzelski, sympathy for Edward Gierak, and contempt for Adam Michnik later in the book (Brandt, pp. 439–40). Garton Ash is witheringly critical of Brandt’s irritated refusal while out of office to meet with Solidarity leader Lech Walesa during a trip to Poland in 1985. Although Brandt continued to argue that quiet diplomacy was more effective than public gestures, this course was by now “entirely at odds with the real requirements” of Eastern European dissident movements, “for which the public symbolic politics were infinitely more important than any small, individual humanitarian concessions.” Garton Ash, *In Europe’s Name*, p. 306, quotation on p. 577.

the Basic Law. The dissident-dominated East German Round Table had already begun to discuss ideas for slow unification accompanied by a new constitution that guaranteed social services, sexual and gender rights, direct democracy, and employment. On March 14, future chancellor Gerhard Schröder, a member of the Western SPD's executive committee, seemed to respond favorably by outlining some ideas for overhauling the Basic Law.⁴²

Even after Eastern voters endorsed fast-track accession by voting for Kohl's Alliance for Germany on March 18, the comparatively moderate views of Brandt and others on unity and NATO were eclipsed within the SPD by the more radical formulations of Bahr, Lafontaine, and (to de Maizière's chagrin) Markus Meckel, the Social Democratic foreign minister in East Germany's broad new coalition government. On March 20, "Fortschritt '90," a Social Democratic working group including Bahr and chaired by chancellor candidate Lafontaine, released a twelve-point security platform. This document envisaged linking German unification to a new alliance-free European security system under which Germany would be cleared of all nuclear weapons. As Zelikow and Rice point out (p. 439), the intent of this platform was to provoke or to compel a complete American withdrawal from Germany.

In June, Meckel, several of whose close aides came from the West German peace movement, again proposed the rapid construction of a new all-European security system, one component of which would be a neutral zone in central Europe. All nuclear weapons and all foreign troops were to be removed from united Germany (pp. 290, 298, 343, 469, 471). Meeting with Bush and Baker on June 11, de Maizière distanced himself from this view. But Meckel persisted in it even as Gorbachev was moving to accept that postunification Germany would be a member of NATO.

Might the less radical among the Social Democratic ideas eventually have permitted the inclusion of post-Communist Russia in a more effective or visionary security architecture for post-Cold War Europe? The matter would seem to turn on the long-term utility of dismantling the most stable and most democratic component of Europe's security architecture, replacing an alliance and an operational organization with hopes and promises, at the supreme moment of uncertainty. At the very least, the anachronisms implicit in the question encumber an affirmative reply. First, the Social Democratic proposals neither aimed toward nor foresaw any rapid and definitive change in the power, ideological status, or existence of the Soviet Union, any more than the proposals for including united Germany in NATO did. Second, one cannot know whether events would even have led to the collapse of Communist dictatorship and the breakup of the Soviet Union without the additional impetus supplied by the manner in which the German question was resolved.⁴³ Third, as long as the historic Soviet Union remained an imposing in-

⁴² Maier, pp. 181, 199, and Jarausch, p. 131 (Round Table); Zelikow and Rice, p. 437 (Schröder). Despite the outcome of the East German elections on March 18, the soon-to-be-dissolved Round Table continued to draft its proposed new constitution even as de Maizière's new government prepared to make good on its promise of rapid reunification by constitutional accession.

⁴³ On the other hand, Gorbachev insists that had the Soviet Union not dissolved, NATO would

ternational force and the still formidable hard-line elements of its Communist Party continued to have the significant prospect of returning to political ascendancy, the lack of structural clarity in the Social Democrats' proposals and the leisurely attitude about the time horizon were luxuries more fitting for a party of opposition than of government.

Zelikow and Rice are surely correct that the alternatives to unification-within-NATO were muddled and would have either prolonged instability or allowed the Soviets time to reconstruct a more assertive foreign policy in central Europe. Whereas Philipsen thinks that a longer period of instability in the GDR might have created more "space" for new and worthwhile experiments with domestic "democratic engagement," such "space" depended upon a continued unassertive or unusually cooperative Soviet Union. With the possibility alive that 1989 might still have become 1848, it seems hard to fault Kohl and Bush for preserving existing security structures even while they acted on the assumption that the window of democratic opportunity in Eastern Europe might not be open long.

VI

Zelikow and Rice's account is not meant to be a book about grassroots change. Still, it has a thesis in this regard. "Leaders," they insist (p. 119), "can shape opinion. They can provide a focal point for confused or uncertain public views by taking a stand." By mid-November of 1989, Kohl "was convinced that if the East Germans thought that unity was really possible, not just a mirage, they would rally to this standard" (p. 112). With his subsequent ten-point plan, Kohl "started to bridge the vast gulf between the abstract desire for unification and operational accomplishment of the goal. The East Germans could see that the idea not only was on the table but was a real possibility, something they could demand. Kohl's speech gave the emerging East German public mood a focal point—and a leader. . . . His program clearly went far beyond Genscher's public and diplomatic approach, which had strongly downplayed the significance of unification as an operational objective" (p. 121).

In assigning such a catalytic role to Kohl, Zelikow and Rice differ from Maier, Pond, Jarausch, and also Gorbachev. Whereas the latter authors place the initiative firmly in the streets of East Germany, Zelikow and Rice assert that Kohl in effect focused and rallied East German opinion from above. They are surely correct that "Kohl and his advisers were trying to shape East German opinion, not just respond to it." Zelikow and Rice also seem right to reject the view that Kohl was "trying to slow . . . down" the East German "clamor for unification" to a "manageable pace" (p. 408). Still, there is a difference between trying to slow it down and trying to keep up with it.

Both Bush and Kohl understood that speed put useful pressure on the Soviets. But they also understood where the pressure for unification was coming from—

not have expanded beyond Germany, and the CSCE framework, including both intact superpowers, might have taken priority. He seems not to doubt that an intact Soviet Union would have kept to the path of democratic reform. Gorbachev, *Wie es war*, pp. 104, 152, 164, 186–87.

and that it could backfire if it was not properly channeled. On December 12, 1989, Kohl told Baker that he feared that frustrating the aspiration for unification could lead to Eastern violence. Without his ten-point plan, he went on, the Soviets might have tried to seize the initiative by reviving or modifying Stalin's offer of 1952 for unification linked to neutrality (p. 144). In February, Kohl noted that the East German parliament might move unilaterally to force the issue of unification. Bush's national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft, wrote to the president that Germany "was like a pressure cooker"; Kohl and the Americans would have to work hard "to keep the lid from blowing off in the months ahead" (pp. 177–78). While they may have had little desire to try to turn down the heat, they had every interest in how it was applied. But the heat, in any case, was coming from below.

In that context, although Zelikow and Rice superbly analyze the diplomacy surrounding unification, there is something troubling about the seeming ease with which they can tell their story with such little reference to the streets of Berlin and Leipzig. Their assertion that a popular revolution could so easily and consensually become transformed into diplomatic history suggests that they overstate the extent to which Western leaders could have shaped East German opinion if it were not already moving in their direction.

It is strange to find the same overstatement in "bottom-up" accounts such as Philipsen's that argue that Western manipulation turned 1989 into another of those "missed opportunities"—this time, for a new, autonomous, and genuinely participatory democracy—that seem such a staple of German historiography. For despite Philipsen's best efforts, many of those he interviewed seem determined to tell him that "the people" wanted unification (and Western-style parliamentary liberalism) as soon as it became a realistic option. The reason they dared not seek it earlier was because it was contextually inconceivable rather than because they had not yet been manipulated by Western politicians. In other words, opening the Wall did not so much restrict as shift the range of options, allowing unification to come into view. Almost as soon as it did, it was embraced. To several interviewees, treating the people's choice as undemocratic manipulation that ought to have been forestalled (as Bohley and other leaders of the dissident-sponsored initiative New Forum seemed to do) showed a condescending view of what democracy means.

Philipsen's interviews confirm the importance of Western publicity for the dissidents, who insist, contrary to Brandt's and Schmidt's claims, that only overt pressure, not quiet diplomacy, worked. Also poignantly elucidated is the long-standing impatience of the activists with the émigrés, whose form of protest the activists found demoralizing. Yet, even as emigration siphoned off some of the discontented, it fed the internal change from bitter resignation to indignant exasperation that eventually produced the revolution.⁴⁴ "After having lived right next to this Wall for so long," one activist reports, "you developed this overwhelming desire just to walk right through it." One night, without warning, the activist's boyfriend impulsively tried; he was arrested, jailed, and deported (p. 187). A pastor

⁴⁴ Of course, as Gorbachev rightly points out, another crucial factor was the heightened popular confidence in Soviet restraint. *Ibid.*, p. 83.

adds (p. 218), “Everyone knew somebody who had fled, and so everyone had to confront him or herself once again with the question, ‘What am I still doing here?’” In this atmosphere, the East German government’s decision under pressure in the early fall of 1989 to permit emigration for the asylum seekers in Bonn’s Czech embassy if the prospective émigrés first returned to the GDR produced dramatic scenes of support for the émigrés as their trains returned from Prague and then departed for the West. Amid these scenes, Honecker’s statement that “we are not going to shed a tear for these people” had approximately the effect of “let them eat cake.” “We were simply outraged,” a worker reports; this “impertinent” statement was “just outrageous; I can’t tell you how we felt” (p. 122). A pastor corroborates, “I could have crushed my television set” (p. 218).

Above all, these interviews demonstrate again the absolute centrality of the Wall. The sense of humiliation and loss of dignity it embodied is an overriding theme among activists and ordinary people alike, and righting this wrong far outstrips any other aspiration—including material motives or the commitment to any particular vision of the political future. The strong terms in which this theme is universally expressed speak for themselves: pastor Rainer Eppelmann’s summary (p. 63) of the topics that youths brought up at his blues masses (“hopelessness, feeling incarcerated, fear”); activist Ludwig Melhorn’s indignant equation (pp. 78–79) of the regime’s policy of German-German “demarcation” (*Abgrenzung*) with “imprisonment” and “being walled in”; even longtime party member Werner Bramke’s statement (p. 106) that the year 1961 (when the Wall went up) “represented an outstandingly negative experience for me.” “I always noticed,” recounts New Forum’s Ingrid Köppe, “that it got very quiet” on Berlin’s commuter trains whenever they traveled along the Wall; “people suddenly interrupted their conversations and just stared at the Wall. And after the Wall had passed, they began to talk again” (p. 189).

In that context, as Philipsen seems to know and yet repeatedly seems to devalue, the desire for unification emerges in his interviews not as a separate issue but as an expression of a fundamental human right, the cry of those outraged by the denial of their dignity. If this outlook seemed to some dissidents to confuse two separate issues, most East Germans did not see it that way. The title of Melhorn’s dissident journal (“Breaking Open”) (p. 79), his reference in 1986 to “the scandal of Germany’s separation” (p. 78), and his self-described migration from “living with the division” in the sixties to “overcoming the division” in the eighties (p. 83) might not have seemed to Melhorn to refer to unification, but for most East Germans who saw in Western liberalism a dignified civic identity there was nothing confused about identifying with the FRG.⁴⁵

Indeed, only by recognizing that unification was neither externally compelled

⁴⁵ In further double entendres, the dissident group Initiative for Peace and Human Rights published the mimeographed paper “Grenzfall” (Fall of the border, or Limiting case), and a forerunner of Democracy Now called itself “End to Demarcation (*Abgrenzung*) in Theory and Practice.” Maier, p. 172. As Eppelmann tells Philipsen (in Philipsen, p. 244), East Germany was not Greenland, and “the political structure in the minds of the vast majority of GDR citizens . . . was exactly the same as in the Federal Republic.”

nor just facile economic escapism can the sense of disillusionment that has followed be fully dignified. Although the economy certainly mattered, dignity, for many, was the underlying (and related) issue. For some, the modest earlier achievements of GDR materialism, together with its safety-net claims, may actually have been solace at times for swallowing one's dignity. By the downturn of the late 1980s, even that solace (such as it was) was being lost. As a group of workers tell Philipsen, Western trips, when allowed, produced a "shock" because Western abundance, by *outripping* what people had permitted themselves to believe about the televised West, augmented their feelings of official mendacity and humiliation. For these workers, the real issue was "arbitrariness," lack of trust, being lied to, being expected to accept the indignities until "we just felt too stupid carrying on" (pp. 123–26). Most East Germans in late 1989 and early 1990 saw reunification not as contradicting this issue's priority but as promoting it. By the same token, voting for Western parties was perceived not as an abdication but as an affirmation. It is because Easterners believed these things that their later disappointment with Western chauvinism was all the greater.

VII

Warning against the dueling discourses of heroic liberation-through-reunification versus an "aborted revolution" (p. 198) that succumbed to an authoritarian Western-capitalist takeover, Konrad Jarausch goes "beyond the simplifications of celebration or catastrophe" (p. 7) to suggest that there were three consecutive authentic revolutions, each with "different actors and agendas" (p. 202). First, dissidents led the securing of civil freedoms. Second, the broader Eastern population (which he too calls the "silent majority") advanced its own agenda of national unification, largely in order "to join the social market economy of the West" (p. 202). In the elections of March 1990, this Eastern majority "passed the initiative" to the initially "quite unprepared" government in Bonn (p. 200). Third, "inspired by the need for internal reconciliation," Bonn shaped an equally revolutionary social and institutional "transformation from above that tried to Westernize the East" (p. 202).

However useful this schema, care must be taken lest it obscure as much as it illuminates. Charles Maier is less persuaded that the three stages were so distinct. Maier's superb discussion of the Communist regime's economic problems does not divert him from emphasizing the importance of civil issues to the broader public. And, as Jarausch himself notes (p. 106), more than half of those who participated in the overwhelmingly prounification demonstrations of February were veterans of at least ten previous demonstrations. Not some anonymous or silent majority but "the protesters who had filled the streets . . . in October," Maier contends, themselves provided the chants and the votes for unification (p. 213). Unification did not come (as in 1871) "at the cost of liberalism" (p. 165), which it "consolidat[ed]" (p. 119), or even at the cost of "democratic self-determination," which it "advance[d]" (p. 193). Moreover, it is Maier who most explicitly articulates another crucial point: in encompassing the values of solidarity, reunion, and

a better life, unification should not be seen as a “moral decline or coarsening of aspirations” (p. 195).

Maier movingly evokes the degrading culture of infantilization that pervaded, propped up, and eventually wore down the GDR. The SED dictatorship developed an elaborate nexus of misplaced faith, denial, intimidation, and complicity—an “ambiance of collaboration” (p. 5) that ran so deep that some of its participants seemed no longer aware of “how deeply complicit they had been” (p. 47). The private realm in the GDR was infiltrated and transformed into another avenue of social control.⁴⁶ For intellectuals, license to publish was dependent upon entering into a partnership of censorship and self-abasement with bureaucratic functionaries posing as mentors, facilitators, and tutors. In a more general fashion, liberal rights were replaced by the regime’s coercive bestowal of privileges, including rationed rewards from the West, upon those who entered its network of duplicity, subservience, and cowering clientelism. East German society took on an “amnesiac” quality; “moral connections” were “anesthetized” (p. 32). In extreme cases, the morally debased became oblivious to their own cynicism. One prominent intellectual likened his alternating dialogues with his friends and the secret police to the meaningless switching of TV channels (p. 47).

As Maier points out, the cultural and social forces that rocked political comity and transformed individual identities in the Western world of the late 1960s and beyond—consumerism, mass media, environmentalism, sectoral shifts in the economy, and the prioritizing of the sphere of leisure over that of the workplace—could not be mediated in the repressive East German society bound dogmatically to a simplistic concept of class. The denial of the principle of a private sphere of personal and spontaneous expression crippled any attempt to respond to those who were attracted to the youthful anti-punch-card perspective. The counterpart to Western exuberance thus became a combination of soulless mimicry (officially sponsored rock bands), safety-valve vicariousness (access to West German TV), the “niche society” of “Biedermeier collectivism” (p. 29), and the further growth of Eastern sullenness.

The economic side of these problems lay especially in the painful but necessary global phenomenon of restructuring and industrial downsizing. This process was induced in the 1970s by a variety of factors, including not only the energy crisis, the exigencies of environmental cleanup, and the impact of new technologies but also the normal need for a readjustment following the overheated economy of the first two postwar decades. Whereas Western societies found the will to take the necessary steps, Eastern states avoided doing so, largely out of fear of the consequences for unpopular regimes that ruled sullen and humiliated populations, and relied instead on Western loans and imports to put off the moment of reckoning.

⁴⁶ To his credit, Maier is interested in describing the phenomenon, not in undifferentiated or wholesale condemnation of the citizens who were implicated in it. Avoiding smugness or complacency, he warns of parallel sociocultural trends in the West but points out the saving grace of pluralistic liberalism: Because the “undermining of [the] public and private spheres” is decentralized, competitive, and unofficial (rather than policed), its corrosive effects, although noteworthy, have so far been relatively constricted. Maier, p. 49.

Because the Eastern regimes tried to secure a crucial margin of popular legitimization by reference to the egalitarian and full-employment promises of socialism, they could not rationalize their economic practices. It is ironic that the dictatorships were more intimidated by popular disapprobation than were the democracies, and the planned economies were less rational in their workings than the market economies.

Far from restructuring their economies, the Eastern regimes tried to bribe their populations with ever more unaffordable consumer goods even while they engaged, sometimes competitively, in ruinous efforts to stem the slip in technological positions. Stymied by their own consumer sector's shoddy production, they resorted to Western imports, which they financed by taking on ever more debt, since they could not do so through exports. Each country sought payment from its similarly hapless Eastern partners in scarce convertible currency that it could spend in the West. Since each country cherished the most lucrative economic sectors, the results were cloned rather than integrated economies. Investment in high technology and internal calls for patience in the name of delayed gratification competed with consumerist schemes and showy building projects. Much high-technology investment was at any rate a hopeless misallocation of resources, in light of the inability of the command model to catch up with the moving target presented by the technological and marketing innovations in the West. By 1989, an East German 256-kilobyte memory chip (already outmoded) cost thirty times as much as a Western one. Even with imported Western equipment, the GDR produced less than one five-hundredth as many such chips as Austria. Eastern industry in effect was building value-subtracted products; an East German Walkman, for example, cost more in partially imported component parts than complete imported units. Its goods salable only within a closed and artificial system, the Eastern economy nonetheless could not survive without external supplies and subsidization (Western "loans"). Stuck on the horns of this dilemma, it spiraled into collapse.

As both Jarausch and Maier lucidly explain, the Western bailout of 1990 took the form of a currency union that, by significantly overvaluing the East German mark, exacerbated the economic difficulties of German reunification. Although Eastern migration gave Kohl greater leverage than Modrow (who "had a state to lose"), the migration also put pressure on Kohl, who was "rushing to stay ahead of an economic and political momentum that might otherwise overwhelm [his] control of events" (Maier, pp. 233, 234). This factor, combined with the prevailing public opinion in both Germanys that Eastern sacrifices and exertions should be respected, produced irresistible pressure to overvalue the *Ostmark*. Thus, in contrast to the monetary replacements of 1924 and 1948, the new currency union's exchange rates protected Eastern savers and pensioners rather than confirming "the significant amputation of real monetary assets" that Eastern policies had "squandered" (p. 240). This approach was tantamount to burdening the future (and the young) to subsidize the past (and the old). In effect, Eastern purchasing power in the West was subsidized, causing uncompetitive Eastern firms to lose their markets at the same time that they faced higher interest charges for the credit they sorely needed. The push by Western trade unions for wage parity in the East further

exacerbated the problems (and suggests that Social Democratic management of economic reunification would not have been more enlightened). All of these factors cost Eastern workers their jobs.

What would have happened had the Eastern economies restructured earlier? No one can say, but Maier does point to the pre-1968 attempts, even in Ulbricht's East Germany, to find another model of socialist development. He concludes that different economic policies—decentralized management, even within a nonprivatized system—might have changed things. Yet, Maier reveals no clear path to economic change within a socialist model. As he himself notes, the “logic” of creating economic incentives by decentralizing management “was inherently expansive.” This logic, he avers, would soon have led to the freeing of prices; further reforms must then have followed. In short, the momentum of reforms would have caused them to exceed their own boundaries, until they “eventually unleashed forces for pluralism” (pp. 88–89). This is in fact what happened in 1989. But it did not then mean a “third way.” What it did mean was the end of socialism.

Could things have been different in 1968? Maier seems to think so. “The use of force . . . to halt the reformist trajectory after 1968,” he states, “had momentous consequences” (p. 91). In this reading, the Eastern bloc's ultimate economic anguish was due not to the premises of socialism, but to a delay in facing the need to make economic and social adjustments. The “decade of delay,” Maier claims, “cost the nomenklatura their system” (p. 105). Later Eastern leaders tried and failed to telescope the West's two decades of structural change into five years (p. 302).

“Actual outcomes,” Maier insists, “do not prove might-have-beens impossible,” but “demonstrate only that they were not tried or became difficult to stabilize.” Thus, the counterfactual possibility of a “third way” cannot be dismissed simply on the basis that no “third-way” regime materialized; rather, “substantive grounds [must] be adduced for asserting its infeasibility.” Maier offers one such ground, for 1989: “If the Soviet Union was casting the GDR loose, and it had to parachute into the capitalist world economy, it would have to play by capitalist rules” (p. 396). That is a hard-headed economic judgment. But it leaves the door open regarding 1968 by begging the question of whether reforms at that point could still have been distinguished from “parachuting.”

Maier's own point about “expansive” logic would seem to cast doubt here. If Thatcher-Reaganomics, for all its human costs, was the painful medicine later taken in the West, it is difficult to imagine how an even more top-heavy system could have been effectively reformed at an even earlier point in the East—even if the will, the conditions, and the foresight had been there, which they were not. The opportunity that was lost in 1968 would seem to have been the opportunity not to fix socialism but to make a more successful transition to capitalism.⁴⁷

In the last analysis, however, politics, not economics, was the prime component of Marxist-Leninist decision making anyway (as must ironically be the case in a command economy). Thus, the deeper question would seem to be what might have

⁴⁷ Gorbachev unwittingly seems to imply something like this point himself. Had Honecker introduced reforms earlier, he writes, reunification (not socialist reform) would have proceeded less painfully. Gorbachev, *Wie es war*, p. 61.

impelled Communists to anticipate the need to stop acting like Communists (and yet still to have been Communists?) before the evidence was in that such a step was no longer a choice but an imperative. This takes us away from the realm of economics and back to that of how to reestablish the civil society that Communists had made it their business to destroy. And that, in the end, was what the Prague Spring was really about.

By 1968, writes Milan Kundera, “those young, intelligent radicals” who had once built Czech Communism had come to have “the strange feeling of having sent something into the world, a deed of their own making, which had taken on a life of its own, lost all resemblance to the original idea, and totally ignored the originators of the idea. So those young, intellectual radicals started shouting to their deed, calling it back, scolding it, chasing it, hunting it down.”⁴⁸ What they were hunting down, however, was in its essence not economic but civic. Western liberalism’s economic adaptability (however imperfect) was a function of its civic pluralism. It constituted a systemic difference with Communism, not merely a superior strategy. But if Communism was a civic mistake, could it really be fixed, even in 1968? Or did it not just have to be replaced? Was not the whole project of reform Communism a contradiction in terms, no matter what year it was undertaken? And if so, where does that leave those who rejected Communism but still hoped for a “third way,” even beyond the waning days of the fall of 1989?

The trouble with envisioning a “third way” never really lay in envisioning some variant of a mixed economy (for otherwise, much of Western Europe would already exemplify the “third way”). Despite the vast differences between dissidents and reform Communists, the trouble again concerned how pluralism was to be reconciled with the guiding position (official or unofficial) of a privileged semiprivate institution (be it the Communist party or the inner circle of a former dissident group) that dominates the public function of delimiting, regulating, or otherwise deciding and presiding over the moral (and thereby ideological) foundations of the pluralism. If policed, such an arrangement contradicted itself; if not policed or otherwise codified, it was ineffectual as a formula for government rather than opposition. The former problem plagued all types of reform Communism; the latter problem plagued all groups of the ilk of New Forum.

In Poland as in Czechoslovakia, the failure of the Prague Spring was an object lesson: no salvation was to be found within the old socialist paradigm. As Ludwig Melhorn notes, however, the existence of a rival Germany compelled pre-1989 East German dissent, in order to exist at all, to stay “within a left paradigm” (Philipsen, p. 87). But just as the Wall created a GDR opposition committed to “improving socialism,” its fall, by changing the sense of what was possible, dashed the hopes of the type of opposition entity it had created. Those who felt cheated out of forty years of their lives did not wish to risk another political experiment; nor did most wish to resegment themselves via the party system. “We live only once,” the demonstrators’ placards stated; “therefore yes to German unity” (Jar-

⁴⁸ Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, trans. M. H. Heim (New York, 1980), p. 9.

ausch, p. 87). What Easterners wanted, they saw, or thought they saw, in front of them. Some simply wanted to be *Wessis*. More wanted to share, as who they were, in a universalized notion of Western well-being and dignity.

VIII

It is “inaccurate,” claims Elizabeth Pond, to speak of “a sobering of euphoria” in East Germany after 1989, because, “apart from the very personal emotion of November 9, . . . there had been no national euphoria to begin with.” Rather, there had been the desire for personal dignity, together with “a sober, utilitarian yearning to hitch onto the Western prosperity and freedom to travel” (p. 199). In the early 1980s, Bonn’s first envoy to East Berlin, the Social Democrat Günter Gaus, had popularized the contention in the West that private lives were somehow warmer in the “niche society” of the GDR. A decade later, pastor Richard Schröder of the Eastern SPD vehemently rejected any such sentimentalization. Whereas direct experience was the measure for judging another person’s character in the West, wrote Schröder, one never knew whether one’s best friend was an informer in the East. Those leftists who demeaned East Germans as German-mark nationalists who voted on the basis of access to bananas seemed to Schröder to be showing contempt for the legitimate aspirations of the common man whom they claimed abstractly to champion.⁴⁹

“If [the Easterners] choose what they always wanted,” the poet Thomas Rosenlöcher jeered in 1990, “they find themselves, the West in the East” (quoted by Jarausch, p. 125). The statement is true, and false. At any rate, it should be shorn of its cynical edge. The revelation that led to the outcome of March 1990 was as genuine as the later discovery that there was loss involved in finding oneself. Easterners found that Western values came to them as part of a package deal, embedded in a somewhat alien social and cultural context. They also found that they were simply outnumbered—in each established party, as well as overall. (The exception, of course, was the PDS, which then tried to use this difference to profile itself.) Easterners were not so much colonized as they were immigrants in their own land. Their condition was characterized not by the loss of sovereignty but by the exercise of volition under circumstances that laced the action with ambivalence.

For these reasons, although the constitutional arena is probably where unification has gone best, a certain kind of Eastern civic dignity has remained elusive. Despite a basic appreciation for the extension eastward of the Western model, the sense of having exchanged one authority for another, though overstated, persists. If the people of the ex-GDR do not mourn “their” former republic, many do remain somewhat bewildered by the way things have gone in their new one. The result,

⁴⁹ Günter Gaus, *Wo Deutschland liegt. Eine Ortsbestimmung* (Hamburg, 1983); see also Gaus, *Wendewut* (Hamburg, 1990); Pond, pp. 206–8. The Eastern dissident Wolfgang Templin also condemned Western Social Democrats for having “wanted to trivialize the GDR, with its paltry offerings, . . . as basically a niche society or a leisure society.” By obfuscating the malicious nature of the regime and discouraging Eastern resistance before 1989, they had “essentially reinforced” Easterners’ “political immaturity and dependence.” Quoted in Maier, p. 30.

as Maier observes, is that some East Germans since unification continue to show “what even sympathetic West Germans have described as a dismaying sense of inferiority: the feeling they need to be colonized” (p. xiv).

Yet even this disposition, Maier insists, does not belie his “one major argument”: “the East Germans, when they came to act collectively, had a decisive impact on their own history” (p. xiii). “No matter how hesitant at first, and how filled with doubts later,” East German agency, “at each critical juncture,” either “impelled” or “allowed” the decisive next step. By defiantly “managing to claim public space,” the protesters and the émigrés “provoked a crisis of governance and set in motion the greater powers around them” (p. xiv). Those powers in turn acted within a framework whose contours were being shaped by the immediacy of the popular presence. Maier’s is a story of contingency, not inevitability; but the choices were made as much in urban spaces as in privileged and counterprivileged discourse, traditional corridors of power, or diplomatic conference rooms.

Perhaps it is consciousness of this fact that has kept up, amid the resignation, a sometimes defiant Eastern pride. As much as some Westerners might like to borrow it, Eastern civic pride is the only German kind that was won in the streets. This has been a mixed blessing, fostering admiration as well as envy, feeding resentments on both sides, yet fending off even deeper despair.

Easterners are aware that their infantilization is not yet over. What is over, however, is its pervasive enforcement. Instead of the West redeeming the East, New Forum’s Bärbel Bohley prophesied in 1990, the Eastern rot would infect the West. This prophecy has proved to be, as Maier states, a “pungent exaggeration” (p. 289). He appropriately ends his book by quoting not Bohley in 1990, but the East German pastor in charge of “working through” the secret Stasi files, Joachim Gauck, in 1995 (p. 337):

I would like us to be an adult nation and to become an even more adult one. I see the fact that we can endure conflicts about the past, that we did not ordain any rapid peace from above, as a sign that the nation has become more adult. It needs no quick [closing of the books]. It can take controversy. It has become more democratic. . . . We East Germans need time . . . I would plead in our enlarged Germany: give us time . . . Five years beyond unification still hasn’t given us time enough, still hasn’t provided the occasion to close the books. . . . Out of the controversy will emerge the leave taking from what has burdened us.

“We wanted justice,” Bohley once flippantly stated, “and we got the *Rechtsstaat*.” By contrast, Gauck simply and eloquently affirmed: “I yearned many, many years for the *Rechtsstaat*” (pp. 316–17).

It is a familiar kind of elitist lament about liberal democracy—but not particularly affordable for those who have been denied democracy—that “the people” never seem to understand what it is that they “should” want. In the name of something purer, more direct, and allegedly more humane, popular majorities are reprimanded for opting for parliamentary liberalism instead of seeking a “third way.” Philipsen is correct to counter those who, refusing to label 1989 a revolution (since it was nonviolent and nonpurging), refer to it only as a “*Wende*” (“turn”). Yet, he

seems to devalue the probability that the minimally violent, nonmillenarian course of the 1989 revolution owed much to the fact that the alternative to the ancien régime did not need to be imagined or invented, but was being modeled—however imperfectly (like all human institutions)—by the West.⁵⁰

Western pride ought not to mean Western swagger; Communists have no monopoly on hubris. There is perhaps no better example of that fact today than the once so powerful Helmut Kohl. But Kohl's disgrace, unlike Honecker's, need not lay low the system of values he purported to believe in. Liberal pluralism, its institutions, and the rule of law can survive Helmut Kohl, and hold him to account. Thus, it may be (with Zelikow and Rice) that what Philipsen laments should actually be celebrated.

⁵⁰ Gauck was recently asked when one could conclude that the investigations into people's *Stasi* pasts had gone on long enough. He again invoked the *Rechtsstaat* by replying that there is a law about that too; it expires in 2006. Had it not been for unification and the concomitant setting in of liberal legal practice, Gauck suggested, the post-Communist reckoning would have been far more draconian. Interview in *Der Spiegel*, no. 31 (July 31, 2000), pp. 38–40. Responding to the idea that the PDS continues to exist because of the investigations, the historian Heinrich August Winkler invokes a historical parallel: nonengagement with the GDR past, he says, would have led “sooner or later to a 1968 from the right.” *Der Spiegel*, no. 40 (October 2, 2000), p. 89.