

Uniting Germany

Actions and Reactions

For Leija, Tim, and Kai, in remembrance of our travels in Germany

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- 13 Cf. Arnold, *Die ersten hundert Tage des Hans Modrow*, 1990, *passim*, and Thaysen, *Der Runde Tisch*, 1990, *passim*.
- 14 Cf. FAZ, SZ, *Die Welt* and *Der Tagesspiegel*, 10–13, 16 Jan. 1990; *Welt am Sonntag*, 14 Jan; FR 18 Jan. 1990; Glaessner, *The Unification Process in Germany*, 1992, pp. 60–61; Thaysen, 1990, pp. 163–72; Arnold, 1990, *passim*.
- 15 German television, 15 Jan. 1990; FAZ, SZ, *Die Welt* and *Der Tagesspiegel*, 16, 24, 29 Jan. 1990.
- 16 FR, 29 Jan. 1990.
- 17 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 103–4.
- 18 See, e.g., *Rheinische Merkur/Crist und Welt*, 22 Dec. 1989.
- 19 Thatcher, in the *Wall Street Journal*, 26 Jan. 1990.
- 20 Teltschick, 1991, p. 116.
- 21 *The Economist*, 27 Jan. 1990, pp. 29–34.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 *Neues Deutschland*, 22 Jan. 1989.
- 24 See, e.g., FAZ, *Neues Deutschland*, SZ and *Die Welt*, 30, 31 Jan. 1990; *Der Spiegel*, 29 Jan. 1990.
- 25 Teltschick, 1991, p. 120.
- 26 FAZ, *Neues Deutschland*, SZ and *Die Welt*, 31 Jan. 1990, 2 Feb. 1990; Teltschick, 1991, pp. 120, 123.
- 27 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 124, 126.
- 28 Ibid., p. 109.
- 29 FAZ, *IHT*, SZ, *Neues Deutschland* and *Die Welt*, 5, 6 Feb. 1990; *Der Spiegel*, 5 Feb. 1990.
- 30 FAZ, SZ and *Die Welt*, 7, 8 Feb. 1990; Teltschick, 1991, pp. 129–30.
- 31 See, e.g., FAZ and *Handelsblatt*, 7 Feb. 1990.
- 32 FAZ, SZ and *Die Welt*, 8 Feb. 1990; *Der Spiegel*, 12 Feb. 1990.
- 33 *Neues Deutschland*, 12 Jan. 1990, 2 Feb. 1990.
- 34 Comment by an American official in Jan. 1990.

8 Selling, Buying, Soothing

Kohl had kept the Western leaders on their toes by continually reminding them of their long-standing verbal support of German reunification. Now they were called to show if they measured up to their words or whether they had spoken with a forked tongue. Both implicitly and explicitly, Kohl and other Germans were posing the threat that by not delivering on its words on reunification the West risked a rift with Germany and an intensification of the crisis in the DDR. Kohl also brandished a carrot to reassure the West, however, by pledging that a united Germany would stay in NATO.

To deliver on that promise he needed Gorbachev's co-operation. Although hard-pressed at home by the internal problems of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev could still exact a price for not throwing sand in the wheels of German reunification. Kohl in turn could try to buy Gorbachev's and Moscow's agreement by promising an economic return or by withholding it from the impoverished Russians. He could also convincingly argue that, for all practical purposes, blocking reunification was not a realistic option.

Yet Gorbachev could still try to drive a hard bargain. Having repeatedly voiced its opposition to NATO membership of a united Germany, Moscow could hardly be expected to yield everything on the security issue without getting something in return. If it did not get German neutrality it could at least insist on other military concessions, such as the withdrawal of all foreign forces, as the price for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Germany. This was all the more a real possibility as the German Social Democrats for the most part favoured cutting ties with military alliances. Thus the future of foreign troops in a united Germany did not look promising. A possible removal of Soviet forces from Poland would leave the Soviet troops in Germany extremely vulnerable. Without secure supply lines they would cease to be an asset, which made it easier for Gorbachev to bargain them away.

After Gorbachev had sent signals of his willingness to negotiate a deal about the German issue during Modrow's visit to Moscow, Kohl and Genscher took advantage of the opening. They prepared themselves for a trip to meet Gorbachev in early February 1990. The Germans received some significant

aid from Bush who, in his State of the Union address, proposed disarmament measures which could help to solve the security problems connected with German unity. Envisioning reductions of conventional forces in Central Europe, they could pave the way for cutting the Soviet military presence in the DDR. As Kohl's Moscow journey drew closer, Bonn's Western allies became increasingly supportive. As if sensing that a potential breakthrough could be in store, they were climbing on a winning bandwagon. Mitterrand asserted anxiously that no problems existed between him and Kohl, although the press claimed the opposite, and that he wanted close consultation, while Foreign Minister Dumas predicted publicly that the reunification was near. Thatcher was more reserved, but admitted publicly that reunification was probable.¹

Of all the allied leaders, Bush was clearly the most co-operative towards the Germans. On the eve of Kohl's departure he pledged support in specific terms. Assuring Kohl that he would not allow Moscow to pressure the Germans via four-power meetings, he also conceded that its people should decide about unified Germany's role in the alliances. At the same time, he was satisfied with Kohl's rejection of neutrality and keeping Germany in NATO. Agreeing to a specific status for East German territory in NATO, he also promised close information on the talks between Baker and the Soviet leaders which was to immediately precede Kohl's arrival in Moscow, and expressed his admiration of the way Kohl had met recent challenges as a leader.²

Bush accepted Genscher's proposal that, while a unified Germany would remain a member of NATO, no NATO troops would be stationed in former East German territory in order to make the reunification palatable to Moscow.³ Washington needed to make a commitment to quick reunification. It was faced with elections in East Germany which, by all the signs, would bring to power a government that would without delay proceed towards national unification. Another urgent consideration also influenced Bonn's Western allies. They had to consider the impact of Soviet and East German talk of a unified neutral Germany upon the West Germans. If the Western allies withheld their support for reunification and frustrated the Germans, the consequences were unpredictable.

Gaining Moscow's agreement to German reunification on terms acceptable to the Bundesrepublik and its Western allies remained a major hurdle that Kohl had to overcome. In preparation for his mission to Moscow, Kohl's adviser Horst Teltschick was engaging in a little psychological political warfare, helped by the situation in East Germany and alarming reports of it in the German media. On the eve of Kohl's departure for a meeting with Gorbachev on 10 February, he was passing word that East Germany was facing imminent economic and political collapse. Kohl him-

self spoke of his need to bring home the 'dramatic' situation of East Germany to Gorbachev. Bonn also announced that it was sending massive food aid to the Soviet Union.⁴ Kohl still had a selling job to do and, as a careful tactician, he was doing his utmost to lay the groundwork for the best possible outcome of the visit from his point of view. Adding to the uncertainty were charges by the German Social Democrats that Kohl and his advisers were fanning panic and hysteria.⁵

As Bush had promised earlier, Baker informed Kohl of his prior talks with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze upon the German delegation's arrival in Moscow. These talks had produced agreements on substantial progress in reducing weaponry and the numbers of American and Soviet troops confronting each other in Europe.⁶ Such agreements obviously benefited the Germans and improved the prospects of a Soviet retreat from the DDR. This time an American-Soviet deal seemed to help the Germans, unlike some occasions in the past. It did not pass unnoticed by them. Baker's report was thus encouraging and helpful to Kohl. Not only had Baker made progress in arms control, but he said that Gorbachev and Shevardnadze regarded German reunification as inevitable, although they were concerned that it could lead to instability in Europe.⁷

When meeting Gorbachev in the Kremlin a little later, Kohl stressed the urgency of a quick reunification in view of the alarming situation in the DDR. He said that neutrality was not acceptable to him as a price for it, but he also indicated that NATO would not have to extend to East German territory. Gorbachev asked what kind of timetable Kohl had in mind, but Kohl could not give a definite answer. He noted that in December he had talked of reunification taking years but the people had disagreed with their feet. Gorbachev then said that there was no disagreement about German unity between the Soviet Union, the Bundesrepublik and the DDR, and the right of the people to pursue it. This was the decisive breakthrough, or concession.

In return, Gorbachev wanted assurance on the Oder-Neisse border, the honouring of the DDR's economic obligations towards the Soviet Union and further future economic co-operation, to all of which Kohl indicated agreement.⁸

The Kohl mission to Moscow was a resounding success for the chancellor. Gorbachev had, in fact, agreed that the Germans themselves could solve the form, timing and conditions of German unity.⁹ He realized and acknowledged that the crumbling of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe made the Soviet hold on the DDR untenable and pointless. Recognizing this and that he could not block German unification short of using force, which would wreck the very foundations of his foreign and internal policy, Gorbachev gracefully made the best he could of the situation. Giving the green light for

reunification, he was still trying to exact a price for it. As he put it, reunification was not to offend 'the legitimate interest' of others. What these interests were and how high a hurdle they would constitute remained hazy.

This very vagueness could potentially be used to complicate matters in the future if needs and opportunities to do so emerged. On the very day of Kohl's arrival, Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze had still been talking of a neutral Germany. Gorbachev had mentioned it as remaining a possible solution, but Kohl ruled it out. Elated and beaming, Kohl could claim that Gorbachev had agreed to German reunification, leaving it up to the Germans to decide about its progress. It was indeed 'a great day for Germany', as triumphant Kohl declared.¹⁰

What may have helped the Kohl mission was Soviet preoccupation with the internal restructuring of the political machinery and redistribution of power in the Soviet Union. Moscow certainly was not only unenthusiastic about German reunification but, more than anyone else, it had been voicing public reservations about it. Internal Soviet opposition to German reunification persisted. Spearheaded by Yegor Ligachev, the main opponent of Gorbachev, it had support among the Soviet hard-liners.¹¹ Furthermore, nobody could overlook the Soviet troops in East Germany, long thought of as among the élite of the Soviet armed forces. Thus the success of Kohl's Moscow mission brought a great sense of relief to the Germans.

The increasing likelihood of German reunification inevitably brought uneasiness and trepidation to many other Europeans. It did, after all, upset an international order that had lasted some 45 years and, despite the tensions of the Cold War, this had been the longest uninterrupted period of international peace that Europe had ever enjoyed. Because of the sheer weight and central location of the country, German reunification would fundamentally change the balance of power on the continent. Through its economic strength Germany would emerge as the leading European power, at least in time of peace. Many leaders and spokesmen of Germany's neighbours displayed apprehension at the prospect of a resurgent Germany because of lingering memories of the Nazis and the Second World War. However, the Bundesrepublik had been a successful and stable democracy since its origins over 40 years. No extremist party had gained a significant following there, and its stable economy and progressive welfare legislation had created a basically harmonious and peaceful society not essentially different from its neighbouring prosperous welfare states.

This did not, nevertheless, necessarily put everyone's concerns to rest. To many it was not the nature but the power of a reunited Germany that mattered. Talk of fears rooted in the past sometimes simply camouflaged and covered jealousies and rivalries of the present. Thus everybody was not

agreeable. The very day that Kohl was meeting Gorbachev in Moscow, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher urged caution about German reunification. She wanted 'massive consultation' about the matter and the approval of no less than 35 nations.¹² Such proposals spelled complications to the Germans, and Thatcher's words did nothing to warm the coolness that already prevailed between her and Kohl. They echoed similar sentiments to those of an earlier proposal by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze that there should be a referendum on German reunification among Europeans and North Americans. Both proposals were stillborn. Kohl had wasted no time in countering Shevardnadze, saying that German unity was a German issue, but he did not convince Thatcher.

There remained further hurdles on the path of German reunification. The Soviet Union as well as the Western allies and partners of the Bundesrepublik were anxious to receive all the assurances and promises they could from the Germans. In a telephone call to Modrow, Gorbachev still insisted after his meeting with Kohl that he had 'clearly told' Kohl that a reunited Germany could not stay in NATO.¹³ That kept him on a collision course with the West, but he had a weak bargaining position. Kohl was already starting to speak for all of Germany with the authority that the overwhelming support for reunification in East Germany gave him. Recognizing the sentiments of their countrymen and facing elections 18 March, all the significant political parties there were declaring themselves in favour of unification.

The Soviets were getting the message and hedging on their opposition to NATO membership of a united Germany. At an East-West conference in Ottawa a dejected and forlorn-looking Shevardnadze, shrugging his shoulders, refused to comment on it on 13 February.¹⁴ The Soviet leadership knew that its empire was crumbling and that it was also making sudden major one-sided concessions to the West in disarmament negotiations. On both the German issue and the disarmament issue it was giving in on matters which it knew it would shortly lose but was now asked formally to concede.

The Ottawa conference between the NATO and Warsaw Pact foreign ministers turned into another milestone on the path to Germany unity. At the end of November, just a few months earlier, Kohl's ten-point plan had triggered anxious and even angry objections. Since then, much water had flowed under the bridge and efforts to stop it had proved to be futile. In Ottawa the wartime Allies together with the two German states formally accepted German unity.

By then, everyone agreed that the division of Germany was destabilizing Europe; before that, everyone (other than the Germans) had talked of how reunification threatened stability. This turnaround in views was no mean achievement for the East German people and the German leaders who drove it

home time after time with their foreign counterparts. The Ottawa participants also agreed on the so-called two-plus-four process to deal with the external aspects of German unity while its internal dimensions were left to the two German states.¹⁵ This procedure ensured the participation of the four principal wartime Allies – the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain and France – and the Germans in shaping the future of Germany and Europe.

The Ottawa meeting confirmed a growing general conviction about the inevitability of German reunification. Only the matter of its form, timing and reassurances to other countries remained to be decided. Bonn's Western allies saw their best available reassurance in continuing German membership of the EC and NATO, and sought to sell the same notion to the Soviet Union and the East Central European neighbours of Germany. Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary accepted it quickly, but Poland wanted additional assurances. It wanted to participate in future discussion about German reunification and demanded guarantees for their common border.¹⁶

The smaller western and northern neighbours of Germany found it relatively easy to accept German reunification, having already long grown accustomed to close co-operation and a degree of economic dependency on the Bundesrepublik. Thus the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Luxembourg were not going to cause complications, although they grumbled about not being invited to take part in the unification negotiations.¹⁷

Even Israel was coming around to accepting what seemed inevitable. The Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens arrived in Bonn and expressed to Kohl his hope that 'misunderstandings' over Israeli Prime Minister Shamir's statements concerning German unity on American television had not burdened German-Israeli relations. He said Shamir's pronouncements had to be understood against the background of his having lost all his family in the Holocaust.¹⁸

For Britain and France, German reunification was also a hard pill to swallow. Both stood to lose more in their relative status than the smaller countries. The élites of both Britain and France felt strong frustration in sensing their power and influence slipping to Germany, and yet at the same time recognizing that prudence dictated acceptance of it. Painful as it was, eventually both had to approve reunification.

Both Britain and France knew, by the time of the Ottawa meeting, that nothing was likely to block German reunification. They were adjusting to what seemed inevitable. Mitterrand had realized that Gorbachev was in no position to block it or even to drive a hard bargain. He was concerned about the future of allied troops in Germany after the Soviet withdrawal and anxious over whether the Germans would in future honour their pledge not to acquire nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. Kohl sought to reassure Mitterrand and pledged continuing Franco-German co-operation.¹⁹

Mitterrand's concerns were indicative of his preoccupation with the future balance of power between Germany and France. Its possession of nuclear weapons was about the only thing left where France could still in the future hold an edge on Germany. The same was true of Britain. Seeing Ottawa as a turning-point, Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd announced unconditional British support for German unification in an interview with a German newspaper – at which Kohl's foreign policy adviser Teltschick jotted down in his diary, 'It has taken long enough.'²⁰ The comment expressed intense German frustration with British actions and attitudes on German reunification. Despite Hurd's assurance, problems between the two countries lingered, as was soon to become obvious.

In advance of her allies, the United States had adopted a realistic view of German reunification. Bush and Baker could then move to actively help to shape the process around it. This enabled them to make a positive contribution to it and to American-German relations, which Kohl appreciated. This decision by the American President spoke well of his sense and acumen in adapting to the changing situation.

What really mattered, however, was the kind of deal that the Germans and the Russians would strike. The British and the French impact was negligible. The American influence was stronger once Washington had concluded that reunification was inevitable and decided to make the best of it and, indeed, positively helped it along.

This American policy was aided by calls for neutrality and unification from German Social Democrats. Arguing that the end of the East-West confrontation was changing the meaning of neutrality, they were raising fears in the West. For Washington, one way of countering such arguments for neutrality was to contribute positively to German reunification and at the same time to insist on continued German participation in NATO. Bush and Baker pleased Kohl and Genscher by helping to persuade the British, the French and the Soviets to agree to the 'two-plus-four' formula, whereas these three had originally favoured a so-called 'four-plus-zero' formula which left the Germans out of the negotiations.²¹ Such high-handedness held the promise of all kinds of delays concerning reunification and was unacceptable to the Germans.

While reunification was the Germans' primary concern, its impact on international security arrangements was a preoccupation of their negotiating partners and neighbours. Although the West insisted upon NATO membership of a united Germany, it agreed to a temporarily continued Soviet military presence in eastern Germany. The Soviets in turn wanted to tie reunification to its acceptance by all Germany's neighbours and to guarantees of the post-war borders and a peace treaty. Facing German unification, Moscow could find some reassurance and consolation in the potential popu-

larity of the Social Democrats in a united Germany because of their neutralist leanings. Public opinion polls showed strong support for them in East Germany close to the East German elections of 18 March. In a united Germany this presumed strength could conceivably translate into a Social Democratic victory in the elections.

While this was something that the Soviets could hope for, it was something that Bonn's Western allies dreaded. In addition, at least in London and Paris, a frustrating and uneasy feeling of impotence prevailed in face of the rapid progress towards German unification. There was a sense that Bonn was pressing ahead on its own and that the sheer momentum and dynamics of the situation were forcing all the others along. Such uneasiness caused a fair amount of worried talk but no effective intervention.

This left the politics of reunification largely in German hands. The Americans offered help to the Germans. The Soviets were a coy and not too convincing opponent that was constantly shifting its position, sometimes holding more than one position on the issue at the same time or speaking with more than one mouth and voice. Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, like Mitterrand and Thatcher, protested that German unification was advancing too fast and felt left out, as they were unable to control the process.²² Both among the Germans and on the international scene the dominant mover was Kohl. Kohl was looking towards the future and knew clearly what he wanted to achieve. His fellow players both in the West and East only knew what they wanted to prevent. They were haunted by the past, or at least they acted or pretended as if they were.

Even after having embraced a quick German reunification, Washington strove to minimize any possible consequent reduction of American influence in Europe. As NATO remained the major vehicle for projecting and exercising that influence, the securing of future German participation in it and the prevention of its breakdown became a major American preoccupation. This was a tall order.

The liberation of East Central Europe from the Soviet grip and the relaxation of East-West rivalry and confrontation dramatically reduced the relevance and appeal of NATO in particular to the Germans. Among the Germans especially but also elsewhere in Europe there was increasing questioning of the role and need of NATO and a search for alternative security arrangements and structures. Oskar Lafontaine, the Social Democratic challenger to Kohl, had argued that, like France, Germany should walk out of the integrated chain of NATO military command. Ridiculing Kohl's and other Christian Democrats' pledges of loyalty to NATO as 'anachronistic', he sought to ride the anti-NATO sentiments.

Kohl was anxious to soothe American concerns about these matters in order to keep the process of German reunification on track. Bush in turn

was as anxious to be reassured of continued German membership of NATO and commitment to the future presence of American troops in Germany and Europe. To take care of these mutual anxieties, Kohl journeyed to Washington on 24 February 1990, when he sought to ease Washington's wariness by assuring Bush that unified Germany would remain a full member of NATO and that American troops should remain in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. Bush wanted to prevent a Soviet troop withdrawal from forcing the American troops to leave as well. While he expressed support for German unity, he also stressed the importance of close consultation between the allies to overcome anxiety about the unification. He said Thatcher had come round to accepting it, which was not the case three months earlier.²³

Kohl's reassurance was timely in soothing Washington's worries. Facing an impending Soviet retreat from East Central Europe, Washington worried acutely about the future of the American military presence in Europe. On 26 February the Czechoslovaks and Moscow agreed on the withdrawal of all Soviet forces from Czechoslovak territory, starting immediately.²⁴ Accompanying a similar Soviet-Hungarian understanding, such a Soviet retreat from the borders of Germany weakened the case for maintaining American troops there. Having directly confronted the Soviet army on the German-Czechoslovak border, the American troops in the Bundesrepublik would only face the Soviet forces remaining in the rapidly crumbling and disappearing DDR, where their increasing isolation made their positions untenable with the withdrawal of the Soviet forces behind them in neighbouring East Central Europe.

From time to time in the past significant political bickering and dissension had disturbed NATO. Repeated quarrels about burden-sharing had occurred, with the Americans often feeling that they were carrying more than their fair share and accusing other members of trying to get a free ride at their expense. In the internal American debate even the spectre of the unilateral withdrawal of American troops from Europe was raised more than once to force the Europeans to do more for their own defence and security. Unimpressed and unconvinced by such American pressures and threats, the Europeans had in turn often complained about American high-handedness in running NATO and not consulting sufficiently with their allies. Most of this quarrelling had not been serious in the sense of threatening to undermine the very existence of the organization. The one serious exception was the French withdrawal under Charles de Gaulle from the command structure of NATO in 1966, which had weakened the co-ordination and integration of the defence of Western Europe.

None of these past quarrels had led to serious questioning of the very existence of NATO, but the dramatic reduction of an imminent Soviet threat struck at the original reason for the birth and continued life of the organiza-

tion by creating a new situation in Europe. While Chancellor Kohl continued to pledge and profess his and Germany's loyalty to NATO, other Germans spoke ever more boldly of alternative security structures for Europe. These structures were to bridge the East-West gap and replace the alliance systems inherited from the Cold War. Such ideas were increasingly heard not only from German Social Democrats but also from Genscher's German Foreign Ministry. Furthermore, they were ideas which held wide appeal for many Europeans. Public opinion polls in turn suggested that a clear majority of Germans preferred not to be part of any alliance system after reunification.

Prominent among those questioning the continuing need of NATO was Lafontaine. To him, both NATO and the Warsaw Pact were relics of the Cold War which belonged to the past.²⁵ The spread of such views further increased Kohl's bargaining power with Bush as they intensified American anxiety about the future of NATO. Seeing it as the best vehicle available for the continued exercise of American influence in Europe, Bush grew ever more determined to back Kohl and to do what he could to ensure Kohl's re-election.

Washington was visibly and audibly hard put to find reasons for the perpetuation of NATO which were persuasive to the sceptics. In the short term, important support existed for the continuation of the organization, yet even many of its backers for the immediate future were looking for alternative longer-term security arrangements.

In Europe the strongest support for NATO persisted in Britain. Mrs Thatcher and the British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd repeatedly emphasized its importance and the need of continued German membership for the security of Europe. The French also backed NATO, at least for the time being. Publicly, both the British and the French spoke of the necessity of maintaining NATO because of uncertainty regarding the future of the Soviet Union and Gorbachev and the continuation of his policies towards the West. One could not be sure that the thaw in East-West relations would last for ever – or, as French Prime Minister Michel Rocard stated bluntly, 'Mr Gorbachev will die one day. He will have a successor, and army marshals cannot be excluded.'²⁶

Yet it was not only the Soviet Union but also unified Germany that loomed as a potential, although usually an unspoken, threat, and as another justification for the continued existence of NATO. Behind much of the talk about the need to keep up NATO and insistence on continued German membership were hidden concerns and fears of a unified Germany and a need to keep her tied and under surveillance. To some extent such concerns agitated her neighbours and partners. They all shared memories of the Second World War and they all were confronted with the prospect of in-

creased German power in the near future. They may have reconciled themselves to accept German reunification but such acceptance did not preclude continued anxiety.

Because of its geographical proximity, the immediacy of its ties to the Bundesrepublik, the size of its resources, and its pivotal role in the European Community, the attitudes in France were of special importance among Germany's neighbours.²⁷ Paris vouched for its trust of Bonn and for its wish to co-operate with the Germans. The French recognized that this long-lasting co-operation had been a pillar of stability and prosperity in Western Europe after the Second World War. Furthermore, they regarded it as necessary to meet the economic challenge of the United States and Japan. So far it had been largely a co-operation of equals. France's status as a nuclear power and its prominent role in the EC bureaucracy had in part balanced German economic superiority.

How long would such a balance last? Facing the changes in Germany, alarm and apprehension were spreading in France, on both the right and the left, about increasing German power. Among the French élite and leadership a keen sense of rivalry and suspicions and fears of the Germans surfaced from time to time. President Mitterrand had thrown obstacles in the path of speedy German reunification. The former French Premier Michel Debré commented darkly about his neighbour: 'We French, who know our neighbour well, how can we not remind all Europeans and the world ... of the need to guard against abuses which Germany commits in all areas when it sees an opportunity?'²⁸ In an article in *Le Figaro*, he even expressed suspicions of Germany again dreaming of world domination.²⁹

The shadow and memories of the past had left their traces in the psyche of the French, and these burdens of blood and humiliation affected their attitudes towards Germany. The bold and fast-paced moves towards German reunification and the prospect of facing an increasingly more powerful Germany in the near future created uncertainties and revived old fears, especially among those alive during the Second World War. As Dominique Moïsi, the prominent French scholar of international relations, put it: 'The French are deeply insecure. ... The Germans are asserting themselves, and we are growing fearful. Our fears may not be well founded, but we have them none the less, and a fearful people will not always distinguish carefully between myth and reality.'³⁰ Among younger Frenchmen born after the war, such fear and the burdens of the past based on them seemed to have largely lost their grip, judging from the overwhelming support among them for German reunification, but they were not yet the French leaders and the past loomed large in the minds of the war generation.

Other European leaders shared the desire of Washington, London and Paris to keep a united Germany in NATO. Thus all the 15 NATO members

expressed their support for German unity. The Italian Foreign Minister Gianni de Michelis spoke in strong terms of the need for Germany to stay in NATO. A man who loved to talk and quip, he was reported to have repeated the refrain that he loved Germany so much that he preferred two of them.³¹

The Soviet Union remained the only major power to hold out against a united Germany's membership of NATO. After returning from Ottawa, Shevardnadze said that finding a solution to the problem would take years but that he was not opposed to German membership if fundamental changes took place in NATO policy. Gorbachev was quoted in *Pravda* on 21 February 1990 as saying that the Soviet Union did not oppose German unification, though he complained that it was advancing too fast. He was backtracking from his comments to Kohl in Moscow, saying that unification was not a matter purely for the Germans to decide but that they had to consider their neighbours' interests.³² He clearly wanted to be part of the action. Only a week later, on 27 February, Shevardnadze said that German membership of NATO would destroy the European balance of power. Stating 'That is absolutely out of the question', Gorbachev imperiously ruled it out in an interview on German television on 6 March. Shevardnadze even excluded the compromise of not placing NATO troops in East German territory as an artificial device and called Western pronouncements on German NATO membership 'tactless'.³³ Harsh as these statements sounded, neither Gorbachev nor Shevardnadze any longer categorically and specifically ruled out German unification, as they had done earlier. Their bark was worse than their bite, perhaps for bargaining purposes and because of Soviet internal politics. They were concerned about unmet East German economic obligations and criticism by Soviet hard-liners for too easily giving up the fruits of victory in the Second World War.

The Soviet Union had remained opposed to German reunification for as long as possible. Both Gorbachev and Shevardnadze had vocally and pointedly originally ruled it out. Shevardnadze had even used exceptionally emotional and strong language for diplomatic discourse, painting dark images of threatening 'sinister shadows of the past ... militarism ... [and] revenge'.³⁴

By contrast, the majority of Soviet public opinion, as expressed in polls, early accepted German reunification.³⁵ Such generosity of spirit was remarkable in a country which had lost by far more lives in the war against Germany than anyone else, or all the others combined for that matter, and whose people had constantly and continually been bombarded by reminders of that war.

The pressure of events and persuasion gradually and eventually also pushed the Soviet leadership to reconsider and amend its position. The persuaders included Bush and Baker, who were trying to sell Gorbachev

and Shevardnadze the notion that membership of NATO by a united Germany was also in the Soviet interest since it prevented unilateral German action in the sensitive sphere of security policy. This was no easy task, as the Soviet leaders hardly thought that they needed advice as to what was in their interest. It was going to take more than words to persuade them. They wanted something concrete in return which only the Germans could deliver.

The notion that NATO should be preserved as an insurance against a resurgent and potentially threatening Germany was risky. In fact, it was self-defeating and downright dangerous to the health and longevity of the very organization whose survival it ostensibly sought. With only a minority of Germans supporting continued membership of NATO, any suggestion that the organization was somehow not in their interest could stir further opposition to it in Germany. With the foundation of popular support for NATO already precarious, it could make German membership untenable. Kohl's seemingly wholehearted embrace of NATO and assurances of German loyalty to it would not be enough if the popular mandate for it disappeared, and strong opposition to it developed in Germany. Such strong opposition could grow from the resentment felt by the Germans who saw themselves as no threat to anyone, having absorbed all the lessons of the past. Nobody likes to stay in a group where one's fellows are obstructive or antagonistic, and in the long run Germany was strong enough not to be forced to keep company which it did not want. The unstated but often implied notion that part of NATO's mission was to check the Germans could become fatal to the organization.

If German enthusiasm for NATO was less than overwhelming, its commitment to the European Community was beyond reasonable doubt. The Bundesrepublik was, after all, a major beneficiary of the EC, traditionally running a trade surplus with its other members. Compared with this the sums it contributed to the EC were relatively modest. Nevertheless, the spectre of German unification caused anxiety among the partners of the Bundesrepublik in the Community. In particular, fears abounded about the impact of German reunification on the prospect of achieving a higher degree of EC unity as planned by the end of 1992. The Germans were commonly expected to become so preoccupied with the complications and tasks of national integration that they would have less interest and energy left for the European Community.

Some were concerned about an upsurge of German nationalism and its impact on the EC. Others fretted about the economic consequences of the incorporation of East Germany into the EC via the Bundesrepublik. The penny-wise were vexed about who would pay for what share of the cost of German unification and integrating East Germany with the EC. Together with such concerns went anxieties about competition for markets, funds and investments.

It was generally recognized that East Germany would have to be subsidized and granted exceptions from many EC standards and rules for some time. The big question was at whose expense, to what extent and for what length of time. The Spaniards and the Portuguese fretted about possible losses of potential German investment going to East Germany. The British worried about competition from subsidized East German companies; giving open expression to such fears, British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd proclaimed, 'The rest of us will need protection from the entry into our markets of subsidized East German goods.'³⁶

It would take time before the answers to such questions would become clear, which did not lessen the levels of nervousness and anguish. The most enthusiastic proponents of further EC integration were especially concerned that, under the weight of all these new complications and burdens, the whole process would lose momentum, slow down, and possibly stop altogether. They included notably the French, most prominently the President of the European Commission Jacques Delors, President François Mitterrand, and Foreign Minister Roland Dumas. To them further EC integration continued to be the best promise of maintaining and asserting the French role and influence in the face of a resurgent Germany. Mitterrand saw no insuperable problem in extending the EC into East Germany,³⁷ and Bonn's decision not to seek additional EC representation based on the East Germans undoubtedly helped.

Those less enthusiastic about further integration within the EC were not altogether displeased with the additional complications. Those downright opposed to more integration were frankly cheered by them. Notable among these groups were many Britons and most prominently Mrs Thatcher. Mrs Thatcher was, of course, not enthusiastic about German unification either, the potential perceived source of further complications for the EC, but she was even less enthusiastic about the further loss of British sovereignty which loomed largest in her mind among the unfortunate results of further EC integration.

In addition to the specifics of the immediate and short-term impact of German reunification, the EC members also held longer-term worries. These varied from fears of German domination of the EC to Germany turning eastwards and concentrating its investment and trade heavily in Eastern Europe, to the detriment and neglect of its EC partners. Contradictory as such fears sometimes were, they were nevertheless real to those who were haunted by them. Fears of German domination harked back to Adolf Hitler's New Order in Europe. They had to do not only with perceptions of German arrogance and 'Besserwisser' (know-all) mentality, but also with the mere German reputation for superior efficiency and hard work. Linked with these went simple astonishment at the German eco-

nomie performance and doubts of being able to compete with the Germans in world markets.

In a sense many of these fears and doubts rested on realities already in place. The economy of the Bundesrepublik was already the powerhouse of Europe, and the Deutschmark and the policies of the German Central bank powerfully affected other European currencies and economic policies – for example, higher Deutschmark interest rates forced interest rates higher elsewhere in Europe. This was an indirect way for the Bundesrepublik to make others share the costs of German reunification and reconstruction of eastern Germany. Germany also contributed by far a larger share of the EC budget than any other member, however, and Kohl had tried to meet in part the economic concerns of Germany's EC partners by stating that EC monies did not need to be used to pay for the costs of reunification but that the Germans would pay their own bill. Nevertheless, such assurances could not overcome all the deeply rooted apprehensions.

Notes

- 1 *IHTr* and *FAZ*, 1 Feb. 1990; Teltschick, 1991, pp. 123, 128; *Die Welt* and *The Times*, 9 Feb. 1990.
- 2 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 134–5.
- 3 See, e.g., Hans-Dietrich Genscher, 'German Unity within the European Framework', *Statements and Speeches*, 13, 2, 6 Feb. 1990, or Genscher, 31 Jan. 1990, Tutzing, *Unterwegs zur Einheit*, 1991 and Szabo, 1992, pp. 56–62.
- 4 See, e.g., *FAZ*, *Die Welt* and *Der Spiegel*, 5 Feb. 1989, and *FAZ*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 8, 9 Feb. 1989.
- 5 *FR*, 10 Feb. 1989.
- 6 Reuters and TASS, 10 Feb. 1990.
- 7 Teltschick, 1991, p. 137.
- 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 139–41.
- 9 TASS, 11 Feb. 1990.
- 10 German television, 10 Feb. 1990; *Welt am Sonntag*, 11 Feb. and *Die Welt*, 12 Feb. 1990.
- 11 *IHTr* and *Pravda*, 8 Feb. 1990.
- 12 *The Times*, 11 Feb. 1990.
- 13 ADN, 12 Feb. 1990.
- 14 CNN, 13 Feb.; *FAZ*, *IHTr*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 14 and 15 Feb. 1990.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *The Economist*, 17 Feb. 1990; *Time* and *Newsweek*, 19 Feb. 1990.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 Teltschick, 1991, p. 150.
- 19 *Ibid.* pp. 150–51 and *Die Welt*, 20 Feb. 1990.
- 20 Teltschick, 1991, p. 153.
- 21 Szabo, 1992, p. 61.
- 22 *Pravda*, 21 Feb. 1990.

- 23 Claus Genrich in *FAZ*, 24, 26 Feb. 1990; Teltschick, 1991, pp. 159–61.
 24 *IHTr*, 27 Feb. 1990.
 25 See, e.g., Karl Kaiser, 'German Unification', *Foreign Affairs*, 1, 1991, p. 195; Lafontaine, in *Time*, 2 April 1990.
 26 Rocard, in *Time*, 2 April 1990.
 27 On French views and policies, cf. Ronald Tiersky, 'France in the New Europe', *Foreign Affairs*, Spring, 1992, pp. 131–9.
 28 Debré, in *Time*, 26 March 1990.
 29 Debré, in *Le Figaro*, 15 March 1990.
 30 Moisi, in *Time*, 26 March 1990.
 31 *FAZ*, *IHTr*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 9 March 1990.
 32 Shevardnadze, *The Future belongs to Freedom*, 1991, p. 137, and Gorbachev, in *Pravda*, 21 Feb. 1990.
 33 TASS, 27 Feb. 1990; German television 6 Mar. 1990; Shevardnadze in *Neuen Berliner Illustrierten*, 8 March 1990.
 34 Shevardnadze, in *Time*, 26 March 1990.
 35 *Libération*, 19 Feb. 1990. Some 51 per cent were in favour.
 36 Hurd, in *Business Week*, 2 April 1990.
 37 Teltschick, 1991, p. 151.

9 Growing Alarm

To the Germans, the sinking East Germany economy and the resulting mood of its people were rapidly becoming the imperatives that could not wait. Fanned by alarming media accounts and rumours about economic breakdown and foreseeable utter collapse, the East Germans' notion of the state of their economy was sinking even faster than was warranted by its actual performance during the winter of 1990. Driven by desperation, the East Germans created a situation where anything short of reunification seemed unacceptable.¹ Their economic despair and anxiety to snatch at the lifeline of the *Bundesrepublik* was so strong that for most it overcame their fears of losing the modest security they had enjoyed through their savings, pensions, and jobs.

Some were, of course, unhappy with the prospect of the demise of the DDR. Those most unhappy were its major beneficiaries, the recipients of power, status and perquisites. Facing a potentially less comfortable future, they regretted the passing of their fountain of welfare. Among them were officials of the party and state, favoured cultural and sports figures, and possessors of knowledge and skills soon to become obsolete: officers of the Stasi and the political officers of the East German armed forces, teachers and professors of Marxism and Leninism as well as Russian, all knew that after reunification there would be little if any need of their services. Most of these people looked forward to an uncertain future. Some were bitter and fearful. A few were defiant, among them the phenomenal figure-skating star Katarina Witt of Karl-Marx-Stadt who had dazzled the world with her poise and skill. 'I'm no cheap turncoat,' she declared to critics of her continued adherence to the Communists.²

Instead of teachers of Marxism and Leninism, East Germany badly needed people capable of starting and running small and medium-size companies that could offer employment. Called the *Mittelstand*, such companies were the backbone of the West German economy and the trainers of much of its highly skilled labour force. Although parts of East Germany had had a similar tradition, the Communists had stamped it out long enough ago to make its revival difficult. The former entrepreneurs for the most part would

- 10 See, e.g., *The Economist*, 31 March 1990.
- 11 Kohl, on German television, 18 March 1990.
- 12 *FAZ* and *SZ*, 20 March 1990.
- 13 German television, 18 March 1990.
- 14 See, e.g., *Köln Express*, 24 March 1990.
- 15 *Der Spiegel*, 26 March 1990.
- 16 *FAZ*, *FR* and *SZ*, 23, 24 March 1990.
- 17 *ADN*, 25 March; *FAZ* and *Die Welt*, 3 April 1990.
- 18 *FR* and *SZ*, 24 March 1990.
- 19 Schäuble, *Der Vertrag*, 1991, pp. 272–3.
- 20 Herles and Rose (eds), *Parliaments-Szenen einer deutschen Revolution*, 1989, p. 193.
- 21 For more information on the Stasi, see, e.g., Gauck, *Die Stasi-Akten*, 1991; Gill and Schröter, *Das Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*, 1991; von Lang, *Erich Mielke*, 1991; Schell and Kalinka, *Stasi und kein Ende*, 1991; Bürgerkomitee Leipzig (ed.), *Stasi Intern*, 1991.

11 International Reactions

While internal and inter-German matters had largely preoccupied the Germans in connection with the March elections, others were primarily concerned with their international ramifications. Their first reactions to the election results reflected these concerns. Washington welcomed the success of the Christian Democrats as signalling support for German membership of NATO. Moscow declared its acceptance of the results, but urged the new East German leaders to move slowly in the matter of unification and to respect the obligations of the DDR and Soviet interests. Reunification should not lead to NATO membership of a unified Germany as this would shake the balance in Europe. The chairman of the EC Commission, Jacques Delors, said that the Bundesrepublik could not proceed with unification without negotiating with its EC partners. According to Delors, German reunification presupposed consent of the other EC members as in practice it introduced East Germany into the EC. Warsaw in turn immediately announced that it wanted to begin negotiations with both Germanies about a border treaty.¹

German reunification, which the election results hastened, was the single most important change for Europe since the Second World War. It symbolized and was the focal point of a fundamental transformation of the Cold War alignment. The long-oppressed and repressed East Germans were the catalysts for this change and found themselves unexpectedly in the driver's seat. Through their actions, first through the massive haemorrhage to the West and then through their votes, they were in practice largely setting both the course and speed of German unification. These actions and the East German economic collapse were hastening a quick currency union with economic and political unification close upon its heels. The very momentum and necessity of these developments in turn put narrow limits and constraints on outsiders' influence and reduced their options for creating obstacles and road blocks. Even any efforts along such lines were risky both in terms of their immediate and long-term results. They might create immediate inestimable economic havoc, even chaos, and sow potentially dangerous and long-lasting bitterness in the strongest economic power in Europe.

Washington had come to recognize such dangers. It was quickly passing the word out that it favoured speediest possible German reunification. This

was in sharp contrast to its earlier go-slow advice and cautions. It wished to overcome any bad feelings generated among the Germans by such previous approaches. Bush also let Kohl know that they were on the same wavelength on the thorny question of the German Polish border. Prior to meeting the Polish prime minister Mazowiecki in Washington on 21 March 1990, he informed Kohl of his intended message to the Pole on the border issue. To German satisfaction it reflected their line without an 'if and but'.² Seeking to placate and to reassure the Germans, Washington was further serving notice that, while it wished Germany to stay in NATO, this was a German decision.³

Moscow had rejected a united Germany's NATO membership repeatedly. Although Gorbachev had categorically ruled it out publicly on West German television on 6 March 1990, other Soviet officials were hedging. Thus the Soviet Union was staking out a tough bargaining position in order to win maximum concessions in return for eventual agreement. But there was more to it. German NATO membership was also a difficult matter for the Soviet Union for reasons of its internal politics. This was why Gorbachev's and Shevardnadze's public statements on the matter were tougher than their attitudes in private. They were guarding themselves against internal attacks by hard-liners.⁴

A curious example of this dual approach took place at a meeting of the Warsaw Pact in Prague in March 1990. At the very climax of the East German election campaign the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact members were arguing in Prague over whether a united Germany could be a member of NATO. Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland were acting in concert and defying the Soviet Union. They asserted their own independent foreign policy over the German issue. Moscow insisted upon German neutrality, but Budapest, Prague and Warsaw accepted Germany's NATO membership.⁵

Geography, economic needs, history and political fears determined their stand. Inhabiting a geographical region between Germany in the west and the Soviet Union in the east, the Poles, Czechoslovaks and Hungarians had always lived in the shadow of both Germans and Russians. They badly needed massive foreign investment and know-how which they realized they could, to a large extent, only obtain from Germany. Witnessing the internal disintegration and economic collapse of the Soviet Union, they knew they could no longer count on their traditional economic ties with the Soviets. Both as their most important source of raw materials, above all oil, and as the largest market for their industrial exports which were unable to compete in the West, the Soviet Union seemed an undependable partner in the near future. In need of a new, powerful economic partner, they did not want to offend Germany.

Yet it was not only their wish to get along with the Germans that shaped their attitude to German membership of NATO. The Poles and the Czechs also feared the Germans. Sharing common borders with a united Germany

and possessing large, formerly German-inhabited territories, they worried about future German ambitions. To them a neutral but unrestrained Germany seemed more dangerous and threatening than Germany bound to and by NATO. This reassurance seemed all the more important to them as they wanted to rid their territory of Soviet troops. Czechoslovakia and Hungary had already signed treaties to that effect, and Poland would have eagerly followed their example if it were not for its lingering border and territorial concerns. The Czechoslovak foreign minister Jiri Dienstbar thought a neutral Germany the 'worst alternative' and his Polish colleague Krzysztof Skubiszewski said it would 'not be good for Europe'.⁶

In the disintegrating Warsaw Pact, the Soviet Union had become isolated in its opposition to German membership of NATO. This put Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze out on a limb. Still insisting that NATO membership for a united Germany was 'impossible', he also sought to shift the focus of attention on future German armaments. Although Shevardnadze had spoken harshly against German NATO membership, in private he afterwards expressed his appreciation that several states had been for it. Their stand could serve as a shield for him and Gorbachev against the hard-liners in the internal Soviet debate on Germany.⁷

The Germans welcomed signs of Soviet flexibility. They encouraged close contacts with the Soviet leadership by being receptive to Soviet desires and requests. Kohl indicated to Gorbachev that Soviet troops could remain for a limited time in East Germany even after unification without the simultaneous presence of German troops. He also promised the fulfilment of the DDR's economic obligations to the Soviet Union within the limits of feasibility.⁸

There was nevertheless a limit to Kohl's accommodation. He repeatedly rejected tentative Soviet proposals to weaken or undo Germany's commitment to NATO. Such Soviet proposals varied from full German neutrality to trying to keep the Germans tied both to NATO and the Warsaw Pact or establishing a demilitarized zone in the heart of Germany. Moscow also dangled before the Germans an arrangement like the French had with NATO, but made it clear that if Bonn persisted with NATO membership the rights of the Warsaw Pact similarly had to be upheld in the DDR.⁹ However, the very fact that Moscow was actively proposing different solutions to German membership indicated its willingness to compromise.

Germany's immediate eastern neighbours shared its western neighbours' anxiety to keep a unified Germany in NATO as a form of check or control on it (though controlling a member, Germany, certainly could not be an admitted purpose of NATO's existence or even one of its openly avowed missions). Yet with the receding Soviet threat, NATO clearly needed a new reason for its existence, or at least a redefinition of its mission. The Ameri-

cans had talked about turning the defence alliance into a broader political organization, but it was the German attitude to membership which was the key to NATO's future. Without the Germans it had none, at least in the sense in which it had existed in the past. Furthermore, how long would the Germans see a need for it when the last Soviet troops left Germany? How long after that would they welcome or even tolerate a foreign military presence on their territory? When would they tell the Americans to take their noisy jets, the object of frequent complaints, elsewhere? These were anxious questions increasingly aired in European capitals and Washington.

Anxiety about Germany could not serve as a reason for NATO's continued existence, and anxiety about the Soviet Union was rapidly becoming passé. What, then, would bind the alliance together? The Americans might leave without being asked to withdraw their forces. They had often talked about reducing their troops in Europe, and many Americans had long resented the costs incurred, though successive Washington administrations had never seriously considered total withdrawal. Bush, however, faced a different situation from any of his post-war predecessors in the White House. Not only was the credibility of the Soviet threat waning rapidly but the EC, spearheaded by Germany, was increasingly emerging as a major economic rival of the United States. How long would American taxpayers put up with contributing to the security of such an increasingly prosperous rival?

Bush and the American foreign policy establishment saw NATO and some continued American military presence in Europe as a lever with which to assert and protect American political and economic interests. The question being increasingly asked was how long they could sell that notion to the American voters. Kohl's success in the East German elections pushed such nagging questions to the background for a while, as it cooled the speculation and debate about German NATO membership, but the issue of NATO's future and Germany was likely to come back to haunt the policy-makers. A united Germany was unlikely to welcome or even tolerate foreign troops on its soil indefinitely.¹⁰

American, British and others' anxiety over NATO's future was spurred on by Genscher. He talked of an eventual replacing of the existing alliances in Europe with a new, comprehensive, collective security structure. When Genscher spoke along those lines at a meeting of the WEU, the Western European Union, on 23 March 1990, the very forum alarmed the Americans in particular. They saw in the WEU, as a potential European defence organization excluding the United States, a possible rival to NATO. Genscher had also spoken in terms that had been used by the Soviets, which further added to the American and British sense of alarm.¹¹

Kohl reacted angrily to Genscher's words, which departed from his repeated affirmation and pledges of German NATO membership. He feared

that his Western allies could misunderstand them as signalling German linkage with the Soviet Union, and informed Genscher that he would not allow such statements to become Bonn's policy.¹² Genscher's utterances could have undermined Kohl's credibility and even suggested German duplicity, though they may actually have benefited rather than harmed the German cause. By adding to the Western allies' anxiety, Genscher's comments may have increased their disposition to humour the Germans and were undoubtedly music to Russian ears.

At least for the time being, Kohl and the Germans were eager to reassure everyone who possibly harboured doubts about a new united Germany. Immediately after the East German elections Kohl had praised the Americans and the other Western allies for contributing to German reunification. He had also paid tribute to Gorbachev's policy of *perestroika* for allowing the first free elections in East Germany. Kohl also sought to calm worries about German domination of the EC or, alternatively, fears that the reunification of Germany would slow down and damage the plans for a single market in 1992 and European economic, monetary and political union.¹³ These apprehensions derived from alarm over a resurgence of German nationalism resulting from reunification and future German preoccupation with rebuilding the badly damaged economy of eastern Germany.

The East German elections symbolized a giant step towards German unity. They also brought forth a resurgence of strong emotional reactions among those who most feared and opposed it. The strongest reactions, predictably and understandably, could be found among Jews who had suffered most at German hands. The most extreme talk of Germans and Germany ranged from the notion of a specific defective German genetic flaw to evils of the German national character, though more sober minds sought to calm it. 'You can't talk about something genetically wrong with the German people,' said Moshe Zimmerman, professor of German history at Jerusalem's Hebrew University, but it was Václav Havel, the Czechoslovak president, who perhaps most compellingly put such speculation about the national character in a historical perspective. Speaking about the Germans to his countrymen he said, 'to condemn them only because they are Germans, to be afraid of them only because of that, is the same as to be anti-Semitic'.¹⁴

Among the major powers France stood to be most directly affected by German reunification. President Mitterrand had sought to block or, failing that, to curb its advance. After repeated failure to achieve either he pinned his hopes on a Social Democratic victory in the East German elections, hoping that it might slow down the process of unification.¹⁵ Foreseeing power in Europe slipping more and more to a united Germany in the future, the French sought to tie Germany to the further political and monetary

integration of the EC as soon and as thoroughly as possible. To them it was a form of reassurance. Because the French at the same time tried to preserve what they could of their leadership role within the EC, they faced a delicate task. Their situation was unenviable as they walked a tightrope between a fear of Germany cut loose and fear of German domination of the EC.

Kohl attempted to calm such fears. 'No one needs to be worried about German dominance in the European Community,' he vouched. Pledging that a united Germany would be a reliable and solid partner who would adhere to the timetable and the aims of the economic and political integration of the EC, he also said that a unified Germany was only possible with a more united EC. He maintained, furthermore, that German unification would speed European integration.¹⁶ Kohl made his soothing statement in Brussels where Jacques Delors, the French President of the European Commission, had invited him to give reassurances in the EC headquarters.

It was not the first time that he had given such pledges. He had given similar assurances at least twice before, at the EC summit meetings in Paris and Strasbourg the previous autumn, yet as the process of German reunification accelerated it generated new waves of anxieties that had to be taken into account. Not only the very speed and fact but the manner of reunification alarmed European leaders. President Mitterrand was annoyed that he had to read in the papers and hear on television news about reunification of which he expected to have been appraised. His own actions in turn may have accounted for such a lack of communication, as the Germans had become wary of him. They had not taken kindly Mitterrand's trips to confer in Berlin with Modrow, the last Communist Prime Minister of the DDR. Mitterrand's meeting with Gorbachev in Kiev in December had also increased Germany's uneasiness, as did his support of Poland on the border issue.

The prospect of reunification and the East German election results brought worries about Germany to the surface elsewhere. Officials in Britain, Italy and the smaller EC nations in part shared the French concerns. One result was a warming of relations between France and Britain despite their deep disagreements about the future direction and course of the EC. The tentative Franco-British embrace involved military matters¹⁷ and reflected the lasting formative impact of the Second World War on their leaders. More widespread within the EC were concerns about the economic impact of German unification. Uppermost were questions of the integration of East Germany with the EC.

The concern was not so much about the immediate costs of the economic reconstruction of eastern Germany – funds and investment for that were largely expected to flow from West Germany. Rather it had to do with indirect costs, such as its possible impact on interest rates or inflation in

Germany. Because of the economic weight and power of Germany and the Deutschmark, on which other European currencies were heavily dependent, a rise in German interest rates or inflation was expected and feared to drag along the rest of Europe in its wake.

The West Germans would pay the lion's share of the costs of reconstruction in East Germany, though their more prosperous EC partners would have to contribute a smaller share via the regional development and social funds if East Germany was classified as poor. In EC parlance this meant living standards less than 75 per cent of the EC average. However, the reconstruction of East Germany opened up a new, potentially attractive market for other nations as well as the Germans, but this tended to be overlooked by them. Concern and even fear still seemed to dominate over a recognition of the opportunities.

Hovering in the background behind such economic concerns lay concerns of a longer-term nature. When and how would a united Germany assert political power corresponding to its economic power?

The integration of the East German economy into the EC after reunification remained a sore point with those who feared ending up footing part of the bill one way or another. In particular Prime Minister Thatcher was wary and reluctant to include East Germany. Kohl's reassurances did little to console her as, in contrast to Delors and Mitterrand and many other EC leaders, she did not favour further integration of the EC.

Soon after the East German elections, Kohl moved to mend fences with both Mitterrand and Mrs Thatcher. Recognizing Kohl's enhanced stature, the inevitability of German unification, and the further future rise in German power, both Mitterrand and Thatcher were willing to go along with him. In a television interview on 25 March 1990, Mitterrand sought to repair the Franco-German rift.¹⁸ To Mitterrand's relief, Kohl had agreed with him on accelerated EC integration.

With Mitterrand, Kohl had the benefit of close past co-operation and consultation to build on. The two leaders had customarily met twice a month before the rift which accompanied the beginning of the rapid drive towards German unification. In contrast, relations between Kohl and Mrs Thatcher had never been close but rather cool. Although both were conservative, no real personal empathy had evolved between them.

Indeed, mutual snubs had punctuated their relationship. Mrs Thatcher continued that tradition in an interview published on Kohl's home ground in the widely read weekly *Der Spiegel* a few days before a scheduled meeting between her and Kohl on 29 and 30 March 1990. Criticizing Kohl, she took him to task on the German-Polish border issue. This was rubbing salt in an open wound, as Kohl's handling of the matter had already come under heavy attack from many quarters both at home and abroad. She revealed to

the great joy of Kohl's enemies: 'and I heard Helmut say, "No, I will not guarantee, I will not recognize future boundaries." I have heard it myself in Strasbourg after dinner.'¹⁹

It sounded a bit like a strait-laced schoolgirl reporting on a badly behaved classmate. Nevertheless, coming on top of much earlier criticism, it stung. Kohl sought to overcome it by repeatedly expressing his support of the German resolutions to respect the German-Polish border. Mrs Thatcher may also have regretted going too far, and sought to backtrack from her criticism of Kohl when the two met later.

She may not have liked Kohl, as British officials admitted, but she had to recognize the changed realities about both Kohl and Germany. Kohl's success in the East German elections with their implications for German reunification and subsequent German elections, Washington's shift to support his drive to German unity after previously siding with Britain and France, and Kohl's public acceptance of the Polish border counted heavily among them. In short, Mrs Thatcher was grappling with the new realities of power in Europe. As she herself put it: 'We have to get used to having one country in Europe that is far stronger than the rest. ... Everyone has to accept that there is a bigger Germany.'²⁰

She also acted accordingly. During Kohl's visit she was clearly making amends and on her best behaviour. She claimed that Britain had done as much for German unity as others, and their meeting certainly improved relations between the two leaders. When Thatcher insisted that a united Germany had to remain in NATO, Kohl said he would not pay the price of neutrality for unification. He complimented her on British television as 'a wonderful lady' and found her to be impressive and stimulating: she knew her facts, was specific and concrete in asking questions, and listened – though he admitted that she could also be difficult to deal with, showing little sensitivity to her partner. Kohl thought the old saying that England had no friends or enemies, only interests, applied to her. He had found her 'a fighter' and 'a magnificent woman'.²¹

Kohl also challenged her by saying, 'Those who want a united Germany to be firmly integrated into European structures must logically support further progress in European unification.' When Mrs Thatcher disagreed, he felt confident enough to smile and complimented her: 'Margaret Thatcher is a great lady – a very strong-minded lady,' he noted, but added that, 'I have my own ideas, too; my opponents have been underestimating me for years.'²² Kohl's confidence rested by then both on the progress made towards German reunification and on his own contributions to it, as well as on the support he was receiving from Bush. After the East German elections Washington had increasingly supported Kohl's unification drive, and the Soviet Union was also coming around.

Foreign and domestic critics had repeatedly castigated Kohl for unduly rushing reunification but the election outcome in the DDR strengthened his hand in dealing with them. Kohl was clearly the man of the hour. The loud East German endorsement of his leadership to achieve speedy reunification not only made him the likely chancellor of a united Germany in the near future. It also gave him added weight and authority in the coming negotiations with other countries on the future place of Germany in Europe and the emerging new order on the continent.

At decisive times on the difficult path towards German unity Kohl had acted with determination. Either through instinct or shrewd calculation he had made bold choices that had turned out to be the right choices. After recognizing the opportunity to achieve unification as a result of the popular revolution in the DDR, he persisted in moving ahead over all the obstacles put in his way. If Kohl had reason to be satisfied with his record, it inevitably also influenced his fellow players and negotiating partners.

This held true concerning his dealings with both domestic and foreign issues. Kohl's success subdued previous talk of his coalition partners, the Free Democrats, possibly deserting for the opposition Social Democrats. It also persuaded the Social Democrats to be less inclined to diametrically oppose Kohl's plans and timetable for reunification. The East German election results were the writing on the wall, spelling danger to those who were perceived to be dragging their feet on the issue of national unity. It had put fear into many Social Democrats, acutely aware of the national elections in December, with regard to how the voters might punish them for their past policies on unity.

Kohl's stronger position versus the other players encouraged him to move forward with confidence. By the beginning of April 1990 he was talking of a definite date for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from eastern Germany and the stationing of and extending conscription for the Bundeswehr, the federal army, over all of Germany. He advised the Poles of his readiness for the final regulation of the German-Polish border, but also brought up his interest in German minority rights in Poland and its renunciation of German reparations, though he did not specifically tie them to a treaty on the border.²³

Meanwhile, during his visit to Washington on 6 April, Shevardnadze made it clear that the Soviet Union was dropping its demand of neutrality for a unified Germany, though he persisted in rejecting unified Germany's NATO membership.²⁴ The continuing collapse of the Warsaw Pact influenced Soviet views on Germany and NATO. Moscow found it difficult to accept the continuation and even potential expansion of the rival alliance when its own alliance system was disintegrating. Yet the serious weakening of its economy, its need of economic and financial help, and the aspirations

of its minority nationalities undermined the Soviet ability and will to resist concessions. The Baltic peoples' fervour to reassert their independence and growing nationalist rumblings among Ukrainians, by far the largest Soviet national minority, were unnerving Moscow.

As a compromise, the Soviets had floated the idea that Germany could be simultaneously a member of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact, but no one had picked it up. To others it seemed impractical and unrealistic. They saw it as a sign of Soviet desperation in finding an alternative to unified Germany's NATO membership when faced with solid resistance to German neutrality. Bush and Thatcher increased their pressure on the issue, repeating their earlier demands on German NATO membership, though they also upheld German rights to full control of all its territory and full sovereignty.²⁵

Moscow continued, however, serving notice of its reservations on the German question, including the pace at which reunification was proceeding. Besides wanting further real concessions, Gorbachev still needed to engage in shadow boxing for the sake of his domestic critics. Depending on its spokesman, and sometimes even delivered by the same person, Moscow's positions kept changing. Without totally abandoning its opposition to German NATO membership, it was nevertheless signalling its will to continue to negotiate. Shevardnadze had stressed the need for compromise on 10 April.²⁶ Moscow had clearly travelled some distance from its original rather arrogant stand.

The Soviets were also buttressing their bargaining position by reasserting themselves in the DDR against the de Maizière government. Summoning the prime minister to his presence as an inferior, the Soviet ambassador made it clear who was still the boss and insisted on fulfilment of all DDR contracts and obligations to the Soviet Union and the other Comecon countries.²⁷

Such an insistence on economic obligations was also a reflection of the Soviet Union's worsening economic problems. Kohl was apprehensive that these difficulties, together with the acute tension between Lithuania and Moscow, could create obstacles to German unification. He saw the Soviet economic problems as the key to overcoming Moscow's resistance. German economic aid and co-operation would be more important to Moscow than opposing German membership of NATO. On 23 April he proposed negotiations to Gorbachev on an extensive treaty of co-operation, including DDR obligations. Evoking historical co-operation between Germany and Russia, the proposal suggested a fundamental improvement and warming of relations between the two countries, parallel in importance with European integration.²⁸ It was an important step towards a German-Soviet deal.

Kohl was also keen on reassuring France and its smaller neighbours of Bonn's continuing interest in European integration and that German

reunification was no obstacle to it. Acting together, Kohl and Mitterrand proposed an EC meeting about European political union to complement meetings on economic and monetary union. Both leaders wanted to speed up preparations and work for these aims in order to have them ready for ratification by the beginning of 1993. They also envisaged the political union to include European foreign, defence and security policy.²⁹ This could reduce the future importance of both NATO and the United States for Europe, which had been a long-term French aim, preceding but also continued by Mitterrand.

Like Kohl, Mitterrand also wished to resume Franco-German co-operation particularly for the purpose of further European integration. He wanted it badly enough to initiate a major effort to make amends, as he now had little reason for thinking that anything could stop German unification. The only thing that remained was to make the best of it for France. When the two leaders met in Paris on 25 April, Mitterrand toasted German unification and praised the 'great' German people. He was obviously both eager to please Kohl in private and to display good relations between the two in public, though he also pleaded with Kohl for French troops to stay in Germany until further progress took place on general disarmament and Soviet stability. Kohl was pleased with Mitterrand's overtures, and in turn talked of Franco-German friendship and his wish for European unity.³⁰

At the time, however, Kohl's primary interest lay in German reunification, although he also sincerely wanted further European integration. Furthermore, the latter contributed to the former, as it could reassure many of Bonn's partners in the EC who may have been concerned about the Germans. While France believed that German reunification increased the need for European integration as a way of retaining control over German actions, Britain did not share this view. It preferred to achieve the same ends via NATO.

Most EC nations supported the Franco-German initiative for further European integration, although (including France and Germany) they held many and in part different visions about the nature of future political union. Some were willing to transfer more power to the European organs than others. The Germans wanted to strengthen the European Parliament and the role of democratic decision-making within the EC, while the French were bent on strengthening the role of the Council of Ministers.

The Franco-German proposal was aired at an EC summit meeting in Dublin on 28 April which had originally been called to discuss the implications of German reunification for the Community. Kohl told the meeting that German and European unification were two sides of the same coin. He also soothed the assembled EC leaders' possible worries concerning the potential economic costs of German reunification to its EC partners by

promising that the Germans would pay for it by themselves. He said that they did not plan to put their hands into the EC wallet. Jacques Delors, the President of the European Commission, had proposed EC aid to the East Germans but was blocked by Margaret Thatcher.

The EC leaders' response greatly pleased Kohl, who was all smiles. They endorsed German unification in positive terms and agreed upon moves for needed modification in the EC. Mitterrand did his share, as well as other European leaders such as the Italian prime premier Giulio Andreotti, who had previously been critical of German reunification but who now became very supportive. The choice was whether to be run over or jump on the train. Kohl was particularly satisfied with Mitterrand's stance.³¹

Not only Germany's EC partners gave new and renewed signals of their agreeability and needs. So did Washington, alarmed over all the recent talk of European political union and a common EC foreign, security and defence policy and its implications for the American presence and role in Europe. Changes were taking place in Europe which pointed towards a reduced American influence there in the future. Not only had the rapidly diminishing threat from the east undermined the importance of NATO, but the grafting of a common security policy onto the EC and talk of an all-European security structure, based on the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, or the CSCE consultations, could also weaken the American impact.

Washington had some reason to worry. Having largely lost their fear of the Russians, many Europeans were less enthusiastic about the continued American presence on their continent than at any other time since the Second World War. Some Europeans were still apprehensive, and even entertained fears of the Germans. They and many others continued to welcome the continued existence of NATO and an American presence as a counterweight to a powerful, unified Germany. Washington used these fears by associating its future contribution to European defence and security with the viability of NATO, but the crucial unanswered question remained how long the Europeans would respond in the same way.

As long as the Soviet situation stayed unsettled and uncertain, all the European NATO members would cling to the organization as a guarantee of safety for lack of a viable alternative. What would happen with the emergence of an alternative solution to their security problems? Would they then still see value in NATO? Having existed for so long, over forty years, NATO was likely to continue its existence in some form even after its original mission and essential functions had disappeared. The force of continuity, old habits and institutional dynamics, sheer lethargy and fear of the unknown could allow it to linger while it slowly withered, but to remain the kind of viable and vital organization on which the United States could base

its role in Europe in the future, NATO needed a credible mission and purpose. In the long run, Washington's need of it could not alone either keep it a going concern or keep the Europeans interested in it.

Many Germans and other Europeans had already been and were talking about creating alternatives to NATO as solutions to European problems of security. Among them were influential figures such as Genscher and leading German Social Democrats, and French and East European leaders, including Gorbachev and Shevardnadze. While the possible alternatives remained vague, they alarmed Washington enough for it to move to thwart the threats to the role of NATO. At the same time, Washington continued its search for a new mission, a political role for the organization which would maintain the United States as a player in Europe.³²

For the preservation of NATO as an organization of key importance in Europe, continued German membership was essential. Thus Washington thought it important to keep the Germans happy by supporting German unification, lest they be tempted by Moscow's talk of alternative security arrangements as a price for unification. At the NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels on 3 May 1990, Baker declared that a stable, united Germany was a loss to no one. The Americans were, of course, not the only ones eager to keep the Germans in NATO, and had ample backing in this aspiration among its other members. The meeting was also generally positive on German unification.³³ Coming so soon after the supportiveness of the EC summit, this was a double boost for the Germans. They were riding high.

From the NATO meeting Baker went to Bonn and emphasized Bush's concerns directly to Kohl. Bush wanted to strengthen NATO's political role and keep the United States 'a major player' in European politics. As if to underline the seriousness of this desire, Baker tied it to significant American military presence in Europe. Desirous of keeping a close rapport with Bush, Kohl in turn reassured Baker and strongly disassociated himself from efforts to bring about an American withdrawal from Europe.³⁴ The very same day that Baker was passing on Bush's concerns to Kohl, Bush himself also forcefully expressed similar views in a speech in Oklahoma. He said that 'the United States should remain a European power in the broadest sense, politically, militarily and economically' and that 'the foundation for American engagement in Europe has been and will continue to be NATO'. Speaking in support of a continued American military presence in Europe, he claimed that it demonstrated better than words an enduring political compact between the United States and Europe.³⁵

Washington had many reasons for wishing to remain an active and influential player in Europe. It feared that an American military withdrawal would lead to a loss of political influence which in turn could lead to

restrictions on American exports and investment activities in Europe. Washington also thought that continued American military commitment was necessary because of the unsettled situation in the Soviet Union. While Washington was vocal about the Soviet factor, it said little of its wish to guarantee and guard American economic interests as a reason for its continued political and military engagement in Europe. It and other NATO members said even less in public about a remaining factor – Germany. A strongly felt need still existed in Washington, as in other NATO capitals, to keep the Germans in check and contained within the Western alliance. Many felt that a strong American role in Europe was needed even more to balance the increasingly powerful Germans. This was talked about far more in private than in public, and such sensitivity to German feelings already indicated the German's growing power.³⁶

Such sensitivities reflected the spreading conviction that German unification was already inevitable. The Germans themselves were moving rapidly forward with economic and monetary union, though serious problems remained unsettled over a unified Germany's place in the security structure of Europe. Concerning these remaining problems, the Soviet Union was out of step with the other involved powers. German NATO membership remained the most serious bone of contention. On the German–Polish boundary there was a meeting of minds in principle, but some irritation lingered over the timing of its final recognition. Kohl wanted to wait until after the German local and national elections, in order to prevent potential extremist electioneering exploitation of that sensitive issue.

On the eve of the first so-called two-plus-four talks about German unification between the foreign ministers in Bonn on 5 May 1990, the participants were manoeuvring for position. Moscow was signalling to Bonn its receptiveness to a deal with the Germans. An article in *Pravda* indicated that unified Germany's NATO membership was likely and not necessarily a disaster.³⁷ Immediately following Baker, Shevardnadze had gone to see Kohl, bringing Gorbachev's warm greetings and a message of his readiness to meet Kohl in July.

Shevardnadze came basically as a supplicant, although he still held some bargaining leverage. If the Soviet reforms had no success, he predicted that total anarchy or a dictatorship would ensue. As Kohl repeated his earlier proposals for far-reaching co-operation between unified Germany and the Soviet Union, Shevardnadze emphasized his own and Gorbachev's responsiveness to Kohl's proposals. He said that they favoured German unification and, although the Soviet Union could not accept unified Germany's NATO membership, a compromise could be found.

Its nature became evident when, in conclusion, he asked Kohl for Bonn's credit guarantees for the Soviet Union. A fair degree of anxiety accompa-

nied the Soviet request. This became clear when Shevardnadze proceeded to assure Kohl that the Soviet Union was basically a rich country, so the credits would involve no risk. Kohl indicated his wish to help but did not commit himself to a promise.³⁸ Without explicitly admitting it, the Soviet Union was in fact asking for money as partial payment for its acceptance of a settlement on the German question. No wonder the Germans concluded that Moscow was ready for an understanding. The credit request meant that it was looking for a deal and not for a confrontation. Kohl was quite pleased with his talks with both Shevardnadze and Baker. He wanted to help Gorbachev with credits without delay, thinking that, together with the earlier German food aid, it would help to smooth the way for a political understanding.³⁹

In the two-plus-four talks the Soviet Union had a difficult row to hoe. Alone, it faced both the Germans and their Western allies. The one thing it had going for it was the others' wariness of pushing Gorbachev too hard for fear of endangering his leadership of the Soviet Union. He had, after all, been willing to co-operate with them, and any alternative to him would be an unknown quantity. Shevardnadze tried to make the most of this by indicating that Gorbachev had little room for concessions because of internal Soviet pressures. He could not give more without also gaining something.

Shevardnadze came with alternative proposals to German NATO membership. Besides again proposing a new European-wide security system, based on the 35-nation Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the CSE, he also suggested the uncoupling of the external and domestic issues of German unification. This second proposal came as a total surprise and caused quite a stir. It was a clear departure from past Soviet policy. Shevardnadze was signalling to the Germans to proceed with unification before solutions had been found to the disputes concerning its international or external aspects. There was, however, a drawback. Until a solution to them was found, the four wartime allies could retain rights in Germany.⁴⁰

The German reception of Shevardnadze's proposal was divided. Genscher welcomed it, saying that it paved the way for rapid German reunification. Kohl rejected it. He felt it was merely an opening bid in a continuing game. 'Did anyone really believe the Soviet Union would put all its cards on the table?' he wondered.⁴¹ Shevardnadze's proposal implied continued restrictions on German sovereignty, a prospect which held little appeal for a nation riding high on expectations of its unification. The German desire to have full sovereignty restored to them found support with Baker. He warned against any kind of discrimination against the Germans as it could cause resentment, conflict and instability. Even the French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas expressed similar sentiments, saying it was not for the wartime

Allies to decide for a sovereign and unified Germany what alliance it could join.⁴²

As if making amends, Shevardnadze adopted a conciliatory tone in the concluding press conference of the two-plus-four meeting. Vouching for constructive Soviet co-operation, he also mentioned its intention to speed up the process of German unification.⁴³ This was another departure from a long-standing Soviet position. Previously, Moscow had repeatedly complained about the Germans moving too fast. The Soviet Union clearly did not wish to appear as the spoiler to the Germans when Bonn's Western allies gave it vocal support. Something resembling a bidding match was evolving. The Germans had reason to feel satisfied and confident of the eventual outcome.

Encouraged by the two-plus-four meeting and Shevardnadze's comments, Kohl concluded that all-German elections could perhaps be held that same year. He had reason to feel confident. Gorbachev sent him a message a few days later, on 9 May 1990, indicating how pleased he was over Kohl's talk with Shevardnadze and how he wished to quickly solve the remaining problems.⁴⁴

What, then, lay behind the new Soviet emphasis on speeding matters up? While Gorbachev and Shevardnadze had to talk tough in public to appease the Soviet hard-liners, they increasingly needed German economic help and co-operation to shore up their positions. The Soviet economic chaos and, most recently, the May Day demonstrations had served notice to both of their vulnerability. They probably felt that they could not afford to stall much longer on a deal with the Germans.

Notes

- 1 See, e.g., *The Economist*, 24 March 1990; *Newsweek* and *Time*, 26 March 1990.
- 2 Teltschick, 1991, p. 179.
- 3 *IHTr*, 22 March 1990.
- 4 Teltschick, 1991, p. 180.
- 5 *FAZ*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 19 March 1990.
- 6 *IHTr*, 19 March 1990.
- 7 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 184, 201.
- 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 188.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 180, 186.
- 10 Cf. Emil Kirchner and James Sperling, 'The Future of Germany and the Future of NATO', *German Politics*, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1992, pp. 50-77.
- 11 *FAZ*, *IHTr*, *SZ*, *The Times* and *Die Welt* 24 March 1990; Teltschick, 1991, p. 182.
- 12 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 182-3.
- 13 *FAZ* and *Die Welt*, 20 March 1990.
- 14 Zimmerman and Havel in *Time*, 26 March 1990.

- 15 *IHTr*, 20, 22 March 1990.
- 16 Kohl, in *Time*, 26 March 1990, and *IHTr*, 24 March 1990.
- 17 *The Economist*, 24 March 1990, p. 51.
- 18 Mitterrand, on French television, 25 March 1990.
- 19 Thatcher, in *Der Spiegel*, 26 March 1990.
- 20 Thatcher, in *IHTr* and *The Times*, 31 March 1990.
- 21 *Ibid.*; Kohl, on BBC, 30 March 1990; Kohl, in Teltschick, 1991, pp. 189-90.
- 22 Kohl, BBC, 30 March 1990, and *Time*, 2 April 1990.
- 23 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 190, 192.
- 24 *Welt am Sonntag*, 8 March 1990.
- 25 *IHTr* and *The Times*, 14 April 1990.
- 26 Shevardnadze, *Novosti*, 10 April 1990.
- 27 Teltschick, 1991, p. 198.
- 28 *Ibid.*, pp. 204-6.
- 29 *IHTr*, *Le Monde* and *Die Welt*, 21 Feb. 1990.
- 30 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 207-8; *FAZ*, *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde* and *Die Welt*, 26 April 1990.
- 31 *Welt am Sonntag*, 29 April 1990; *Der Spiegel*, 30 April 1990; *The Economist*, 5 May 1990; Teltschick, 1991, p. 211.
- 32 Kirchner and Sperling, 'The future Germany and the future of NATO', *German Politics*, 1, 1992, pp. 50-77.
- 33 *FAZ*, *IHTr*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 4 May 1990.
- 34 Teltschick, 1991, p. 217.
- 35 Bush in *IHTr*, 4 May 1990.
- 36 Views expressed by several Western diplomats in the spring of 1990.
- 37 *Pravda*, 3 May 1990.
- 38 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 218-21.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 221.
- 40 Shevardnadze, *Novosti*, 5 May 1990.
- 41 *IHTr* and *Die Welt*, 8 May 1990; *The Economist*, 12 May 1990.
- 42 *IHTr*, 5 May 1990; *Welt am Sonntag*, 6 May 1990; *Der Spiegel*, 7 May 1990; Szabo, 1992, pp. 82-4.
- 43 *FAZ* and *SZ*, 7 May 1990.
- 44 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 224, 228.

14 The End Game

The Germans felt confident, yet before Gorbachev's and Kohl's meeting in July 1990 cleared the last remaining major hurdle from the path of German reunification, some surprises still lay in store and many problems still had to be solved.

Both German politicians' and business leaders' confidence owed much to a Moscow visit by leading West German bankers at Kohl's instigation in mid-May 1990. Hilmar Kopper and Wolfgang Röller, respectively the heads of the Deutsche Bank and the Dresdener Bank, together with Kohl's foreign policy adviser Horst Teltschick, had confidential meetings with Soviet leaders in the Kremlin on 14 May. Soviet requests for credit guarantees from Kohl had brought the German bankers to Moscow to assess Soviet credit-worthiness from an economic point of view.

The Soviet leaders put their best face on things as loan applicants. Soviet Premier Nikolai Ryzhkov, Shevardnadze, and in the end Gorbachev himself gave their sales talk. Thanking the Germans for their quick and confidential reaction and for the possibility of talking over their problems and for possible help, the Soviet leaders spoke positively of the developing German-Soviet political and economic ties. They needed economic help to keep Soviet living standards from falling to the point of endangering the reform policy and the future of the world, they said. They also argued that the Soviet Union was a rich country with a great potential when it came out of its transition. The Germans felt the Soviets presented their economic situation candidly, to the point of producing a list of their major creditors in descending order. West Germany headed it, followed by Japan, Italy, France, Austria, and Britain. It was an interesting list – notable was the absence of the United States.¹

The Soviet leaders' response to the German delegation confirmed that Kohl was on a right track. Upon its return he decided to help Gorbachev with some DM5 billion worth of credit guarantees. In addition, he sought to enlist Bush for further aid during a visit to Washington on 17 May. Outlining to Bush the deteriorating economic situation and rapidly rising unemployment in East Germany and anticipating further problems with monetary

union, Kohl wanted to bring forward the anticipated all-German elections to early December, but for that he needed Gorbachev's co-operation. Bush hesitated because of the Lithuanian-Soviet conflict, but agreed with Kohl that the Lithuanian issue should not determine the West's policy when Kohl pointed out that a successor to Gorbachev would probably be no improvement.²

Kohl spoke candidly of his concerns, but so did Bush. As before, he said that the Soviet troop withdrawal should not be tied up with American withdrawal. Furthermore, he would not wish to leave American troops where they were not wanted. It was not that the Americans had to feel loved in order to stay, but Bush was concerned about the future development of American and German opinions as he was fighting growing isolationism. Kohl did his best to reassure Bush and compared his own situation to that of a farmer who wished to bring in the hay before a possible thunderstorm. The two men had developed considerable trust in each other and afterwards publicly confirmed their agreement about achieving German reunification. Bush came out for unrestricted German sovereignty over all its territory and an end to all Allied post-war rights. 'We both want a united Germany', he said, 'which enjoys full sovereignty, a united Germany which is a full member of the Western community and of NATO.' Kohl in turn thanked Bush for his support of German unification.³

Just before seeing Bush, Kohl had received a jolt from the local elections in North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony on 13 May. On past experience he had reason to believe that he would fare better in all-German than mere West German elections. This gave him an additional reason to push for early unification, and his coalition partners favoured these aims for the same reasons. This upset the Social Democrats, who expected in contrast to succeed better in the West German elections. Polls showed them gaining ground and on 21 May a poll indicated that Lafontaine could beat Kohl. They also thought that the prolonged economic problems and dislocation associated with unification could benefit them in the long run and therefore wanted to delay the eventual all-German elections.⁴

Another potential concern was the attitudes of Germany's neighbours, among whom public support for German unification was declining. According to EC polls, support for it since the fall of the wall had waned in France from 80 to 66, in Britain from 71 to 64, in the Netherlands from 76 to 59, and in Belgium from 71 to 61 per cent. In West Germany the percentage of people supporting unification had remained stable, going from 78 to 77 per cent.⁵ It was ironic. While public support for German unification was declining among her neighbours, the originally reluctant British and French leaders had come around to backing it because of its seemingly unstoppable dynamics.

Kohl thus had ample reason to strongly pursue his aim of rapid unification. He made it known to Gorbachev that he regarded the credits as part of a package for progress in the two-plus-four talks, and held out the promise of help with further Western credits and wide-ranging German-Soviet economic co-operation. In return he expected Moscow to contribute to a constructive solution of the German issue before the end of the year.⁶

The Soviet leaders had been demanding treaty-bound limits on German armed forces and continued to resist German membership of NATO. Moscow further talked of the need of a peace treaty with Germany, originally gaining some support from Paris for this notion. Bonn opposed it determinedly, believing that it could lead to all kinds of complications and delays and put the Germans in an inferior position as the defeated power. The Germans instead wanted talks between equals.

Kohl's message to Gorbachev was followed up by Genscher meeting Shevardnadze. Genscher brought with him a bag of presents and concessions in exchange for Soviet recognition of German unification and NATO membership. They included massive credits and promises of more, specific East German deliveries to the Soviet Union including uranium, and funds for the upkeep and pay of Soviet troops in East Germany.⁷

The Soviet leaders did not buy the offer at once. During a Moscow visit by Mitterrand on 25 May, Gorbachev indicated increased Soviet intransigence in disarmament negotiations if a united Germany became part of NATO. As a compromise he proposed a similar arrangement for Germany as France had with NATO. He was also suggesting to the West the uncomfortable notion that the West's insistence on German-NATO membership signaled its distrust of the Germans.⁸ In view of Mitterrand's past activities, Gorbachev may have hoped to gain his support, but times and the situation had changed.

Gorbachev was looking for a way in which he could deliver enough to secure the aid he needed and wanted, without risking a serious internal political backlash. In a *Time* interview preceding his trip to Washington in May, he predicted a narrowing of differences between himself and Bush on the German question.⁹ He also attempted to drive a wedge between the Germans and their Western allies, saying that some in the West pretended to be more enthusiastic about German unity than they really were, hoping that the Soviet Union would put the brakes on and get the blame.¹⁰

Shevardnadze was also making soothing overtures to the Germans. He talked about the need to search for solutions to the German issue that were acceptable to all, while also indicating Soviet agreeability to the accelerated German timetable. Furthermore, he underlined the importance of future good Soviet-German relations, including those with a united Germany.¹¹ It was all connected with money. The German offer of DM5 billion in credits was something concrete of which the Soviet leaders were eager to take

advantage. Genscher reported to Kohl that Shevardnadze had reacted 'euphorically' to it and had signalled his readiness to settle the remaining issues.¹² Shevardnadze also proceeded to prepare the ground in the Soviet Union for its eventual acceptance of German membership of NATO.¹³ Stopping off in Ottawa on his way to Washington, Gorbachev pursued the same line, expressing optimism over an eventual agreement on the matter.¹⁴ Meanwhile, Kohl and Bush kept in close touch with one another, co-ordinating strategies. Kohl wanted to make sure that Gorbachev gained an impression of American-German unity on the issues involved. Having discerned the possibility of a deal with Gorbachev, he was keen on propping him up sufficiently for him to stay in power. Kohl therefore wanted Gorbachev to emerge well from the Washington summit so that his position *vis-à-vis* his internal foes would strengthen. He repeatedly stressed the importance of this to Bush, who basically agreed with his approach.¹⁵

The summit, however, brought no breakthrough on the German question. Gorbachev criticized Washington both for trying to dictate its views and for the lack of any new ideas, but both leaders also expressed optimism. Apparently keen on not jeopardizing his relations with Bonn, Gorbachev said that the Soviet Union did not wish to obstruct German unification. Bush informed Kohl of the progress and outcome of the summit. Reporting that Gorbachev had asked for massive economic help with American participation, he indicated agreement on condition that progress was made on the German question among other issues.¹⁶

Bush and Kohl were in fact consulting so closely with one another over the German question that they seemed to work in tandem. The American establishment clearly wanted good relations with a future united Germany, as did the Soviet leadership. Early in June Kohl was again back in the United States receiving a Harvard honorary doctorate and a standing ovation both before and after his speech thanking the American people for what they had done on behalf of the Germans.¹⁷ He also met Bush. Upon his return to Bonn, Kohl told the assembled Christian Democratic politicians that Bush had represented German interests as no other American president had done before, and commented on a friendly attitude in Congress and in the country in general towards Germany.¹⁸

That was quite a change from the previous autumn, when Washington seemed to have been out of touch with the mood and events in Germany. Bush had early recognized the Bundesrepublik as the most important American ally in Europe, but had hesitated and floundered for a certain period when facing the novel situation arising out of the events in East Germany in the autumn of 1989. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the sudden prospect of German reunification took him by surprise, as they did so many others. However, he recognized the new European and German realities faster than

some other international leaders, and his policy rapidly became one of resuming and continuing close co-operation with Kohl.

What the Germans wanted from the United States and the West in general was further economic help for the Soviet Union, and progress in the disarmament negotiations in order to facilitate Soviet agreement on the German issue. Almost simultaneous meetings of the Warsaw Pact and NATO in early June opened up new possibilities for a removal of the remaining obstacles. The meeting of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow on 7 June signalled its continuing dissolution. Moscow could clearly no longer dictate its will to its other members as in the past. Neither Gorbachev's proposals to revitalize the Pact nor his renewed suggestion that a united Germany should be tied to both NATO and the Warsaw Pact found much appeal with its other members.¹⁹ Gorbachev's bargaining power was rapidly running out, being essentially reduced to the leverage he could squeeze from his very weakness, the perceived vulnerability and tenuousness of his hold on power in the Soviet Union.

The simultaneous NATO meeting at Turnberry on 8 June declared all its members' support for the unrestricted sovereignty of a united Germany, including its right to NATO membership.²⁰ Pressure was clearly increasing on the Soviet Union and Gorbachev to stop delaying on the German issue. Talk could be heard in political and diplomatic circles that continued Soviet resistance on the German and NATO issue put at risk Moscow's chances of gaining German and Western aid and credits. The possibility of German interference with energy and water supplies to the Soviet garrisons in East Germany was also mentioned. The potential long-term negative impact on future relations between a united Germany and the Soviet Union which could arise from continued procrastination loomed as an additional cloud on the horizon in the minds of some Soviet officials.²¹

Whatever the reasons, the Soviet leaders started to display increasing flexibility. Gorbachev got in touch with Kohl by letter on 11 June. Thanking him for his aid in overcoming Soviet economic problems, he pleaded for Kohl's help in securing additional large long-term credits from other countries as well. He reaffirmed their mutual agreements of 10 February and assured him of his confidence in rapidly finding solutions to the international ramifications of the German issue, and proposed direct contacts.²²

It was an encouraging communication for the Germans. So was a meeting between Genscher and Shevardnadze in Brest on the same day that Kohl received Gorbachev's letter. It was a symbolic reconciliation of a sort between Germany and the Soviet Union from the tragedies of the Second World War. The two foreign ministers together visited the grave of Shevardnadze's brother who had fallen on the first day of the war. Seeking a solution to Germany's membership of NATO in a transformation of NATO

and the Warsaw Pact from military to political organizations associated with each other, they ran into problems over specific details.

Shevardnadze insisted on the preservation of the wartime Allies' rights in Germany until the completion of the Soviet military withdrawal and reciprocity in the withdrawal of Soviet and Western troops. Genscher rejected both conditions.²³

The Soviet leaders' bargaining position was not enviable. Internationally they were isolated, as their former allies or subject states had slipped out of their hands and abandoned them. Domestically their room for manoeuvre was shrinking, for their popularity at home was sinking as the Soviet economy deteriorated. They still held out against accepting united Germany's membership of NATO, but few thought that Gorbachev even now was aiming at German withdrawal from NATO; rather, he was simply trying to arrange the best possible deal he could get. The Germans believed that money would make all the difference, although they officially denied it to spare Soviet sensitivities, and that Gorbachev could not afford to wait much longer. They also wanted to strike a deal while Gorbachev still could deliver it. The Soviet Union, however, was no longer in a position to block German unification. Even its possible insistence on keeping troops in East Germany could no longer guarantee its ability to dictate to the Germans. Isolated and demoralized, these troops were rapidly losing their value as a bargaining asset but instead increasingly turned into a liability for Moscow.

No wonder the German leaders felt ever more confident of settling matters soon. Internally they were preparing to move as quickly as possible to unification. The re-emergence of the *Länder* in East Germany corresponding to the West German *Länder* assisted rapid unification. This could occur under Article 23 of the constitution of the Bundesrepublik without any time-consuming and complex legal and constitutional disputes.²⁴

On the international aspects of unification the road might be more awkward. While the Bundesrepublik appeared to be willing to pay what it could, other nations were clearly less forthcoming with the credits and aid that Gorbachev seemed to be holding out for. They were no more eager to help when they witnessed how the Russians were falling behind on the payments on credits they had already received. Loans were no longer as easily accessible to the Soviets as they had been. The Russians were met with scepticism when they claimed that their problems were of a passing nature. While they managed to roll over short-term credits, they had little success in raising large new loans. Soviet officials had to get used to the humiliation of knocking in vain on bankers' doors in European financial centres. Warily received, they often had to leave with empty pockets or to agree to much higher interest rates and more guarantees if they did manage to get any results. In desperation the Soviets were offering gold deposits as security.²⁵

Clearly the value of money was increasing as a bargaining lever with Moscow.

Gorbachev announced new proposals in a speech to the Supreme Soviet on 12 June. He could accept Germany's NATO membership with limitations, he said, if it also remained a Warsaw Pact associate and changes took place in both organizations which resulted in *rapprochement* between them towards an all-European security structure. Broadcast directly on TV, Gorbachev's speech was intended to prepare Soviet opinion for greater flexibility and signal to the West and the Germans his own willingness to find solutions. Both Kohl and Bush rejected Gorbachev's new proposals.²⁶

Gorbachev's internal position was at the same time rapidly becoming increasingly precarious. Under pressure from the hard-liners, he was also confronted by a growing challenge from Boris Yeltsin. Yeltsin's power increased greatly at one blow, as the elected President of the Russian Federation when it declared its 'sovereignty', on the same day that Gorbachev was making his proposals.²⁷

While Gorbachev's position was weakening, Kohl was moving determinedly ahead to speed up German unification. He was acting on several fronts simultaneously in order to advance his basic aim. The day after Gorbachev's speech he dispatched letters to his EC and Group of Seven partners, the participants in the world economic summits. He was preparing the ground, asking them to help in dealing with the Soviet economic problems. Kohl thus sought to set an agenda for the forthcoming EC and Group of Seven summits in Dublin and Houston which could be helpful to German unification.²⁸ He was trying to meet Gorbachev's request for additional massive Western credits.

Internally, he was building consensus for the final and conclusive acceptance of the Polish-German boundary on the Oder-Neisse line as a necessary condition for unification. Those who would not abandon territorial claims were putting unification at risk, he said, and announced publicly that the border would be guaranteed.²⁹ Poland's acceptance of Soviet troops within its territory until it had received satisfactory German border guarantees may have been on his mind.

The following day Kohl was sitting on the balcony of the East German parliament when the proposal came up to immediately join the Bundesrepublik. It passed easily with an overwhelming majority of 267 to 92. Although it was later set aside for additional study and preparation, the clear majority for the motion added to the pressure for speedy unification.³⁰ It was a prod to the wartime Allies and it bolstered Kohl's wish for fast action; his guiding hand was seen behind the vote.

Kohl wasted no time in taking advantage of the East German measure and predicted that an all-German government would emerge before the end

of the year.³¹ He was speeding along towards national German unity, driven both by a genuine general desire for it and by tactical considerations. The tactical considerations had both internal German and international dimensions. The internal aspects involved election calculations based on the economic prospects in East Germany. Kohl was thought to stand a better chance the earlier the all-German elections took place, such thoughts being based on gloomy expectations of economic dislocation in East Germany in the wake of monetary union.

The international considerations concerned mainly German fears that Gorbachev would not or could not deliver owing to his increasingly shaky position in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, some of the pronouncements of Bonn's Western allies were not altogether reassuring to the Germans. French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, for example, was clearly making amends for past French behaviour in an interview in *Der Spiegel* in mid-June, but still felt free to say that the Germans were in too much of a hurry. This was not altogether reassuring to the Germans in view of Dumas's past pronouncements. The Germans also remembered that the Nazis had executed Dumas's father during their occupation of France, and Dumas was very close to Mitterrand.³² At about the same time British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher reiterated in public her concerns about German unification. She expressed her worries over German economic and political domination of the European Community, evoking the memory of the two world wars.³³

German apprehensions of Gorbachev's position became aggravated by the Communist hard-liners' heavy attacks on the Soviet leader. His main enemy, Yegor Ligachev, criticized him for his handling of the German question. Hard-pressed, Gorbachev was forced to seek an alliance with another old foe, the Russian President Boris Yeltsin.³⁴ This indicated the seriousness of Gorbachev's troubles as the two were divided not only by old feuds but also by bad personal chemistry.

Gorbachev's problems manifested themselves in additional hurdles on the path to German unification. Shevardnadze tied the Soviet troop withdrawals from the DDR to the reduction of other foreign forces in Germany, and proposed an upper limit of 200,000 to 250,000 to the German armed forces. Furthermore, he wanted to maintain the wartime Allies' rights and troops in Germany and the DDR's treaty obligations to the Warsaw Pact for at least five years after unification, but this made little sense in practice and was immediately rejected by the Western allies and Bonn. They saw Shevardnadze's proposals as a sop to the Soviet hard-liners.³⁵ Shevardnadze himself indirectly encouraged the dismissal of his proposals by repeatedly indicating his willingness to compromise.³⁶

The Germans and the Western allies knew that Moscow's ability to press its demands was rapidly weakening. Popular protests against the increas-

ingly demoralized Soviet troops were emerging in East Germany and Gorbachev's need for economic help was growing ever more urgent. After German economic union in July, Bonn was to pick up the DDR's obligations for the support and upkeep of the Soviet troops and their dependants in East Germany. This meant that what had been considered an élite part of the Soviet army would depend on Bonn for its daily existence. The Soviet military also became dependent on Bonn in another way, as a partner, when Bonn became responsible for the DDR's obligations, including providing the Soviets with elements of high technology.³⁷

Meanwhile, Kohl continued systematically to work for an eventual deal with Gorbachev. He secured the simultaneous acceptance by both German legislatures of German economic union and a recognition of the German-Polish border. The latter he justified as necessary to achieve German unity, but once again demanded rights for the German minority in Poland.³⁸ A formal recognition of the border was hard on many Germans. They held cherished and intimate memories of the lost lands connected with their youth and childhood, memories of childhood friends, parents and grandparents, and lost homes. Many felt these losses to be unjust.

To German annoyance, the French had supported the Poles on the border issue, and settling it also thus removed an irritant from Franco-German co-operation. By June, Mitterrand was increasingly eager to get along with Kohl, making amends for his past attitudes and confirming the Franco-German alliance and friendship. While, for example, Bush was holding back on American economic help to Gorbachev despite Kohl's earnest pleas for it, Mitterrand became receptive and helpful. He publicly advocated an agreement on an aid package at the forthcoming EC and world economic summits respectively in Dublin and Houston.³⁹ In Dublin, Mitterrand backed Kohl's efforts to gain international financial aid for Gorbachev but Mrs Thatcher forthrightly refused. This was despite the rapport that allegedly existed between her and the needy Russian, but she could be frugal and had never been enthusiastic about German unity, to put it mildly.

The British saw no reason to rush with aid to the Soviet Union. After all, the Russians were not starving, they said, only standing in queues.⁴⁰ Instead of immediate aid, the EC summit merely agreed to provide it in principle, subject to further study.⁴¹ This was something, but not the quick shot in the arm that Gorbachev had been looking for, in the form of rapidly available credits in their billions. He badly needed to have something substantial to show in the way of achievement before the fast-approaching Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, where he was expected to come under heavy attack, but at least Kohl had measured up to his word to try to enlist international help to Gorbachev beyond the promised billions of German credits. He would also soon have another chance

at another forum at the forthcoming Houston economic summit in early July.

Kohl gained more immediate results from the NATO summit in London. Immediately preceded by but largely simultaneous with the Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, it made the kind of reassuring noises and gestures towards the Soviet Union which Kohl and the Germans were after. The idea was to reassure Gorbachev and bolster him against the Soviet hard-liners, in order to advance Moscow's acceptance of united Germany's NATO membership. Just before and during their own meeting, the NATO summit participants were exposed to reports of the hard-liners' show of strength and blistering attacks against Gorbachev. Shevardnadze, speaking early in the Soviet meeting, was on the defensive and appeared nervous. Where he talked in favour of co-operation with a unified Germany, whose division he called artificial and unnatural, the leader of the hard-liners, Ligachev, advocated the use of strong armed forces, to the sound of loud applause.⁴²

The question of united Germany and NATO was the central issue confronting the London summit, and was in turn closely connected with the role of the United States in NATO and Europe and the possible future evolution of the organization. Its preservation was a top priority to the Americans, as it provided their main foothold and bridgehead in Europe. Without Germany the organization could no longer fulfil such a role.

Gorbachev tried to influence the summit. Sending a message to Mrs Thatcher as its hostess, he said that its results would influence Soviet attitudes on German unification, and once again tried to obtain Western economic aid. It did nothing to harm his cause,⁴³ and the East Germans did their share to impress upon the summit the urgency of dismantling the military confrontation in Central Europe. East German Defence Minister Rainer Eppelmann demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the DDR. He said that their continued presence caused rising tension between them and the local people which had resulted in open confrontations and some violence.⁴⁴

The NATO summit basically delivered what the Germans wanted. It sent conciliatory and friendly signals to Gorbachev to help him in overcoming hard-line resistance to acceptance of German unity and NATO membership. All the summit participants spoke of the importance of united Germany's NATO membership, but also agreed on a series of reassuring overtures to Moscow, which included several steps designed to emphasize the defensive and peaceful character of NATO. Among them were proposals for new disarmament measures, changes in strategic doctrine, and buttressing the role of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe as a means of including the Soviet Union more closely in a new security structure for the continent. The Germans, supported by the French, had championed the

last point. They also signalled their acceptance of new upper limits on their armed forces as a further reassuring gesture.

The Americans went far to meet German desires at the summit, connecting it with their own future in Europe. Bush re-emphasized the wish of the United States to remain a European power in politics, militarily, and in economics, and noted that the United States, more than any others, had welcomed German unification. Stressing his wish to continue the American presence in Germany, he at the same time soothed the Germans by saying that the future size of the German armed forces was up to them. Kohl in return pledged future German loyalty to NATO.⁴⁵ The Germans had reason to be pleased with the results of the summit. It had gone along with their wish to help Moscow.

The EC and NATO summits in Dublin and London had already displayed the Germans' enhanced status and role, and in the Houston economic summit of the Group of Seven this became even more visible. Helmut Kohl arrived after the other participants, together with the Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti directly from the World Cup final in Rome, where this former centre forward of his high school's soccer team had seen his compatriots win the world soccer championship. It caused a new emotional high among the Germans, accompanied by fervent flagwaving and celebrations. Kohl shared the triumphant emotions, as the tears in his eyes and his happy face clearly revealed on television to the hundreds of millions of people around the world watching the final. It also revealed that only with the German team did all its members consistently sing the words to their national anthem when it was played. With other teams only some, typically a minority, participated this way.⁴⁶

It could be taken as one indication of patriotism or nationalism and as such flew in the face of the polls which suggested that patriotism and nationalism had a weaker grip on young Germans than on their counterparts in many other countries around them.

Germany was clearly being empowered in politics and sports as well as in the economic matters on the agenda in Houston. In May the Bundesrepublik, together with Japan, had been granted the second most voting power in the International Monetary Fund after the United States. This was a formal recognition of its increased economic influence, putting it ahead of its third-ranked European rivals Britain and France – or, as Bonn's Finance Minister Theo Waigel put it, the Germans and Japanese had won silver while Britain and France got bronze. The Deutschmark had also become, after the US dollar, the second most important reserve currency in the world, reflecting the Bundesrepublik's leading status as an exporter. Under the circumstances, it was no wonder the Germans were expected to flex their muscles.⁴⁷

As the leader of the strongest and wealthiest European country, Kohl acted accordingly. On issues displaying the world's factual division into three leading economic areas, the other Europeans tended to support the Germans, the British being the frequent exception. All the summit participants vouched support for German reunification and pledged co-operation with Soviet efforts to move to a free market economy. Yet key economic powers such as the United States and Japan stopped short of promising the kind of quick financial aid to Moscow that Kohl, closely supported by Mitterrand, was advocating. This rift was disguised in a unanimous agreement to study the matter further, in an echo of the Dublin EC summit.⁴⁸

The Soviet Communist Party Congress had continued its bickering parallel with the Houston summit. After its rocky start Gorbachev had succeeded in reasserting his leadership.⁴⁹ With the immediate danger to Gorbachev's position removed, Bush had less reason to agree to contribute credits or funds, while the Japanese first wanted their two disputed islands in the Kurils from the Soviets before they would join in.

Time after time the British had been most reluctant to rally to the Germans. Nevertheless, an interview by Nicholas Ridley, the Trade and Industry Secretary in Mrs Thatcher's cabinet, when he candidly gave his views on Germany and the Germans, caused something of an uproar. Exposing the secret (and not so secret) British views of their neighbours in colourful and blunt language in public, it startled, pleased, embarrassed and angered people, depending upon their point of view. Speaking of the EC, Ridley divulged: 'This is all a German racket designed to take over the whole of Europe. It has to be thwarted. This rushed take-over by the Germans on the worst possible basis, with the French behaving like poodles to the Germans, is absolutely intolerable.' Referring to Kohl he said: 'He'll soon be coming over here and trying to say that this is what we should do on the banking front and this is what our taxes should be. I mean, he'll soon be trying to take over everything.'⁵⁰

Ridley looked back over a long past when Britain had succeeded in keeping a balance of power in Europe which 'never had been more necessary than now, with Germany so uppity. ... It's the German people. They're already running most of the Community. I mean they pay half of the countries. ... But being bossed by a German - it would cause absolute mayhem in this country, and rightly, I think.'⁵¹

What gave extra force to Ridley's pugnacious words was the nature of his relationship with Mrs Thatcher. They were very close. Ridley was Thatcher's closest ally in the cabinet, and his outspokenness was thought to reveal Mrs Thatcher's real views, since she had earlier opposed German unification.⁵² As *The Economist* put it, 'the shock among his colleagues will be less at his sentiments, more that he has been found out'.⁵³

Ridley was not just whistling in the wind. His words mirrored many of his compatriots' gut feelings. Many Conservative MPs rallied to defend him against calls for his resignation, arguing that his views represented 'a significant segment of public opinion in both the House of Commons and the country'.⁵⁴ Were they right? In April a poll in Britain had found that 50 per cent of the people were concerned about a united Germany emerging as the dominant power in Europe, and of them 53 per cent feared the re-emergence of Nazism or Fascism.⁵⁵ Polls taken immediately after Ridley's comments tended to confirm these findings, although in some polls a clear majority of the respondents distanced themselves from his language. According to a *Sunday Times* poll, 55 per cent would worry if a united Germany 'became the dominant power in Europe', but only 37 would not.⁵⁶ In another poll, 33 per cent agreed and 60 disagreed that 'the French were behaving like poodles to the Germans', while only 28 per cent agreed and 66 did not that Kohl 'will soon be trying to take over everything'.⁵⁷ In contrast leading tabloids, including the *Sun*, the daily with the largest circulation in the country, reported overwhelming support among their readers for Ridley's anti-German opinions.⁵⁸ Despite such sentiments, other polls published almost simultaneously indicated that 64 per cent approved of German unification and trusted the Germans.⁵⁹

Mrs Thatcher at first stood by her friend, resisting demands for his resignation but putting it on record that Ridley's views did not represent her own or the government's views.⁶⁰ Ridley himself said he would not resign if Mrs Thatcher did not wish it. Under growing pressure, however, he had to go; as well as the Labour Party, most conservative MPs also demanded it. Mrs Thatcher's position weakened when the Ridley interview was followed by eye-catching new revelations of official British attitudes towards the Germans and reunification. A leaked confidential report about a brainstorming session on Germany, held by Mrs Thatcher, her foreign policy adviser David Powell, Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and six experts at her country retreat, Chequers, on 24 March hit the press on 15 July. Written by Powell, it exposed what many had suspected.

Attempting to assess what a united Germany would be like, the report enumerated certain alleged German characteristics and traits. Having appeared in the past these traits, such as insensitivity, self-obsession and self-pity, might reappear in the future. Among other traits, 'angst, aggressiveness, bullying, egotism, inferiority complex' were mentioned as an 'abiding part of the German character'. Further worries emerged concerning a German tendency to overestimate their capabilities and power. The meeting had recognized reassuring changes in Germany but feared a possible repeat of past patterns. Thus, while Germany was no longer bent on world conquest, 'the way in which Germans currently used their elbows and threw their

weight about in the European Community suggested that a lot had still not changed'. Yet the participants saw consolation in that 'the more assertive Germany became, the easier it ought to become to construct alliances against Germany on specific issues in the Community'.⁶¹

The session had also expressed admiration and envy of German achievements as well as concerns about German reactions during a serious economic crisis. While not seriously wary of the current German leadership, the participants speculated on the re-emergence of negative characteristics within the next 10 to 15 years. Even the more optimistic ones expressed fear concerning the impact of unification on German attitudes. Germany was expected to change as a result of it and to focus more on Eastern Europe and to dominate it economically. The meeting also thought that West and East Europeans shared certain identical interests in security matters in preventing a re-emergence of German militarism. It wanted continued American military presence in Europe as a counterweight to German military power as well as restrictions on that power. The participants also anticipated that in the long term the reformed Soviet Union was the only power in Europe that could balance Germany. They also further speculated on whether the German commitment to European political unity was tactical or genuine.

As a balance there were also reminders of the harm caused to Europe in the past by British-German disputes. The report concluded on a more hopeful note that the Germans had changed in important ways, they were no longer bent on territorial conquest, and that Britain should be 'nice' to them.⁶²

With the publication of this report suspicions increased that Mrs Thatcher not only shared Ridley's views but might actually have originally encouraged him to give his interview. Foreign Secretary Hurd sought to deny this and tried to minimize the damage done. Concerning the leaked report he said, on the one hand, that its comments should not be taken seriously, and on the other hand he emphasized the positive conclusion about the reassuring changes that had taken place in Germany.⁶³ He had an unenviable and painful task. Mrs Thatcher's memoirs show that she actually shared many of the views leaked from the Chequers seminar.⁶⁴

Outwardly, the Germans took the whole episode quite calmly but it left fences difficult to mend and wounds hard to heal, at least as long as Mrs Thatcher remained in office. To overcome these would take more than words. Bonn's spokesmen tried to underplay the incident, though there were also some cutting comments. An official from the Chancellor's Office claimed: 'What Ridley said was so stupid that we refused to believe that his comments reflected the view of the British establishment.'⁶⁵ More important and substantial matters concerning Germany soon overshadowed the Ridley episode and the Chequers report in connection with Helmut Kohl's visit to Gorbachev.

Notes

- 1 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 230-35.
- 2 Ibid., pp. 236-7.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 238-9; *FAZ* and *IHTr*, 18 May 1990.
- 4 *FAZ*, *FR*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 16, 22 May 1990.
- 5 Karlheinz Reif, Director of Surveys, Research, and Analysis for the EC Commission, Milan, Reuters, 17 May 1990.
- 6 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 243-4.
- 7 *FAZ*, *IHTr*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 22, 23, 24 May 1990.
- 8 *Le Monde*, *FAZ*, *IHTr* and *Pravda*, 26 May 1990.
- 9 Gorbachev, in *Time*, 26 May 1990.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Shevardnadze, in *Welt am Sonntag*, 27 May 1990.
- 12 Teltschick, in *Welt am Sonntag*, 27 May 1990.
- 13 Shevardnadze, in *Izvestia*, 29 May 1990.
- 14 Gorbachev, in *Toronto Star*, 30 May 1990.
- 15 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 237-9, 253.
- 16 *FAZ*, *IHTr*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 1, 2, 4 June 1990; *Welt am Sonntag*, 3 June 1990; Teltschick, 1991, pp. 255-8.
- 17 *Boston Globe* and *Die Welt*, 8 June 1990; Kohl, in *Bulletin*, 74, 13, June 1990, p. 642.
- 18 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 262, 264.
- 19 *FAZ*, *IHTr*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 8 June 1990; *Der Spiegel*, 11 June 1990.
- 20 *Der Spiegel*, 11 June 1990.
- 21 Soviet officials in Stockholm, June 1990.
- 22 Teltschick, 1991, p. 264.
- 23 Ibid., pp. 268, 273-4.
- 24 For a debate on these matters, see, e.g., Glaessner, *The Unification Process in Germany*, 1992, pp. 16-17 and the cited sources.
- 25 *The Economist*, 16 June and the *Wall Street Journal (Europe)*, 15-16 June 1990.
- 26 *FAZ*, *IHTr*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 13 June 1990.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 274-5.
- 29 *Welt am Sonntag*, 17 June 1990.
- 30 *FAZ*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 18 June 1990.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Dumas, in *Der Spiegel*, 4 June 1990.
- 33 Thatcher, on the BBC, 18 June 1990; *the Times*, 19 June 1990.
- 34 *FAZ*, *IHTr*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 21 June 1990.
- 35 *FAZ*, *IHTr*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 23 June 1990; Teltschick, 1991, p. 285.
- 36 E.g. Shevardnadze in *Neues Deutschland*, 27 June 1990.
- 37 Article 13, section 2 of the treaty of German monetary, economic and social union pledged to honour the DDR's foreign trade contracts, *Bulletin, Presse - und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung*, 133/1900.
- 38 *FAZ* and *Die Welt*, 22 June 1990.
- 39 Mitterrand, in *Le Monde*, 20 June 1990.
- 40 Reuters, 25 June 1990.
- 41 *IHTr* and *The Times*, 27 June 1990.
- 42 Reuters, 3 July 1990.
- 43 *IHTr* 6 July 1990.

- 44 AFP, 5 July 1990.
 45 For the NATO summit, see, e.g., Teltschick, 1991, pp. 298–304; FAZ, *IHTR*, *The Times*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 6, 7 June 1990; Szabo, 1992, pp. 88–92.
 46 Based on television coverage in June and July 1990 of the tournament in Italy.
 47 *Wall Street Journal (Europe)*, 9 July 1990.
 48 FAZ, *Financial Times*, *Handelsblatt* and *Wall Street Journal (Europe)*, 9–13 July 1990; *The Economist*, 14 July 1990.
 49 FAZ, *IHTR*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 10–14 July 1990.
 50 Ridley, in the *Spectator*, 14 July 1990.
 51 *Ibid.*
 52 *Spectator*, 14 July 1990; Thatcher, 1993, p. 722.
 53 *The Economist*, 14 July 1990, p. 33.
 54 As Quoted in the *Wall Street Journal (Europe)*, 13–14 July 1990.
 55 *Ibid.*
 56 *Sunday Times*, 15 July 1990.
 57 *Sunday Telegraph*, 15 July 1990.
 58 *Sun*, *Daily Express* and *Daily Star*, 13 July 1990.
 59 *The Independent*, 13 July 1990.
 60 Thatcher, in *The Times*, 13 July, and Ridley, on the BBC, 14 July 1990.
 61 *Independent on Sunday*, 15 July 1990.
 62 *Ibid.*
 63 Hurd, on the BBC, 15 July 1990.
 64 See, e.g., Thatcher, 1993, pp. 769, 791, 798, 813–15.
 65 Quoted in the *Financial Times*, 16 July 1990.

15 The Solution

Kohl flew to Moscow at the head of a large delegation on 14 July 1990. Having prepared the ground during the previous weeks' summits for his much anticipated trip, he had good reason for optimism about its results. Although he had not succeeded in immediately raising the billions that Gorbachev hoped for and felt he needed, Kohl had made a visible effort to deliver. Added to the *de facto* unification of Germany which had just taken place with its economic, monetary and social union, this might be just enough to convince Gorbachev that the deal he could make with his guest would get no better by waiting. Gorbachev could also anticipate that Kohl would not be arriving empty-handed; it had actually been spelled out by a Bonn spokesman.¹ Such outspokenness could have embarrassed the Russian leader. By contrast, a more sensitive Genscher tried his best to soothe Soviet sensitivity and pride by stating that Bonn 'has never believed that German unity could be bought'.² It was a sore point with the Russians.

Knowing that he had not only been invited to Moscow but to Gorbachev's home ground north of the Caucasus, Kohl had reason to expect success. He also knew that Gorbachev was back in the saddle for the time being, having overcome his hard-line foes in the party congress. How firmly and for how long remained an open question, but at least for a time he had gained a longer leash and more room to manoeuvre and to make deals.

Kohl was also aware of Gorbachev's continuing financial needs as the Soviets were making full use of the five billions of Deutschmarks in credits that they had previously received.³ Together with the delays and hesitations that the EC and Group of Seven summits had revealed in the granting of further assistance to the Soviet Union, this was a reliable indication of the financial and economic pressures on Gorbachev. It was significant that Kohl's party included Finance Minister Theo Waigel as well as Foreign Minister Genscher. Clearly, economic and financial matters stood high on its agenda.

The German Chancellor was in high spirits when flying eastwards over the same Russian plains through which German soldiers had slogged during the war, but his occasionally too loud joking revealed his inner tension.⁴

This was perhaps inevitable, as he realized that he was probably on the most important foreign mission in his life. The Germans had to overcome two major obstacles to German unification and the restoration of full sovereignty: the securing of Soviet agreement to its NATO membership, and renunciation of the wartime Allies' rights in Germany. The two were connected. Winning Soviet agreement to them would clear the way for treaties with Bonn's Western allies as well.

When Kohl's party landed in Moscow, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze was at the airport to greet them. Horst Teltschick, Kohl's foreign policy adviser, felt his welcome to be extraordinarily warm. The welcome made Kohl confident that the visit would go well.⁵ Meeting Gorbachev the following day in a turn-of-the-century neo-Gothic mansion belonging to a wealthy pre-revolutionary businessman, they found the Soviet leader friendly and earnest.⁶ As an opening Kohl referred to a saying by Bismarck that one must seize the mantle of history, thus emphasizing the historic opportunity the two leaders faced. Seeking an emotional common bond, he then reminded Gorbachev that they both belonged to the generation which had been affected by the Second World War, yet were too young to feel guilt. With their common experiences, they should make the most of their chance.

Agreeing with Kohl's words, Gorbachev picked up and developed the same theme. Emphasizing the importance of rebuilding closer German-Russian relations, he equated their importance with the relations between the Soviet Union and the United States. In return, Kohl promised to conclude an extensive agreement of co-operation with the Soviet Union, subject to solution of the existing problems. He also reminded him that all the efforts towards financial and economic co-operation, referring to the EC, NATO and Group of Seven summits, were part of a general package or solution to the German question. To buttress his case, he also described the rapidly deteriorating economic situation in the DDR. Gorbachev could empathize with this and quipped that Kohl was living through his own *perestroika*, adding that therefore there should be mutual help.

Keeping his eyes on the essentials, Kohl then proceeded to outline what still needed to be accomplished to keep on track and to the planned timetable. He listed the settlement on Soviet troop withdrawals from the DDR, united Germany's NATO membership, and future limitations on its armed forces. The end result had to be a fully sovereign Germany.⁷ How the one-sided troop limitations accorded with full German sovereignty remained unexplored.

Gorbachev then complimented Kohl for influencing Bush to pursue better relations with the Soviet Union. Kohl in turn emphasized the importance of no suspicions emerging in Washington concerning the German-Soviet relationship. It had to be made clear that good German-Soviet relations

were also in the American interest.⁸ This was the other side of the coin to the earlier, often-repeated Western assurances to Gorbachev that a united Germany's membership of NATO was also to the advantage of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev also expressed his appreciation of the direction NATO was moving, referring to the reassuring and soothing sounds emitted at the NATO London summit about co-operation with the Soviet Union and no longer regarding it as an adversary.⁹

Then he followed up with the decisive concessions. After expressing his assumption that the reunited Germany would be confined within the existing West and East German borders and of Germany's renunciation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, he reached the heart of the matter. NATO's military structure was not to be extended to DDR territory, a transition period of three to four years was needed for Soviet troop withdrawal and, to Kohl's direct question, he expressed agreement with united Germany's full sovereignty. He accepted its NATO membership with the restriction on East Germany, and the end of the wartime Allies' rights and responsibilities in Germany without a transition period after the conclusion of the two-plus-four talks. For the withdrawal of Soviet troops, he wanted a separate treaty.

Kohl repeated Gorbachev's comments to make sure that there had been no misunderstanding.¹⁰ It was a historic breakthrough. Gorbachev had provided the solution to the remaining obstacles to final German reunification.

Gorbachev afterwards expressed his appreciation for the five billion credit guarantees from Bonn. 'This master stroke had come at the right moment. He valued this step ... therefore very highly.'¹¹ It was a telling comment. Hearing it, Kohl must have felt pleased that he had followed his instincts by responding immediately and positively to Gorbachev's requests some two months earlier. It had paid off handsomely.

Economic and financial matters in fact occupied a crucial role in the talks and the emerging settlement between Bonn and Moscow. Bonn's Finance Minister Waigel had a large role in the Moscow talks, and Gorbachev also emphasized the importance of economic co-operation and trade to Soviet-German relations at the press conference following the first stage of his talks with Kohl. He underlined his expectations of their future importance by stressing that the Bundesrepublik had been the largest Western and the DDR the largest Eastern trading partner of the Soviet Union.¹² Waigel's talks with his Soviet counterparts dealt with potential extensive aid programmes both directly by Bonn or via the International Monetary Fund where Bonn carried increased weight. They also involved guarantees for long-term German-Russian trade contracts as well as the costs associated with the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the DDR and their relocation in the Soviet Union. These would come on top of the costs to which Bonn had

already earlier agreed covering the upkeep of these troops after monetary union, including providing Deutschmarks for their wages.

After their first day of talks in Moscow, Gorbachev and Kohl headed southwards to Stavropol and the Caucasus. They had both exuded *bonhomie* at the press conference and, while assuring everyone that their talks were going well, they did not fully reveal how well. Many details, of course, still remained to be settled or, as Gorbachev put it in concrete terms, 'We have got a few small nuts to crack, but we have got very good teeth. We will crack them.'¹³ It was a fitting comment from the man who had been said to have iron teeth.

Much of what remained to be settled would be tackled in a serene environment in the high mountains of the Caucasus. After landing at Stavropol, Gorbachev's home town during his many years as the first secretary of the Communist Party in the region, where they had a friendly encounter with Soviet war veterans, they continued their journey to a mountain resort. They arrived at sunset in the midst of a beautiful flowery meadow surrounded by snowcapped mountains. Wading into the meadow, Raisa Gorbachev picked a few of the flowers and smilingly handed them to Kohl.¹⁴ It was a charming gesture which said a great deal.

Kohl's and Gorbachev's talks continued in an informal atmosphere and setting. Interspersed with walks and strolls, their talks progressed well and in a good mood. Reiterating their aims and conditions, and the agreements from Moscow, they plunged into greater detail, engaging in some bargaining and explaining more their reasoning and thinking. While agreeing that a fully sovereign Germany could choose her own alliances, including NATO, Gorbachev did not want NATO mentioned specifically in a treaty. This, together with the exclusion of NATO troops from eastern Germany as long as Soviet troops remained there, would help to gain acceptance among his compatriots for united Germany's NATO membership. Shevardnadze also specified that, after the Soviet troop withdrawal, NATO structure and in particular nuclear weapons should not be placed in former DDR territory against Soviet wishes.¹⁵

There seemed to be some discrepancy in the views or lack of co-ordination between the two Soviet leaders, as in some of their past pronouncements on the German question, with Gorbachev being more agreeable to the Germans than Shevardnadze. This was evident when Gorbachev reiterated that both its NATO membership and the extension of the NATO area into eastern Germany after the Soviet troop departure was the business of Germany alone. Yet he did not want it on paper. The Soviet Union assumed, however, that nuclear weapons were not to be introduced there and that its security was not reduced. The troops of a unified Germany could, however, be stationed in eastern Germany.

There was further agreement on the stationing of allied troops in Berlin until the Soviet departure. Gorbachev also agreed to Genscher's comment about the extension of NATO security guarantees to cover eastern Germany after unification. German troops could be stationed there before the departure of the Soviet troops although they should not be integrated with NATO forces. After the Soviet withdrawal they could be put under its command.

Some bargaining followed concerning the duration and costs of Soviet troop withdrawal and the limitations on future German armed forces. Gorbachev now wanted a five- to seven-year timetable for the withdrawal, while Kohl thought that three to four years would be sufficient. Kohl prevailed, promising support, retraining and housing for the troops. Gorbachev justified the support for the Soviet troops as preventing restlessness among the soldiers which could spread to the whole army.¹⁶ He may have been worried over its impact on his own future position, but raising the issue also served the purpose of obtaining more money from the Germans.

While the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the restoration of a fully sovereign Germany was of the utmost importance to the Germans, the economic and financial returns for their agreement loomed as obviously high on the Soviet leaders' list. Going beyond the German assumption of the DDR's economic and financial obligations to the Soviet Union (and they had been many), Gorbachev, as ever a skilful salesman, held out the promise of glowing economic opportunities for the Germans in the Soviet Union. Kohl sought to reassure him with promises of new levels of co-operation and pointed out his record of efforts to gain wider international support for Gorbachev's reform policies than the Germans alone could provide. Becoming more specific, Gorbachev also brought up the matter of Soviet real estate in the DDR, for which he wanted compensation.

On the question of German troop limitation, Shevardnadze mentioned the figure of 350,000. The Germans were prepared to come down to 370,000 men within four years. Genscher connected the reduction with general progress on the disarmament talks taking place in Vienna, trying to avoid the singling out of Germany, and Kohl tied it to the withdrawal of Soviet troops from eastern Germany. Gorbachev had previously asked Kohl during their flight south how far Kohl would go and received the figure of 370,000 as an answer. Saying he had expected more, he nevertheless accepted Kohl's figure.¹⁷ It was far above the original 200,000 to 250,000 men the Soviets had mentioned earlier, yet it still represented a substantial reduction from previous levels of combined German armed strength as well as from the then existing West German forces of 480,000. Finally, Gorbachev also agreed to Kohl's request to see to the situation of the Soviet Germans.¹⁸

At the ensuing press conference, confronting curious and anxious journalists who had been waiting impatiently for a historic news story, Kohl and

Gorbachev gave the principal results of their talks. Visibly pleased and all smiles, Kohl stressed their historic significance not only for Germany and the Soviet Union but for Europe as a whole. Gorbachev sounded somewhat defensive. Stressing the preceding summit meetings' and notably the NATO summit's significance to the outcome, he also said: 'Whether we like it or not the time will come when a united Germany will be in NATO if that is its choice.' He also added that the Soviet Union could not deny the Germans what others were conceding to it.¹⁹

The tenuousness of Gorbachev's hold on the Soviet Union was graphically displayed the very same day with the Ukraine's simultaneous formal declaration of its sovereignty.²⁰ It served as a reminder of the many pressures under which Gorbachev was operating. As indicated by his and Kohl's demeanour on television at their first encounter in Moscow and by his exceptional hospitality, he rather than Kohl appeared to be seeking favour. Whereas Kohl had appeared confident, the normally self-confident Gorbachev had seemed uncertain. Both their postures and facial expressions had signalled their mood when facing the bargaining that lay ahead.²¹ Kohl probably felt that German unification was by then unstoppable and only the bill for it had to be settled. Gorbachev was under pressure to extract as much as he could from Kohl not only because of immediate economic and financial needs but because he was being accused of giving up the fruits of the Soviet victory in the Second World War. He was fighting not just to save face against accusations of selling out but for his job and, indeed, his political future.

Yet when he relinquished East Germany, Gorbachev was not really giving up anything concrete that was not already lost or of little remaining value to the Soviet Union. After its loss of control over Poland and Czechoslovakia, its troops in East Germany had in fact become a potentially vulnerable hostage to the West and, as such, a liability. The practical reality was not the only thing that mattered, however. In history and politics symbolism also has its role and, as a primary trophy and symbol of Soviet power resulting from the victory in the Second World War, East Germany had great value and its loss hurt Soviet pride. Appearances also mattered.

In agreeing to extensive economic co-operation and a build-up of trade with the Soviet Union, the Germans were making no sacrifices in the long run. Rather, besides securing German unification, it was an investment in a potentially massive future market for their products.²² It was a means of ensuring that Germany's already clear lead in the vast Russian markets would not only continue but grow in the future.

The Germans felt euphoric after the breakthrough in the Caucasus. Kohl received congratulations from world leaders and lesser notables, from the Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal to Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia. Bush

was impressed and complimented him for outstanding leadership and excellent results.²³ The German press greeted him as a conquering hero.²⁴

Not everyone shared that enthusiasm. Although both Kohl and Gorbachev had given assurances that German-Soviet co-operation was not aimed against any other country, guarded nervousness initially coloured many reactions. There were hurried and often vague recollections of earlier occasions when the Germans and the Russians had drawn together, such as the Rapallo treaty of 1922 and even the Nazi-Soviet pact of August 1939 which triggered first the German and then the Soviet invasion of Poland and the Second World War.

Such recollections were enough to make some suspect the worst, yet the precedents hardly warranted or justified the fears. At Rapallo two alienated and ostracized outsiders in the then international community had allied themselves for mutual self-help. The image did not apply to or fit Germany and the Soviet Union in 1990, and neither did the Nazi-Soviet pact; Kohl was no Hitler and Gorbachev no Stalin.

Fears are nevertheless often beyond the realm of reason. Outwardly, official reactions in other countries were polite and sometimes even sounded enthusiastic, but this often hid a deep uneasiness. To some a new power axis seemed to be emerging connecting Germany and Russia, and this would require adjustment from others. Apprehension about this was wide spread.

What mattered most, however, were the reactions of the United States, France and Britain because of their greater weight and power. Washington, London and Paris felt left out of the limelight. The Kohl-Gorbachev deal had reduced the remaining two-plus-four negotiations and meetings to a sideshow; Western leaders first learned about the historic breakthrough from the media, which certainly did not please them. Clearly a new era was beginning with German unification and the Soviet retreat from Central Europe. This alone caused uneasiness and even foreboding, but for those who were accustomed to be the prime players and to perform the main roles, to be left out of the spotlight at such a time intensified their unease. It was hard to be denied real participation at such a turning-point in post-war history.

When the two-plus-four talks convened in Paris on the heels of the Caucasus meeting, the participants were largely reduced to simply registering things that had already been agreed. The remaining issue was the German-Polish border. The Germans felt some bitterness about the final renunciation of territories which amounted to roughly a quarter of pre-war Germany but accepted it as the inevitable price of their unity.²⁵

Prepared to pay that price, they were incensed at the Polish demand that the wartime Allies retain their rights in Germany until a unified Germany recognized the existing German-Polish boundary. By insisting on it, the

Poles expressed their suspicions regarding the dependability of the resolutions and pledges of the parliaments and governments of both German states to accept the permanency of the border. The Germans thought that it amounted to undermining the foundations of future co-operation between the neighbours.²⁶ In the end an agreement was reached that the German government would sign a border treaty with Poland immediately after unification. The Germans also promised economic help to the Poles.²⁷

The bills were mounting for the Germans over their unification. Anxiety was growing in the DDR as its economy continued to decline and dissolve at a dramatic rate. Some 224,000 lost their jobs during the first two weeks following monetary and economic union, and 30,000 to 40,000 shared their fate each week. In addition, some half a million had only part-time work by the second half of July. This forced Bonn to quickly pump additional money into East Germany.²⁸

The growing East German anxiety emerged in increasing demonstrations and short strikes. The strikers knew that they received half or a third of the corresponding West German wages and at the same time were confronting rapidly increasing living costs. Unemployment hit women especially hard, and among some a feeling of having been deceived and treated unfairly was spreading. Women in particular were also upset over the closing of some social services, such as kindergartens, which added to their burdens.²⁹

In part the East Germans were themselves directly responsible for their plight as they preferred to buy West German products to their own goods, including basic foods. This accelerated the drying up of even the local markets, further lowered production, and threw increasing numbers of people out of work. Yet people wanted Western cars and gadgets as well as Western clothes and equipment. Western chains and wholesalers also at times insisted on exclusively providing their own products to their East German outlets, thus shutting out the local products. When East German products could compete neither at home nor abroad, for often they could not immediately meet Western specifications, the East German economy inevitably disintegrated rapidly.

The disintegration was taking place faster and going much further than earlier calculations had predicted. By the end of August the unemployed had passed the 400,000 level and the figure continued to rise at the rate of some 25,000 per week. Another million or so had only part-time or no work although still classified as employed.³⁰ Since unemployment was a new experience to most East Germans, they were ill prepared to cope with their new situation.

In the midst of this economic malaise, Reiner Gohlke, the man in charge of the economic reforms in the DDR, resigned for lack of adequate Western

investment and because of former Communist officials' resistance to reforms.³¹ This contributed to growing scepticism about the DDR government's ability to carry out the necessary economic reforms.

Adding to the heightening sense of a deep crisis in the DDR was the break-up of its ruling coalition. Together with the increasing and intensifying economic chaos, it led to moves to further speed up reunification. The Volkskammer, the DDR parliament, voted by an overwhelming majority of 294 to 62 on 23 August for German reunification to take place on 3 October 1990. The vote reflected growing public pressure (recent polls showed an even clearly higher share, nine out of ten) for speedy reunification. Responding warmly to the vote, Kohl spoke of a day of joy for all Germans. He stressed how unification had occurred 'without war, without blood, in full unanimity' with Germany's partners in East and West, calling it unique in contemporary history.³²

The vote brought a sigh of relief from the Germans. Many thought it would encourage investment and eventually relieve unemployment in East Germany. Quick unification was believed to be the best guarantee of narrowing and then closing the gap between the West and East Germans' standard of living.³³

One sizable group of East Germans, however, did not, and did not have reason to, look to their personal future with such optimism. These were the many officials of the DDR, some 1.6 million strong, Stasi collaborators and informers, administrators for the old Communist rulers. Many of them would be deprived of their jobs and they could start to empty their desk drawers. Even those kept on would only be on probation. This meant that they faced an uncertain future. To join the ever growing ranks of the unemployed would be a new experience for them.

Others who looked forward to a future full of uncertainty were Soviet soldiers and their dependants stationed in the DDR. Pressures were building up among the East Germans to get rid of these unwanted guests sooner rather than later. Graffiti demanding 'Russen raus', Russians out, were appearing and the Russians were meeting with increasingly chilly treatment by local people. The East Germans were venting long-pent-up emotions of resentment for the past high-handedness of the Soviets.³⁴

The Soviet troops were rapidly becoming demoralized. Not only were they facing local hostility but they were becoming increasingly conscious of the ideological and economic defeat that their homeland had suffered in the long rivalry and struggle with the West. All around them people were rejecting Communism and its symbols with gusto and the shops were newly flooded with goods of variety and quality not available in the Soviet Union. Facing departure from this 'chocolate-land', as they revealingly called it, they could not even be sure of a roof over their heads upon their eventual

return to the motherland, because of housing shortage and competition from other returning troops and their dependants.

The Soviet troops' unhappiness was a growing concern to Gorbachev. Passing the word to Bonn that their withdrawal would take at least five to seven years, Shevardnadze reminded the German government that the withdrawals were tied to German help and complained that it was inadequate. Threatening to slow down the withdrawals, he made other demands concerning security and economic, scientific and technical co-operation between Germany and the Soviet Union.

To spur on the Germans, the Kremlin also conveyed a message that the situation in the Soviet Union was acute and the leadership at a critical juncture. Support for the Soviet troops was essential as otherwise a military revolt could not be excluded in the absence of means for new housing, transport costs and subsistence in the DDR. Kohl decided to be forthcoming as regards Soviet requests for housing but tough on support for the troops. This could both provide a carrot for the troops to leave and a stick to discourage them from lingering in Germany. He also prepared to provide food from the DDR for the Soviet needs worth some one billion Deutschmarks.

These measures did not settle the matter, however, and some tough bargaining over money lay ahead. The Soviets presented a bill in some detail for the Deutschmarks they hoped to collect. They wanted 3.5 billion for troop support over four years, 3 billion for transport, 11.5 billion for new housing, kindergartens, shops and new infrastructure, 500 million for re-training, and 17 to 17.5 billion for the Soviet real estate in the DDR. It was quite a bill and came on top of a telephone request by Bush to Kohl for German financial help to cover the costs of the Kuwait crisis.

Kohl personally called Gorbachev and offered him a total package of 8 billion for the troop withdrawal. The Soviet leader reacted toughly, rejecting the offer as not nearly enough, but showed some flexibility. He wanted 11 billion alone for housing and infrastructure. When the troops' transport and support costs were added, the sum would be substantially higher. Without a financial solution the two-plus-four treaty was endangered, he said. Facing the unmistakable underlying threat, Kohl sought to lighten the tone by saying that, with good will on both sides, a solution could be found, while Gorbachev called the situation alarming. Kohl then suggested that they should both think it over during the weekend.

The game was now approaching its end, as the two-plus-four representatives were supposed to meet in Moscow on 12 September to sign the treaty of German reunification. Two days before that, Kohl again called Gorbachev. Now he offered a total of 11–12 billion. Saying that he did not want to haggle, Gorbachev asked for 15–16 billion. Neither did he, said Kohl, and

referred to the other good things to come through joint Western efforts. Gorbachev then described the internal *preŝŝuŝeŝ* he was under and stuck to the 15 billion figure, saying that since it could not be met almost everything had to be thought over. At that time Kohl threw in another 3 billion in interest-free credits.³⁵

It did the trick. The bargaining over the money had been tougher than had the amiable meeting in the Caucasus, perhaps because of additional as well as renewed domestic pressures on Gorbachev. Both leaders declared their unwillingness to haggle but haggle they did and rightly so, as it was their duty as national leaders to look after the interests of their people and the stakes were high.

The settling of the issue between Kohl and Gorbachev cleared the way for the signing of the Treaty on Final Arrangements in Relation to Germany. Although not in name, it was in practice a peace treaty. It re-established full German sovereignty with the end of the wartime Allies' rights, deriving from their defeat and occupation of Germany almost half a century earlier. It had been a long wait for the Germans. They were, however, to be rattled by a last-minute hitch. This time the British held back. They balked at signing the treaty, insisting upon rights of manoeuvre on East German territory which the treaty denied. Informed about the British demand, Shevardnadze passed the word that 'there would be no treaty' if they persisted, and the angry Germans were reminded of the Ridley affair. Eventually the British backed down, clearing the way.³⁶

The final signing of the treaty on 12 September 1990 called for some speech-making. Perhaps the most apt comment was made by Shevardnadze, who said: 'We cannot continue to live in the past. We have to think about the future.'³⁷ Indeed, the new treaty clearly marked the closing of one era and the beginning of another in the long history of Europe.³⁸ In a sense it marked the end of the tragedy-filled twentieth century and the dawn of the twenty-first century.

It was accompanied the next day by the initialling of a German–Soviet treaty of broad co-operation. Including pledges of non-aggression against each other and annual summits, expanded trade and investment, and scientific and technical co-operation, it helped Gorbachev and Shevardnadze to sell the settlement with Germany for ratification to the partly reluctant and hostile Supreme Soviet.³⁹

After the final clearance of the remaining obstacles on the path of German reunification and the restoration of its full sovereignty, a scramble to adjust to the new reality ensued. Bonn increasingly became a point of attraction to foreign delegations and visitors seeking contact with this rising centre of influence and power. For the future of Europe and in particular the EC, relations between Bonn and Paris remained the most critical. While

asking Kohl permission for French troops to remain in Germany, and eager for continuing Franco-German co-operation towards an economic, monetary and political union of Europe, Mitterrand tried to make amends for the past year. In accordance with his European policy, Kohl wisely reassured him on his concerns.⁴⁰

Behind these concerns lay an apprehension that German reunification would result in profound changes in the general mood and perceptions in Europe. The waning Soviet threat and the withdrawal of Soviet troops (and in time probably the Americans as well) from Germany could weaken the ties of cohesion in Western Europe which had originally been a response to the challenge from Moscow.

With the common enemy and shared fears gone, alliances often fall apart. Would this happen again? Would it lead in turn to an increasing emphasis on national interests at the expense of the common good and, especially in Germany, to a preoccupation with the challenging task of internal reconstruction and healing of wounds? Such questions hung in the air and were anxiously aired and discussed in many places in the face of German reunification.

After the initial clear majority of popular support in France for German reunification immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall, second thoughts had at times come to the fore. Whereas in January 61 per cent of the French had supported and 15 per cent opposed German unity, a poll published just before reunification indicated that 37 per cent welcomed it while 27 per cent felt uneasy about it. Yet another poll taken a little after reunification found 58 per cent were for and only 9 per cent were against it, while 28 per cent were indifferent.⁴¹ The polls could vary considerably, depending upon their timing and the exact wording of the questions, among other things. An endless debate had been carried out on the issue for months in the media, bombarding the public with worried messages. Typical was the question posed by *Le Figaro*, a conservative paper, just before reunification. It read: 'Should we be afraid of Germany?'⁴² No matter how such questions were treated and answered they obviously contributed to public uneasiness.

Yet the French public still remained clearly less alarmed and more positive about a unified Germany than many members of their élite which was more preoccupied with national status and power. Trained to stress the rational, they could not get away from the evidence of the statistics which gave united Germany an overwhelming lead over France in those matters which could be so measured. The one increasingly questionable exception in terms of its actual value was the French nuclear arsenal.

In Britain a somewhat similar gap persisted between the broader public and segments of the élite, although there also mass readers of the tabloid newspapers endorsed the gut feelings of the élite doubters. Historical memories,

traditional prejudices and new fears united them. Feelings of being overrun and ignored in the German unification process angered some leaders. Even the German emphasis on the connection between their national and European unification annoyed rather than reassured those who opposed further European integration. Yet much of the leading British media stressed repeatedly how different contemporary democratic Germany was from the enemy of the past, and a clear majority of the British accepted German unity.⁴³

The Americans had offered the most consistent and strongest support to the Germans' pursuit of unity and had least trepidation about it. Yet preoccupation with the Kuwait crisis was leading to resentment in Washington concerning the level of German support for the American efforts there against Iraq, although there was some recognition of the heavy German obligations to the Soviet Union and internal reconstruction. The broader American public continued to favour German reunification. Just before it was formalized, an ABC News telephone poll indicated that 80 per cent of Americans supported it and 79 per cent saw in Germany no threat. Even among the over 65 age group of the Second World War generation, eight out of ten approved. Many German Americans were very pleased, while many Jews were apprehensive.

Although, of the major powers, the Soviet Union had most vocally opposed German reunification, it looked forward to future co-operation. Seeing in Germany its main Western trading partner and source of help and investment, its leaders and spokesmen referred to this former deadly enemy as a partner and even ally.⁴⁴ Polls taken in Moscow indicated that the Muscovites favoured by a 50 to 30 majority the unification process.⁴⁵ In fact, the Russian overtures were causing some nervousness in Bonn concerning its ability to fulfil all the expectations.

Sharing borders with both Germany and the Soviet Union, the Poles felt uncomfortably caught in between the German-Russian bear hug. Of all Europeans they were least well disposed to or comfortable with German reunification, the reasons involving both historical and current anxieties. The Poles were understandably keenly anxious over the Kohl-Gorbachev deal, as historically they had many a time ended up paying the bill for a German-Russian understanding.

For the future relations between the Germans and their allies and neighbours, not only were the allies' and neighbours' attitudes towards German reunification important, but the Germans' perceptions of them were as well. Polls conducted among Germans around the time of reunification give some interesting clues.

The West and East Germans were asked separately about their allies' and neighbours' stand on unification. For the most part their perceptions were similar but differed clearly on the English and the Poles. Both agreed that

the Americans were by far most in favour and least opposed to German reunification while at the opposite end were the Poles, and to lesser degree the English.

While agreeing that a clear majority of the Americans, the French and the Soviets were for reunification, the West Germans thought that almost as many of the English were against as for it, but the East Germans clearly thought that more were for than against. The West Germans believed that a higher proportion of Poles than the English were for reunification, but the East Germans thought that only among the Poles was a clear majority opposed to it. The extremities of the estimates varied from the West German perception of 74 per cent of Americans favouring and the East German perception of 60 per cent of the Poles being against reunification.⁴⁶

The Germans were quite naturally mainly concerned with their internal unification, and all the more so when the outside obstacles fell by the wayside. Yet their mood was not the same as when the wall came down. The party could not last for ever and the initial great wave of joy had become mixed increasingly with anxiety about costs and jobs. Monday morning had followed the weekend partying and celebrations. The very physical contrast between East and West Germany remained stark. The drab gloom of East Germany struck one continually as another world from the well-kept and tidy West.

It was not just the physical contrast between the two which was striking; the difference was in mentality as well. The distance between the more open and enterprising West Germans and the grimness of many in the East, the lingering 'Verboten' mentality with all its authoritarianism and submissiveness, caused tension. It could not be easily or quickly resolved as it involved two long, separate journeys through time. The different experiences of two generations during close to a half a century, and the marks they had left, could not be wiped out or be overcome easily. The pressures to adjust fell lopsidedly on the East Germans, putting them at a distinct disadvantage and under much greater strain, and as a result the tension and its symptoms were far greater among them.

The West Germans often treated their poorer eastern cousins as somewhat embarrassing, unsophisticated poor relatives. They bemoaned the inefficiencies and technical backwardness of the eastern firms and institutions. They complained about the rundown, dilapidated, and unkept buildings and the lack of modern communications. Some behaved like colonial masters among the natives they had come to tutor and train, and a few concluded that the East Germans were somehow inherently less capable and unable to manage and work effectively.

The East Germans resented being made to feel second class. Very few among them missed the DDR but uncertainty and tension clouded their joy

over reunification. They were happy to be free, free to travel and to speak their mind, but their uncertainty over their economic future prevented them from taking full advantage of the new freedom. They were hurt by westerners looking down on them and telling them how to run their affairs. Many saw the westerners who descended upon them as sharpers and sharks who were out to exploit and trick them because of their inexperience with the workings of the market.

Many westerners went to the east motivated by a genuine desire to help. They brought much-needed skills and knowledge, helping to educate and train the easterners in the new ways and techniques of doing things. Often they had eastern roots which could add to their understanding and intensify their empathy with the people and problems of the east. The easterners sometimes found it easier to accept and welcome them and they became important bridge-builders across the gap that separated the two parts of Germany.⁴⁷

Although they recognized the inferiority of their living standards and environmental and health conditions, as well as their levels of science and technology, education and vocational training, the majority of the easterners felt they had also been better off in some ways. A clear majority believed that they had had greater equality between men and women as well as more protection against crime and more social security,⁴⁸ but in the new conditions they faced this offered scant comfort.

They were somewhat in the position of children or immigrants in a new land or strangers in their own land in the sense that they had many new things to learn to be able to fully function in their new society. The challenges they faced were not easy to overcome. While many would eventually find and gain what they had been hoping and looking for in unification, others were destined to be gravely disappointed.

Like immigrants they discovered that their customary ways of doing things were no longer adequate or even acceptable. Much of what they had learned in their past lives had little relevance or use in the present and the future. They had to meet problems they had never faced before and which often bewildered them. They came across and had to cope with new customs and behaviour, a new value system and institutions, laws and regulations and commercial practices, which often differed dramatically from what they were used to and knew. The very novelty and strangeness of the new options available made every act or choice seem critically important, which added to the tension and strain. In short, many easterners were experiencing a culture shock. No wonder their self-esteem was severely tested and that they felt less self-confident and more easily discouraged, more helpless and anxious than the westerners in the new conditions of a united Germany.⁴⁹

They also, of course, had very real material reasons to feel the way they did. Sharp contrasts existed between the easterners and the westerners concerning both the levels of unemployment and perceptions of their job security. Unlike the western stereotypes of them, however, the easterners displayed a greater willingness than the westerners to regard their lives as challenges into which they were prepared to put a great deal of effort. In contrast, twice as many westerners as easterners were willing to settle back and enjoy their lives, troubling themselves no more than was necessary.⁵⁰

The easterners wanted to be neither drones nor drudges. By far the most important matters in their lives were love and family happiness, followed by speaking their minds openly and honestly.⁵¹ The strength of the urge to speak freely was a telling testimony to the inner forces and drive which had led them to successfully challenge the repression they had lived under, and it put to shame those who had mocked their thirst for freedom as a hunger after bananas and Deutschmarks.

Despite the many differences between them and the resulting tensions, most Germans welcomed reunification. Older people generally greeted it as a natural coming together of the two parts of the nation, the division of which had always been utterly artificial to them. Polls conducted among the Germans shortly before reunification on 3 October indicated greater joy over it among the easterners. Only 12 per cent of them were negative about it, in comparison to 25 per cent among the westerners. In line with this, a higher proportion of the easterners were also more optimistic about their prospects of catching up with the westerners.⁵²

Whatever their worries and expectations most Germans joined wholeheartedly in the celebrations of national unification starting on 3 October and continuing for many through the night and the next day. On the eve of the celebrations, Helmut Kohl addressed his compatriots on television. He spoke of a dream which had become reality and how the moment was one of the happiest of his life. Thanking the people of the DDR who had made reunification possible, he also expressed his appreciation of the United States and above all President Bush, as well as friends in France and Britain and reformers in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, and President Gorbachëv, without whom unification would not have been possible on that date. He also appealed for solidarity among the Germans to overcome the difficulties which he warned lay ahead.⁵³

Unlike the creation of the German empire 120 years earlier, German reunification was not celebrated with displays of military power. Instead, it was accompanied by music, singing, dancing, fireworks, and with the ringing of church bells and solemn services. These were ceremonies which should have been reassuring to watchful neighbours, nervous over signs of aggressive German nationalism. The festivities centred on the floodlit

Reichstag building in the heart of Berlin, around which enormous, happy crowds milled in high spirits. They were entertained by folk and classical music from the great German musical tradition, including pieces by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms and Mendelssohn, conducted appropriately by Kurt Masur, representing the people of Leipzig.

The crowd greeted the arrival of Kohl as the first chancellor of reunited Germany with waves and cheers and calls of 'Helmut' and a sea of black, red and gold German flags. At midnight, when reunification was officially proclaimed, Kohl, the German President Richard von Weizsäcker, and former Chancellor Willy Brandt among other leaders joined the crowd in the singing of the national anthem while a huge floodlit German flag rose towards the sky. It was during this moment that people seemed most overcome with emotion. Most Germans, from their leaders to the ordinary people, were moved by experiencing the realization of what had long been a mere dream to many.

In contrast, a few thousand leftists staged counter-demonstrations against reunification, engaging in rock throwing, window smashing and the tearing down of German flags. Whatever little impact they might have had was nullified by a series of earlier revelations of co-operation between leftist West German terrorists responsible for notorious assassinations and the universally despised Stasi. The not uncommon view was that the leftist demonstrators resorting to violence and the terrorists were kindred souls mainly motivated by resentment and hatred. Their actions were counter-productive in that they merely offended, but gained no sympathy from, most of those few who took any notice of them at all in the midst of their own celebrations of German unity.

Notes

- 1 Dieter Vogel, Reuters, 29 June 1990.
- 2 Genscher, in *Die Welt*, 29 June 1990.
- 3 Teltschick, 1991, p. 316.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 318–19.
- 6 Klein, *Es begann im Kaukasus*, 1991, provides detailed accounts and apt observations of the physical settings and atmosphere of the German–Soviet talks.
- 7 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 319–20. Teltschick's diary offers the only available detailed account of these historic talks.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 322.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 323–4.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 325.
- 12 *FAZ, SZ and Die Welt*, 16 July 1990.

- 13 Gorbachev, in *IHTr*, 16 July 1990.
- 14 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 329–30.
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 333–5.
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp. 335–6.
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 336–8.
- 18 Klein, *Es begann im Kaukasus*, 1991, pp. 259–60.
- 19 A full description and the text of the press conference appears in Klein, 1991, pp. 269–86, 303–23; Gorbachev, in the *Financial Times* and the *Wall Street Journal (Europe)*, 17 July 1990.
- 20 *IHTr*, 18 July 1990.
- 21 German television, 15 July 1990.
- 22 Robert Gerald-Livingston, in *IHTr*, 16 July 1990.
- 23 Teltschick, 1991, p. 343.
- 24 See, e.g., *Bild Zeitung*, *FAZ* and *Die Welt*, 17 June 1990.
- 25 See, e.g., *Der Tagesspiegel*, 18 July 1990.
- 26 See, e.g., Bernt Conrad, in *Die Welt*, 19 July 1990.
- 27 *FAZ* and *SZ*, 18 July 1990.
- 28 *ADN*, 19 July 1990.
- 29 Gertrude Schaffner Goldberg, 'Women on the verge: winners and losers in German unification', *Social Policy*, Fall, 1991, pp. 34–44.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 1 Sept. 1990.
- 31 *Bild Zeitung*, 20 Aug. 1990.
- 32 *FAZ*, *IHTr*, *SZ* and *Die Welt*, 24 Aug. 1990.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 Impressions from East Germany, summer 1990.
- 35 For this bargaining process, see Teltschick, 1991, pp. 352–5, 358, 360–62.
- 36 Shevardnadze, *The Future belongs to Freedom*, 1991, pp. 146–7; *Der Spiegel*, 17 Sept. 1990, pp. 19–20.
- 37 Shevardnadze, in *NYT*, 13 Sept. 1990.
- 38 Treaty of the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany, 12 September 1990, *Documents of German Unity*, 1990.
- 39 317–1 'Treaty on good neighbourliness, partnership and co-operation between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics', 13 Sept. 1990, *Bulletin, Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung*, 133/1900.
- 40 Teltschick, 1991, pp. 367–9; *SZ* and *Le Monde*, 19 Sept. 1990.
- 41 *The Economist*, 27 Jan. 1991; *Le Figaro*, 1 Oct. 1990; *Spiegel Spezial*, I, 1991, p. 27.
- 42 *Le Figaro*, 1 Oct. 1990.
- 43 Cf. *The Economist*, *Financial Times* and *The Independent*.
- 44 Shevardnadze, in *Newsweek*, 8 Oct. 1990.
- 45 *Spiegel Spezial*, I, 1991, p. 24.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 47 Impressions from East Germany in 1990 and 1991.
- 48 See, e.g., the statistics in *Spiegel Spezial*, I, 1991, p. 46.
- 49 *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 68, 70–71.
- 50 *Ibid.*, pp. 58–9, 69.
- 51 *Ibid.*, p. 67. These were 'very important' to respectively 85 and 70 per cent of the East Germans, while having a job where one could earn much money was 'very important' to only 29 per cent.
- 52 *Spiegel Spezial*, I, 1991, pp. 21, 23, 80.
- 53 Kohl, on German television, 2 Oct. 1990.

16 Epilogue

Growing ties between the two Germanies and a certain revival of a sense and reassertion of German national identity had preceded reunification during the 1980s. These were due to no small extent to a German determination not to become the main victims in a possible conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. Such fears, connected with the missile crises, led to efforts in both Germanies to loosen their dependencies upon the two superpowers.

This in turn became possible with their relative weakening. Far more pronounced in the case of the Soviet Union, it brought internal Soviet reforms under Gorbachev. It also resulted in the Soviet withdrawal from the war in Afghanistan after a decade-long but futile effort to dominate that country, the last four years of it under Gorbachev's aegis. This concrete double example of the Soviet loss of both ability and will to maintain the old order internally and imperialist domination abroad did not escape notice. The people who lived against their will under Soviet domination in Europe, including the East Germans, drew their conclusions from both. The result was a wave of liberalization among some, followed next by liberation everywhere from the old Communist order and Soviet power.

These large international transformations and dramatic changes were also a necessary precondition and accompaniment for East German liberation and German reunification. Adding specifically to the tensions in the DDR was Honecker's unwillingness to emulate Gorbachev's reforms, to the extent of banning reformist Soviet publications from his domains. This left little hope of a compromise between the regime and the desires for a liberalizing change.

At the same time, conditions ripened inside the DDR for a fundamental internal challenge to the leadership and a subsequent transformation. There, as elsewhere in the Communist world, a basic conflict existed between the ruling ideology and reality: the preaching of utter equality and the factually prevailing strict hierarchy in the distribution of power and privilege. A self-perpetuating élite had become increasingly out of touch with the desires and

mood of the masses, despite massive Stasi surveillance which seemed to drown in the very volume of the material that it gathered.

Democracy and unification promised greater political equality and equity, although they would also bring more differentiation in wealth and incomes. The sometimes bemoaned loss of equality among the East Germans as a result of the demise of the DDR overlooked fundamentals: its gross inequalities in political rights and power inherent in the utter lack of freedom and democracy. With this, basic preconditions for any true and meaningful equality or equity were missing.

Contributing to the chasm between the rulers and the ruled in the DDR was another gap. It separated illusions and false perceptions, based on lying media and statistics, from the East Germans' real mood and the reality of their standards of production and material conditions. Vastly increased East German visits to the West, typically with families left behind as hostages, added dramatically to the dissatisfaction and frustration. It reflected another gap. This was the vast difference between East and West German standards of living.

As a result of improved East and West German relations and a *rapprochement* between Kohl and Honecker, obstacles to inter-German visits were reduced in the mid-1980s. This led to a dramatic increase in East German visits to the West. The number of East German visitors leaped by roughly two million annually, until about every third East German had travelled in the West by 1988. This relatively sudden and enormous increase in first-hand exposure of the East Germans to the West hardly made them more satisfied with the conditions in the DDR. Instead, it added to their existing dissatisfaction. It immediately preceded the open eruption of demands for change in the DDR in 1989, and the connection in timing was not coincidental. Instead of reconciling the East Germans to their lot and their regime, the lowering of travel restrictions increased their appetite for more freedom and better material standards. This contributed to the events of 1989, validating some of the premises of the Ostpolitik and helping along eventual German reunification.

Yet the step from dissatisfaction and frustration to action was a long one. To defy the repressive regime with all its means of suppression and coercion took great courage; and especially so before it became clear that challenges would not be met with bullets. To some, challenging the regime meant overcoming not only physical fears but also the lingering grip of the ruling ideology on their minds. The comment of a couple from East Berlin on this was both telling and tragicomic. They said: 'Within our limits we are as angry as we can afford to be and still remain socialists.'¹

The East Germans who braved the streets with their demands for freedom were also the main catalysts for German reunification. Eminent among them

were the people of Leipzig, who set the example for others by being the first, the most consistent, and the greatest number to take the risk of defying the Communist regime. A measure of the courage demanded from the earlier demonstrations is that they were carried out with the Chinese massacre on the Square of Heavenly Peace still fresh in the memory. Ordered by the Chinese authorities against demonstrators, this terrible action received the plaudits of the DDR leaders. The early East German demonstrators had no way of knowing that their approbation would not translate into similar bloody repression in the face of a challenge. Their actions demanded bravery and solidarity.

The collective popular forces, the people on the move, their desires and determination drove the major players. The people shaped and often decided their own options and timetables. The East German popular action on a massive scale was a necessary precondition for Chancellor Kohl's and Foreign Minister Genscher's well-timed and decisive actions in the international arena. Important to their success in the international game were Bush's wish for the United States to remain a major player in Europe and Gorbachev's need of financial and economic help. Both Bush and Gorbachev saw in Germany an important partner to secure these aims and needs, and Bush's and eventually Gorbachev's willingness in turn to meet the German desire for reunification doomed any potential opposition to it to failure.

There lay an irony of history here. German reunification would be accompanied by the Soviet exit not only from eastern Germany but from the lands located between the Germans and the Russians as well. Historically long contested between the two, they were moving away from the Russian and towards the German sphere. Gorbachev had talked a great deal about the construction of a common European house, but he dealt the Soviet Union and the Russians out of many rooms of their former apartment in it without gaining access to the rest of the house as an accepted member of the club. In short, the Soviet exit from Germany may also have meant Russian withdrawal from Europe itself.

German reunification would also be accompanied by an anticipated gradual American retreat from Germany and Europe. Declining German and European needs of American military protection and diverging economic and trade interests could undermine and weaken old commitments and loyalties. Thus, Bush's actions on German unification could in the long term have results for America which were the opposite of his aim to retain a major American presence and role in Europe. Yet neither Bush nor Gorbachev may have had any realistic and viable alternative than to go along with the Germans. There was no mistaking it. Reunification did mean a major re-division of power in Europe. This was a fact. It meant the end of both American and Soviet domination of the continent. It also meant a redistribu-

tion of power among the leading nations of the European Community. United Germany gained and France and Britain lost in relative power, and this foreseeable result inevitably caused tension, anxieties, and efforts to struggle against it.

While the British and French efforts to hold back the Germans had little success, they were understandable actions of perceived national interest. In essence the British and the French leaders, Thatcher and Mitterrand, saw themselves defending their nations' and their own position and status. In their own eyes they were undoubtedly only doing their duty as the leaders of their nations. Rather than giving up without a fight, they chose to struggle. Another matter is whether they made a wise choice.

Events moved so fast that the pace alone at times made it difficult for opposition to reunification to coalesce and become organized. The quickness and ease of the collapse of the DDR caused widespread surprise, which can be explained in part by a human tendency to accept matters that have lasted a long time as more or less natural and viable, rather than hold them to be artificial and therefore fragile and vulnerable.

The DDR had existed for two generations, long enough to establish it in many minds (especially outside Germany) as a more or less regular and solid European state. This left many blind to the thinness of the ropes which held it together and how stretched and strained they had become. The Berlin Wall might have looked formidable but both the building and the opening of it were measures of desperation by a regime with no legitimacy in the eyes of the people who lived behind it and were hemmed in by it.

In the end only a small minority wanted the DDR to continue to exist, just as only a small minority felt that it had more to lose than gain from its demise and from German reunification. They made more noise and they received more attention than their small numbers warranted, because they included a disproportionate number of the articulate and the assertive. Some were mainly motivated by dreams of a third way between capitalism and communism. They wanted a society not only of equality and freedom, but also free from the excesses of the market-place. Others simply feared the loss of their privileges based on the old order and sought their perpetuation. Both were in a position to air their feelings in public forums.

What helped them to gain attention had much to do with the earlier actions of some among them and with the receptiveness of the Western media. Some had early called for reforms though without supporting the destruction of the DDR and reunification. They appealed to like-minded Western leftists who in turn secured them attention in the media. The result was an optical illusion. Some confused the frequency of views expressed in public with views actually held by the vast majority of the East German people on reunification.

What emerged was an informal alliance of views between some original East German intellectual opponents of the old order, outright Communist backers of that order, and West German leftist intellectuals who disliked the Bundesrepublik and feared that reunification would lead to the reassertion of extreme German nationalism.

The same fear, of course, had haunted many among the allies and neighbours of Germany and influenced their reactions to the reunification process. More real among them were fears of German economic and eventually political predominance. Polls conducted among the Germans gave scant basis for fears of expansive and assertive German nationalism which would seek to dominate others. In a *Der Spiegel* poll, only 23 per cent of the West Germans and 22 per cent of the East Germans favoured future German hegemony in Europe. In contrast, 43 and 60 per cent were against while 33 and 12 per cent were indifferent.²

Such polls provided much evidence neither of assertive German nationalism in general nor of exceptionally strong feelings of nationalism among the East Germans. Yet the latter was becoming a widely held belief.

Another poll, which asked which country the Germans admired most and wanted their own country to be like, also showed a clear aversion to becoming a dominant great power. Most Germans answered Switzerland or Sweden.³ That they picked the prime examples and symbols of peacefulness, prosperity and egalitarianism in Europe, or the whole world for that matter, was revealing of most Germans' values and aspirations. Like the Swiss and the Swedes, they wanted to cultivate their well-ordered and tidy gardens, not conquer and dominate others. In time, of course, matters could change. In life and history conditions and views evolve and change; there were no guarantees that today's wishes would be tomorrow's desires.

With the dissolution of the Soviet bloc and German reunification, the German strategic position and security improved dramatically. Two opposing front-line states of two antagonistic alliances had fused into one state far more powerful than any of its immediate neighbours. East of them the Germans found themselves facing a power vacuum consisting of would-be allies and clients, instead of enemies belonging to a hostile power bloc. They therefore no longer depended for their own security upon the ultimate protection of the United States.

The new opportunities which opened up with such a fundamental transformation would naturally in time affect the German outlook and views of their proper role in the world. Temporarily, the needs of reconstruction in the eastern section of their country would absorb most German attention and energy; eventually they could gradually spare both more attention and investment for their needy eastern neighbours. Clearly, they had already invested in the region more than anyone else, and complained that others

made splendid speeches about providing aid and investment to the east but did little. France and Britain did not like to be left behind German penetration and growing influence in the region but were hard put to follow its example. Both Mitterrand and Thatcher wanted to take up the German challenge in the region.⁴ Shortage of cash and expertise in the area as well as geography were against them. The Germans seemed predestined to gain and keep the upper hand there, and this signalled fears of German domination in many minds.

Clear variations existed in the relations between the Germans and their immediate eastern neighbours. They were best with the Hungarians, for both longer-term historic and recent reasons. The Germans and the Hungarians had fought on the same side in both world wars and the Germans appreciated the Magyar role as catalysts in the collapse of the DDR. German-Czech relations were more uneasy. They suffered from greater historical burdens, including occupation during and expulsion of the local Germans after the Second World War. The Czech President Václav Havel's timely and generous pronouncement in favour of German reunification was important for German-Czech reconciliation, and similarities in culture and work habits eased economic co-operation in particular. The German-Polish relationship was the most difficult and problematic of the three. The burdens inherited from both the distant and the recent past were heavier than with the others, for repeated German participation in the historic divisions of Poland and the horrors of the Second World War coloured everything. Sharp differences in culture and temperament caused additional difficulties.

Yet all four of these nations realized their need to work with one another closely as neighbours. In practice, this meant above all an extension of German influence upon the others. As a result, the traditional geographical concept of Central Europe was reborn and revived, after a moribund existence through its years of division during the Cold War.⁵

Russia had been the power which historically had challenged German influence in the region lying between them. As long as the Soviet Union lasted, it tried to maintain a lingering grip on it, even after its troops were in full retreat. For example, it tried to block its former satellites' efforts to join any alliance that it construed was aimed against itself, though, with the collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Union, such efforts were doomed. All three of the Germans' immediate eastern neighbours were anxious to join the European Community and even NATO. They saw in Germany a potential sponsor of these ambitions which further strengthened German influence upon them.

The more rational and real fears of German domination had to do rather with economics than with politics or military matters. The basic strength of Germany rested on its productive capacity rather than in its political or

military power. In an era when economic power rather than military might increasingly determined the pecking order between nations and their influence upon one another, Germany's economic strength both frightened and attracted other nations. It was both a formidable source of export competition and provider of credits, investment and markets.

In addition to the East German people, West German economic strength and financial reserves had been the major weapons in Chancellor Kohl's arsenal in bringing about reunification. They had enabled him first to provide incentives to and later to meet Gorbachev's pleas for credits and economic and financial aid. At the time of the final deal, they had enabled Bonn to offer a package to Moscow which it neither wanted to nor could turn down. Finally, they made it possible for the Bundesrepublik to hold out the promise of massive help and economic improvement in the future for the East Germans after reunification. It was evident, despite the subsequent agony, that if any country could afford the costs of unification, integration and reconstruction of eastern Germany, then the Bundesrepublik could and would meet the bill.

Kohl had promised that German reunification would not result in new economic burdens upon its EC partners because of the inclusion of East Germany in the Community. Germany would itself pay for it.⁶ This would indeed formally be the case, but indirectly the reconstruction of East Germany affected not just the other EC countries but much of the rest of Europe as well. This it did through the *de facto* German impact on the European economies through the EMS, the European Monetary System, which was dominated by the Deutschmark.

Bonn had such economic and financial power that by keeping its interest rates high it could indirectly not only influence other economies but attract them to make a contribution to reconstruction in eastern Germany. Together, high German interest rates and the reputation of the Deutschmark for strength, soundness and stability, attracted foreign investments. It worked like honey on bees.

Nevertheless, German reunification was not just a matter of economics. It had more to do with longings for freedom and dignity, freedom from fear, freedom to speak one's mind, and freedom to pursue one's dreams and a better life. It was the result of human actions based on such longings and fired by courage. This courage was inspired by the courage of neighbouring peoples and Gorbachev's unwillingness, indeed refusal, to use raw force to suppress the emerging challenges to Soviet domination west of its borders.

It was important for Germany and especially important for the future soundness of democracy in the east that reunification was the result of popular wishes and desires. Unlike several previous occasions in German history, this time popular participation, democracy and freedom accompa-

nied a remarkable German success and empowerment. Democracy had earlier often been associated with German failure, defeat and national humiliation. Now the victory and extension of democracy among the Germans was intimately intertwined with the victory of national aspirations and an accompanying sense of joy, pride, achievement and power.

This change in the emotional associations between democracy and the fate of Germany, at a watershed in German history which deeply affected people and their attitudes and emotions, had far-ranging significance. Reunification was an emotionally intense and defining national collective experience. People would remember its essence and pass it on in their own attitudes to their children and grandchildren.

Although popular collective desires, determination and actions brought about unification to a great extent, individuals occupying key positions and playing major roles in the unfolding drama also mattered a great deal. They put an imprint upon and shaped their nations' official actions and reactions. Thus the roles of Kohl, Gorbachev and Bush or Mitterrand and Thatcher became inseparable from the roles of the Bundesrepublik, the Soviet Union and the United States or from France and Britain. Their mutual relations also influenced and reflected their nations' relations and attitudes to one another.

The more effective among these key players in achieving their aims were not only those who represented the strongest countries but those who most clearly acted according to the wishes of a clear majority of their compatriots. This was the case above all with Kohl, but also with Bush and Gorbachev, although to a lesser extent. Mitterrand and Thatcher at times acted against the apparent wishes of most of their compatriots or, depending on the representativeness of polls, represented highly divided, and sometimes rather evenly divided, constituencies on the German question.

Some leaders and main players who were averse to German reunification deprecated ordinary people's support of it. Not only were they averse to the aim, they seemed to disapprove of ordinary people making important historic decisions. Gorbachev and Andreotti said that decisions about Germany should not be made on the streets. Mitterrand doubted, or claimed that he doubted, whether the East Germans even wanted unification, even when they had already made their wish for it quite clear. At various times these leaders and Thatcher, and even Bush early in the game, said the decision concerning reunification was not just a German matter but needed to be subjected to the approval of other powers. In short, they were questioning the East Germans' right to freely decide their fate.

This implied that they were also questioning and throwing doubt on the very principles of freedom, democracy, popular sovereignty and national self-determination. This was a tall order. It could not and would not work. It

was an unsellable notion in particular in the Western societies in whose very cores and ethos these principles lay and who had elevated them to the level of articles of faith, to close counterparts of a modern religion.

This was the fundamental cause of the rift between the attitudes of the ordinary people and some of their leaders and élites towards German reunification. The views of the ordinary people reflected more faithfully the core values of their societies than did the leaders' perceptions of national interest. They therefore balked at endorsing efforts to block the popular East German and German wish for freedom, the right of self-determination, and unity. Their stand effectively circumscribed their leaders' options on the issue, and thus the influence of public opinion abroad helped the East German people to gain the right to decide about their future and the cause of German reunification.

It also helped Helmut Kohl's and Hans-Dietrich Genscher's efforts to make reunification a reality, but although they could point at and had the benefit of popular support for their cause in their dealings with other leaders, they still had many obstacles to overcome. At least Kohl repeatedly used the evidence of popular pressure for reunification in his dealings with the other major players. Pointing it out and emphasizing its strength and irresistibility, he undermined and weakened the potential resistance to reunification by other players.

No Western leader faced greater challenges than Kohl in the course of 1989 and 1990, and none met them with greater skill and determination. His two great challenges were German reunification and staying in power after the elections scheduled for December 1990. In tackling these aims, Kohl displayed striking accomplishments as a power broker in both domestic and international politics. He had already had a well-established and solid reputation as a formidable master of domestic politics. He had less of a reputation as a player of international politics before his role in the achievement of German unity. As late as the spring of 1989, Anglo-American critics had accused him of being panic-prone and jelly-like in facing both the Soviets and domestic critics over arms reduction negotiations, ignoring the fact that Kohl had different priorities.

Kohl's great accomplishment was his contribution to convincing both the Western allies and the Soviet Union that German reunification was inevitable and reassuring them through promises and payments. In politics few things are inevitable but nobody wants to fail, and to oppose something that is inevitable amounts to failure. Kohl reassured his uneasy Western allies, never enthusiastic about German reunification, by promising and insisting that a unified Germany would remain faithful to NATO and the EC and would not court neutrality as the price of reunification. The Soviet Union he bought off by making use of its economic misery. The deal became easier

because of Gorbachev's perception that, by letting go of East Germany, he was selling something that was in any event slipping from Soviet control.

After his success in orchestrating German reunification, Kohl eventually received lavish praise from past major actors on the international political stage. They had watched his performance with fascination and with eyes sharpened by their own experiences. Henry Kissinger, the former American secretary of state, rightly complimented Kohl's 'great sense of timing', and said 'he was correct in pushing for fast unification'. Expressing his admiration of and confidence in Kohl, he predicted that Kohl would 'go down in history as a great man'.⁷ Kissinger's colleague as a practitioner of international relations at a high level, former French Foreign Minister Jean François Poncet, was equally generous in heaping praise on Kohl's performance. According to Poncet, Kohl was 'one of the great European leaders of the post-war period', and he added, 'he hasn't made a single significant mistake'.⁸

Kohl played with skill a historic political game in order to secure German reunification. His role in that process invited comparison with the accomplishments of two nineteenth-century European masters of domestic and international politics, Otto von Bismarck and Camillo di Cavour. As chancellor of Prussia, Bismarck engineered German unification under Prussian leadership. As the prime minister of the small north Italian state of Piedmont, Cavour brought about Italian unification.

Kohl was naturally often more easily compared with Bismarck, the first chancellor of a unified Germany. Like Kohl, Bismarck was a physically imposing figure, a big, powerfully built man who towered over his surroundings. Both men were quick to see and to make use of political opportunities, often way ahead of their rivals and opponents, but in some ways there are clearer parallels in Kohl's and Cavour's roles and contributions in helping along their respective nations' unification.

Kohl, unlike Bismarck, could not rely on superior military virtuosity and power, as the ultimate enforcer and guarantor of his political and diplomatic designs. He had no Helmuth von Moltke, the military genius of his age, or a Prussian army to lean on for support. Instead, he had to rely on his political instincts and skills, the will, boldness and enthusiasm of the German people, and the prosperity and wealth of the Bundesrepublik. His assets resembled those of Cavour whose primary assets, besides his own political acumen, were popular Italian enthusiasm for unification and the reputation of Piedmont as a model to the rest of Italy.

Like Bismarck and Cavour, Kohl made skilful use of international constellations to advance his cause of unification. He wanted to make use of the window of opportunity while it lasted, though he was sometimes criticized for having pressed matters too quickly. Yet at the very time of the Moscow

benediction of the reunification in September 1990, widespread rumours circulated of unexplained troop movements around Moscow as preparation for a hard-line military coup. Crack paratroop units were suddenly flown in by a wave of transport planes, wearing full battle gear with helmets, arms, live ammunition and flak jackets. Somehow Defence Minister Dmitri Yazov's official explanation that they came to pick potatoes did not seem convincing.⁹

The coup did not take place then, but if it had it would certainly have justified Kohl's speed. Instead it came the following August, involving the same Yazov, and failed – but it did result in the departure of Gorbachev from power, and it was in Gorbachev that both Kohl and Genscher had heavily invested their hopes and efforts to achieve German reunification.

United Germany had to immediately face conflicting expectations and demands from abroad. Their nature was sometimes ironic in view of the often expressed fears of a re-emergence of German nationalism and domination during the drive towards reunification. In essence they amounted to both an expectation of and demand for a greater German assertiveness and role in international affairs. The Germans would not be allowed to turn into Swiss or Swedes.

Furthermore, the allies and neighbours of Germany were not merely demanding mere words and cash but German military action abroad, which had been unacceptable in the past as a matter most easily and readily associated with reviving and inflaming nationalist passions and the ghosts of history. When during the Gulf crisis and war the Germans provided cash though not arms and fighting men, they became the object of a fair amount of abuse for evading their international duty in the crusade against Saddam Hussein of Iraq. Emotions ran high, especially in the US Congress, to the effect that the Germans were ingrates who did not reciprocate American support for their reunification. Overlooked, however, were the enormous obligations the Germans were already shouldering with their commitments to the Soviet Union and the reconstruction of the eastern part of their country.

In contrast, when soon afterwards the Germans became more assertive on behalf of the Slovenes and Croats in the break-up of Yugoslavia, the French and the British suspected and accused them of new hegemonical aspirations in Eastern Europe. The Germans could have wondered, and many did, that no matter how they behaved, they would be an object of suspicion and a butt of criticism. At the same time, of course, they were trying to look after their interests.

That they did it more assertively than before in the post-war period was alone bound to grate on some who were accustomed to different German behaviour. When the Germans not only got away with it but also exerted

their will on others, levels of unease and suspicion were heightened, in particular among those used to leading in the past. This was the case when the Germans persuaded the EC to recognize the independence of Croatia and Slovenia; the British and the French did not approve of this, as they had originally seemed to favour the Serbs, perhaps partly for reasons of history going back to the two world wars.

With the Soviet withdrawal, Germany was clearly becoming the dominant power in the lands located between the two powers and there was not much anybody could or would do about it. The cards seem stacked in the Germans' favour in the region. It was not so much a matter of the Germans moving in aggressively but of being insistently invited by the locals, in desperate need of help, investment, know-how and trade. The Germans were closest and seemed most able and willing to provide for these and for Russian needs as well, even when pressed by the costs and tasks of reconstruction at home. With the most urgent demands of that job over, they were expected to provide more for their eastern neighbours.

When faced with what they perceived to be German challenges closer at home, the British and the French grew more concerned. Kohl had by and large persuaded the French that he was a good European genuinely in favour of further European integration, but when he suggested that the German language be given corresponding status with French and English in the EC, signs of irritation were clear among the British and the French. The Germans felt that they were at a disadvantage in EC dealings because of problems connected with language, and pointed out that they were, after all, clearly the largest language group within the Community. They had a case which was difficult to deny on grounds of fairness, but to the British and the French it was nevertheless upsetting. They took it as an effort to diminish their relative status and to enhance the Germans'.

Related issues of social psychology, status and power were at stake with the possibility of Germany, together with Japan, gaining a permanent seat on the Security Council of the United Nations. The British and French did not like it and Mrs Thatcher rejected it outright. It remained to be seen how long the permanent membership of the Security Council could continue to be restricted to the principal victors of the Second World War when it no longer corresponded to the actual distribution of power in the world among the major nations. The example of the old League of Nations as originally an organization of the victors in the First World War did not provide a reassuring antecedent in this respect.

At least for the time being, however, the Germans were more preoccupied with their internal unification than they were with their status in the world. Its economic, financial and psychological costs climbed higher than most had foreseen. This resulted in greater hardship for the East Germans and

heavier obligations for the West Germans than many had expected. The West Germans had to dig deeper in their pockets than they had thought and the east did not bloom as soon as the East Germans had hoped. The West Germans were not happy at having to subsidize the East Germans' employment, their unemployment, health and other social benefits, and their retirement benefits and pensions. The unsurprising consequence was frustration and dissatisfaction among both, and it was these that lay behind much of the tension and acrimony between them.

With attention focusing on the economic dislocation and havoc in East Germany resulting from reunification, one basic fact was often overlooked. The fundamental cause of the East Germans' economic miseries was not reunification but rather the previous decades of mismanagement and neglect of the economy in the DDR. The failures of the past were only now fully revealed. The rigid, centrally controlled planning economy of the DDR had not adjusted and adapted to changing demand and the requirements of time. As a result it had become increasingly obsolete and uncompetitive compared with its more flexible and responsive rivals in the international markets of which East Germany became a part with reunification. With the walls of protection and artificial subsidies gone, behind which the true extent of its incompetence and decay had long remained hidden, the tottering state of the East German economy had simply become exposed to the light of day.

In addition to this sad inheritance, parallels with the reunification caused additional woes. The old protected markets for East German goods vanished with the disassembling of the former Soviet bloc. With it went Comecon, its trading umbrella. It had helped to oversee and maintain trade at often artificial prices in return for guaranteed markets for goods and products often unable to compete on free world markets. In addition, rising wage pressures among the East Germans still employed further aggravated the situation faced by many East German firms.

Meanwhile, large numbers of unsolved property claims continued to hamper and slow down new investment. It was becoming clear that it would take longer than originally expected for the living standards in the east to catch up with the west. The east faced a major problem in the scarcity of qualified professionals in many fields, and relatively few westerners were willing to relocate there, often for sheer lack of amenities. The run-down housing and shortage of attractive restaurants and other such mundane matters were uninviting to them.

Despite its difficulties, united Germany proved an irresistible magnet to would-be refugees and immigrants. Its liberal and generous policies of admission based on its constitution, together with its prosperity, high material standards of living, and its relatively advanced and generous social

policies attracted large numbers of people from far and wide. Germany received and admitted far larger numbers of newcomers than any other country in Europe, which in itself often led to resentment and at times to violent backlash.

The extremely high levels of unemployment among East Germans and the havoc and dislocation accompanying unification gave rise to a volatile situation. A vast and rapidly growing influx of newcomers from abroad with no end in sight, competing for and sharing already stretched and strained resources, was bound to result in turmoil in these highly charged conditions.

Neo-Nazi skinhead attacks against foreigners received wide attention as being connected to the German Nazi past. Massive protests were staged against the skinhead violence, however, and these attracted many times the numbers involved in anti-foreign protest actions. Repeatedly urging other countries to partake more in the intake of the rapidly growing refugee flow, the Germans felt that they were doing more than their share. With the exception of their immediate smaller neighbours, a positive response was rather lacking, although criticism of the German violence and its handling had been considerable.

The very same things that attracted masses of refugees to Germany also ensured that the unemployed East German multitudes did not live in dire destitution, as might have been inferred from some foreign reporting on Germany. Germany was, after all, an advanced welfare state, and decades earlier the old German Empire had had social legislation which had served as a model for many other parts of Europe, including the Nordic countries, the subsequent pathbreakers and pioneers in the field.

Germany may have lost its position in the vanguard of advanced social legislation. Its social policies may not have been as progressive in equalizing and levelling the human material condition, its safety net not as far flung or its floor of security not as high as those in the Nordic countries. It was nevertheless clearly ahead of the United States, as well as the United Kingdom, in most matters of this kind. The East Germans who became citizens of the Bundesrepublik certainly did not end up in a *laissez-faire* capitalist jungle, dog-eat-dog type of society, as was sometimes portrayed.

By most standards German social benefits were generous, the working hours short, and vacations long. While these benefits and conditions were not that different from other prosperous European societies, the average vacations were, for example, two and a half times as long as in the United States. Thus the equalizing and redistributive features of the German welfare society were helping to ease the East Germans' hardships. They provided for and guaranteed the basics – food, shelter, medical care, plus a few extras – and they also narrowed in practice the distinctions between the Germans' standards of living and quality of life.

With the passage of time the differences between east and west would diminish. They could become less significant than the older and historically more important divisions between north and south Germany or Protestants and Catholics. Even after the flow of special funds earmarked for the reconstruction in the east slowed down, the German federal system of revenue sharing could help to bridge the remaining inequities between east and west. It had marked built-in features of solidarity affecting both individuals and the different *Länder*, the member states. The German system redistributed and readjusted incomes and services available to them through progressive taxation and social policies as well as revenue sharing.

Preoccupied with the immediate difficulties associated with reunification, both the Germans themselves and many foreign observers often took a gloomy view of the situation in Germany, though the long-term prospects were not that grim. Certainly the process of economic, social and psychological unification would continue for many years, but gradually old wounds would heal and many scars fade. People belonging to different age groups did not experience the changes brought by reunification in the same way. For some in the east, the changes came too late in their lives for a happy adjustment. They constitute a lost generation. To the ever growing numbers of younger people reaching adulthood, however, united Germany is not only a promise but a reality of something much better than the fading memory of the DDR.

Notes

- 1 Comment from August 1990.
- 2 *Spiegel Spezial*, I, 1991, p. 48.
- 3 *SZ*, 4 Jan. 1991, or Childs, *Germany in the Twentieth Century*, 1991, p. 269.
- 4 Thatcher, 1993, p. 798.
- 5 Cf. István Deák, 'German Unification: Perceptions and Politics in East Central Europe', *German Politics and Society*, summer, 1990, pp. 22–30.
- 6 See, e.g., *Financial Times*, 31 July 1990.
- 7 Kissinger, in *Vanity Fair*, Dec., 1990, p. 240.
- 8 Poncet, in the *Wall Street Journal*, 30 Nov. 1990.
- 9 *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and Reuters, 4 Oct. 1990.