

The Rush to
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Preface

“Can you help get me out?” a young East German implored on a gray summer day in 1964. Walking across the ruined center of my birthplace Magdeburg, we were talking about the imprisonment of citizens of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) by the Berlin Wall. His anguished request caught me off guard and made me, someone who had become a fortunate outsider, angry at my own impotence. Twenty years later, I sat in a drab apartment in Potsdam with a dissident couple, once again discussing Socialist Unity Party (SED) repression and German division. Although these former track stars resented the Communist bureaucracy, they were determined to stay and transform the country from within. Their choice of opposition over escape indicated a growing legitimacy of the unloved regime.

Such encounters kept me going back, if only to express my sympathy. I came to the GDR with a double perspective: Raised in West Germany, I was pursuing my academic career in the United States. Though crossing the Berlin border at Friedrichstrasse was always unpleasant, the people on the Eastern side seemed more unpretentious and genuine than their sophisticated but blasé Western cousins. The other German state fascinated me precisely because of its improbable contradictions: The grayness punctuated by red banners, the economic backwardness, and the lack of freedom were appalling. But echos of Weimar radicalism also revealed an alternate vision, committed to antifascism, social justice, and peace.

My scholarly interest in the GDR grew almost inadvertently. When gathering material for monographs on World War I, Imperial German students, and Third Reich professionals, I worked in the central state archives in Potsdam and Merseburg for extended periods of time. Though I found much of the formulaic Marxist-Leninist scholarship tiresome, I enjoyed personal debates with East German colleagues. To further dialogue, I chaired the joint U.S.–GDR subcommission on history, sponsored by the International Research and Exchange Board. Out of our bilateral conferences on National Socialism in 1987 and 1989 grew a greater understanding of the problems of GDR historiography. Since I am not

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48.3 to 88.3 billion DM between 1990 and 1992. As a result of union pressure and social support from the West, real income actually rose about 28 percent between 1989 and 1991. During the same period about 175,000 new businesses were founded that promised to create more jobs. With the belated Eastern Recovery Program of March 1991, the Bonn government transferred an incredible 135 billion DM from the West during that year alone. Despite the immense downturn, the people did not revolt. Joining one of the world's strongest economies suggested reasons to hope that a revival would eventually come.⁸²

The currency union required a double transition. To begin with, command production had to be converted into a social market system. Even before the civic revolution, the GDR economy had reached the end of its rope. Consuming its infrastructure and polluting its environment, it could not meet international competition and began to stall. Joining the FRG was bound to cause severe dislocation because it merged an economy of the second world with one of the first. Popular pressure for quick action eliminated the possibility of a gradual changeover, as carried out by other East European countries. Hasty privatization made a crisis well-nigh inescapable.⁸³

At the same time, the economy needed to move from high industrial to postindustrial patterns. Following the Stalinist model, the GDR had developed a labor-intensive smokestack production, typical of the second phase of industrialization. Painful struggles in mining and shipbuilding had reoriented the West to tertiary high-technology and service pursuits. The currency union forced the GDR not just to adopt capitalist organization, but also to shift to postindustrial patterns at the same time. The neoliberal rejection of structural policy unnecessarily deepened the market shock and increased the eventual cost, but the rapid merger also called forth an unparalleled amount of help. The disruption of the currency union was the price of regaining political unity.⁸⁴

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Negotiating Accession

The transition to unity aroused widespread anxiety. Conservatives could not wait to get rid of the hated GDR, but leftists wanted to slow the merger with the West in order to cushion the shock. On June 17 the Volkskammer and the Bundestag met to commemorate the 1953 uprising and ponder the appropriate way to proceed. Praising the civic revolution, Protestant church leader Manfred Stolpe warned that it would take time to unite the estranged parts. Even if their "differences no longer divide, unification will become more difficult if they are not taken into account."¹

An impatient German Social Union (DSU) disregarded this advice and demanded that the GDR join the FRG "on this very day." Caught by surprise, Prime Minister Lothar de Maizière refused to be stampeded in the ensuing Volkskammer session. "First we must negotiate another not inconsiderable state treaty" so as to create a legal framework for the merger of East and West Germany. "And then the two-plus-four process will have to reach a result acceptable to all sides." Since daunting domestic and diplomatic problems had yet to be resolved, the speed and shape of unity depended on the completion of these tasks.²

The "miracle of Moscow" broke the foreign political deadlock. On July 15 an optimistic but nervous Kohl met with a "friendly and serious" Gorbachev in the Soviet capital to discuss the terms of German unity. Well prepared and trusting each other, both leaders tried to heal the wounds of World War II by bringing "Russia and Germany together again." Offering economic help, Kohl proposed a comprehensive cooperation treaty, once "we have overcome the current obstacles together." While the German chancellor stressed the "dramatic deterioration" of the GDR, the Russian leader flexibly acknowledged that NATO was beginning to transform from a military into a political alliance.³

This meeting of minds suggested compromise. If Bonn accepted its current frontiers and renounced nuclear, biological and chemical (ABC)

weapons, it would recover full sovereignty. Provided that alliance structures were not extended eastward during the transition, "Gorbachev quite calmly and earnestly agrees that Germany can remain a NATO member." As soon as Soviet troop withdrawal was regulated by separate treaty, four-power control could be lifted. "What a sensation! We had not expected such clear assurances from Gorbachev," Kohl's advisor Horst Teltschik commented. "For the chancellor this conversation is an incredible triumph. . . . I am witnessing a historical moment!" To his media spokesman Johnny Klein, Kohl confided elatedly, "It's all in the bag."⁴

A change of scenery facilitated the solution of the remaining problems. The subsequent trip to the presidential dacha in the Caucasus mountains relaxed the atmosphere. On July 16 the full delegations agreed to trade Bonn's support of Soviet entry into Europe for Moscow's acquiescence in German unification. To document the new quality of relations, Kohl reiterated his treaty offer and his hope for complete independence and membership in the Western alliance. Seeking to meet Russian security concerns, the chancellor promised to hold off extending NATO structures temporarily and to refrain from stationing nuclear arms in the East.⁵

In exchange for financial help, the Soviets agreed to withdraw their forces within four years. During this period Western troops might remain in Berlin. Assured that GDR economic commitments would be observed, the Russians also accepted the extension of NATO protection to GDR territory. When negotiations threatened to stall over the size of military cuts, Gorbachev settled for an effective halving of the combined forces to 370,000 men. "The great goal has been reached!" The German visitors were delighted that the security compromise removed any doubt about the return of their full sovereignty. "All questions have been solved amicably. What a success!"⁶

The scope of the Caucasus agreement stunned the public. TV shots of relaxed statesmen strolling along mountain streams had suggested unusual cordiality. But when Gorbachev and Kohl announced the results of their talks, "the surprise [was] immense." Since it settled every two-plus-four dispute, the eight-point summary surpassed all expectations. Russian, German, and international journalists reacted with "a mixture of incredulity, astonishment, and increasing joy." Almost unanimously, the media praised "Kohl's coup" as a historic breakthrough.⁷

The Germans made significant financial promises, renounced former Eastern territories, and conceded deep military cuts. In return the Russians swallowed their fears and reversed decades of divisive policy. With new realism about their declining power, they offered to withdraw troops, allow NATO membership and grant "full and unimpaired sovereignty." Foreign observers were the first to comment that the Caucasus agreement meant the end of postwar Soviet hegemony. Unlike the punitive peace of 1918 or 1945, this was a settlement among equals that removed the rubble of the past to inaugurate a better future. The Caucasus deal also finished "the task of an independent foreign policy of the GDR."⁸

Dimensions of Partition

Rejoining East to West Germany required healing the wounds of division. The most hated symbol of partition was the border. For 1,378 kilometers an ugly scar disfigured the landscape, dividing the GDR from the FRG. To keep its people in, the SED regime had built a formidable fortification that was open at only a dozen crossing points. On land, the frontier consisted of a broad forbidden zone, an inner barrier, a plowed and mined strip, watchtowers and searchlights, a jeep track, self-triggering shrapnel, and electrified outer fences. On water, shore barriers, nets and patrol boats discouraged the foolhardy. Thousands of privileged troops with hundreds of trained German shepherd dogs guarded this prison wall against escape.⁹

Following historical accident, the jagged frontier cut across villages, streets, rail lines, and bridges. The death strip ran through valleys and hillsides, severing forests, fields, and meadows. The border ruptured personal relations, kinship ties, and ancient communities and created economic blight. On the Eastern side, people were forcibly dispossessed and resettled. On the Western end, viewing platforms looked out over a forbidden land where time seemed to stand still. Only hawks and hares prospered.¹⁰

As a by-product of partition, soldiers were everywhere. In an area half the size of Texas, more troops and deadly weapons confronted one another than anywhere else in the world. About 1.4 million Warsaw Pact and NATO soldiers faced each other across the Fulda gap in the heart of Germany. They were armed with 21,000 tanks, 7,400 pieces of artillery, 2,250 combat aircraft and 900 helicopters. More than 2,000 nuclear warheads were aimed at Central European soil. It was in large part this concentration of arms that had spawned a broad peace movement in both Germanies.¹¹

Hemmed in by Soviet and U.S. enclaves, Germans felt as if they lived in occupied territory. Especially during the summer, slow-moving military convoys tied up traffic on the *Autobahn*. Sudden sonic booms from low-flying fighter planes jangled citizens' nerves. During maneuvers tanks tore up fields and rattled through cobblestoned streets while helicopters clattered overhead. In the East, vast areas were cordoned off for exercises. Russian troops were penned into their barracks without chance to fraternize. In the West, there was more contact between civilians and the military. But separate U.S. towns sprang up, complete with schools, baseball fields, and country-western radio stations. The Cold War had produced a parallel military world.¹²

Separation also limited legal sovereignty. Even if it rarely touched on daily lives, the incomplete authority of the two successor states created practical problems and hurt German pride. As a result of defeat, both were subject to military restrictions (no ABC weapons). In the former capital of Berlin, people were not even masters in their own house. Al-

though the Eastern part of the city became the GDR capital, the Western sectors could not obtain full political rights in the FRG. For military reasons, Lufthansa was not even allowed to fly to West Berlin. Transit problems also needed to be taken up with the four powers before being resolved with the GDR.¹³

Without a peace treaty, the former victors still held responsibility for the fate of Germany as a whole. In economic and political questions, the GDR and FRG played an increasingly important role in the Warsaw Pact and COMECON and NATO and the EC respectively. East Germans resented the remnants of four-power rights on Berlin as a limitation of their own independence. To self-assured West Germans lingering restrictions seemed irksome and anachronistic. Incomplete sovereignty made Bonn assume the contradictory stance of an economic giant acting like a political dwarf.¹⁴

Division created two of everything. Germans had to have two governments, embassies, armies, air forces, and navies. Two different flags waved over competing national teams, and two anthems greeted the winners during sporting events such as the Olympic games. Two cultural establishments with academies, orchestras, museums, and publishing houses drew on the same past to propagate the consciousness of two antagonistic countries. Two national railroads and post offices served their respective territories. Both sets of institutions were negatively fixated on each other, because each drew its justification for existing from combatting the dangerous influence of the other.¹⁵

As a result, much public money was wasted in mutual one-upmanship. In prestigious projects such as the commemoration of Berlin's 750th anniversary, East and West competed for the most impressive ceremony. Ideological confrontation engendered intolerance; dissidents could be marginalized and unceremoniously told to go to the other side. In quarrels over protocol the intense competition often verged on the comical. But the jockeying had a serious undertone. At stake was the claim to represent the best traditions of Germany as a whole. The two successor states were like adolescent siblings, close kin but locked in bitter rivalry.¹⁶

Partition was most obvious in the political realm. The two Germanies developed their common heritage in distinctive ways. While Third Reich crimes inspired a communist antifascism in the East, they justified a democratic capitalism in the West. In theory, East Berlin rejected any connection to the unsavory past, whereas Bonn claimed continuity, even if it meant paying restitution to Nazi victims. In practice, GDR uniforms and institutions resembled Prussian authoritarianism more than FRG practices that modified republican traditions. While older Western symbols possessed popular legitimacy, newly invented Eastern representations such as the hammer and compass emblem looked somewhat artificial.¹⁷

Institutions and attitudes gradually grew further apart. In the East, the primacy of the SED eroded the functioning of the multiparty system. The creation of fifteen administrative districts in 1952 suppressed the tradition of federalism. The transfer of power to the party and Kombinate

also interrupted the practice of local self-government. In the FRG the youth revolt of 1968 transformed political culture to real grassroots participation and postmaterialist values. Stifled by Stasi repression, East Germans distrusted their institutions and remained locked in traditionalist preferences for leadership and delegation. By developing different elements of a common legacy, separation produced two distinctive political cultures.¹⁸

Division gradually made daily lives different. Many "secondary virtues," such as hard work, honesty, and living habits like Sunday's *Kaffeeklatsch*, remained similar. But four decades of partition created divergent life styles. Compared to affluent Westerners, most Easterners remained poor. In contrast to bewildering FRG freedom, GDR choices were circumscribed by the tutelary state. Unlike the stratified, competitive West, Eastern society was formally egalitarian and cooperative. Lacking the cosmopolitan ease of the Bonn elite, the East Berlin nomenclatura appeared a bit provincial and crude.¹⁹

Easterners worked longer hours, used mass transit, lived in dilapidated apartment buildings, and had to stand in line. But they also sent their children to free nurseries, vacationed in trade union resorts, paid less for cultural entertainment, and showed solidarity in need. Constant comparison with the glossy West created a widespread sense of inferiority. But socialism also nourished a defensive pride in athletic success, leadership in the Soviet bloc, and claims to be the tenth largest industrial power. Despite relatives' visits and care packages, living patterns grew apart so that separate societies gradually began to emerge.²⁰

The cultural community also started to crack. Though the *Kulturnation* still shared one German tongue, lack of communication made the spoken language increasingly dissimilar. Marxist phrases, new realities, and popular humor created a GDR patois that outsiders found hard to understand. The printed word developed different styles as well. Drab Communist publications bored their readers and attracted little interest in the FRG. The colorful Western products that fascinated Easterners remained largely inaccessible to them. While critical Eastern authors were widely printed in the FRG, only "progressive" Western writers were available in the GDR.²¹

Media and fiction depicted different worlds. The problems of real existing socialism diverged more and more from the anxieties of postindustrial affluence. While most Eastern writers promoted an antifascist anticapitalism, many Western authors engaged in postmodern word plays in exotic settings. Only a few novelists on both sides like Christa Wolf, Martin Walser, and Peter Schneider still talked about unity. The GDR attempt to propagate a "socialist nation" had little success and the "constitutional patriotism" advocated by Western intellectuals retained a somewhat provisional ring. Although the aims of the two regimes were not fully realized, decades of division created different self-images and identities.²²

In many ways the provincial East appeared more "German" than the

international West. Although the enormous fields of the collective farms were new, development had touched the GDR landscape less than the bustling FRG. Dominated by church steeples and with high-rises relegated to the outskirts, many towns seemed hardly changed in the past half-century. The unmistakable Eastern smell that blended lysol disinfectant with lignite dust and body odor also seemed a throwback compared to the soaped and perfumed aroma of the West. As a result of constant waiting for trams, surly officials, or store clerks, time flowed more slowly under socialism than under hectic, money-making capitalism.²³

In the East, space also seemed more confined, intimate, and controlled. Fast-moving *Autobahnen* and trans-continental jet travel created larger horizons in the West. Enforced public conformity made privacy more prized in the GDR than in the showy FRG, where success required an audience for self-display. Decades of oppression rendered Easterners more authoritarian in outlook and docile in behavior than their assertive and individualistic cousins. Since material pleasures were rare, the life of the mind loomed larger, allowing books, plays, concerts, and exhibitions to be savored. Many visitors found in the GDR a more sympathetic world of older virtues that had somehow been lost in the up-to-date FRG.²⁴

Decades of division had deeply estranged the Germanies. In spite of national rhetoric, each side was profoundly ignorant of the other. While travel restrictions limited Eastern access to the West, lack of comfortable accommodations and confiscatory exchange rates inhibited the reverse flow. Western research on the GDR was a small and embattled social science specialty that had much difficulty in obtaining hard data. Eastern investigations of the capitalist world served polemical purposes and were kept out of the public eye. Though leaders met at official occasions, the political classes knew next to nothing about life in the other system.²⁵

Personal contacts could not bridge the gap. Pensioners who were allowed to travel were an important source of news in the East. Businessmen with GDR contacts told tall tales in the West. Some Protestant clergymen cultivated ecumenical ties and a few intellectuals maintained academic contacts. Unusual politicians with GDR roots or special sensitivity, like Erhard Eppler, established close relations, even with opposition figures. Assuming they were still basically alike, both sides embraced hostile stereotypes. GDR intellectuals railed against capitalist "elbow-society," while FRG spokesmen inveighed against "Stalinist repression." This legacy of rivalry abroad and alienation at home made unification a daunting challenge.²⁶

Diplomatic Breakthrough

The World War II victors held the international keys to unity. Accustomed to Cold War stability, the four powers were surprised by the civic revolution and viewed Bonn's unification drive with suspicion. The return

of the German problem posed unexpected risks: If the Big Four opposed self-determination, they might have to use military force. If they tried to slow its momentum, frustrated Germans might take matters into their own hands. Only if they conceded the restoration of unity would they be able to influence its conditions. Meanwhile the smaller neighbors could only watch anxiously and hope for the best.²⁷

National interests differed considerably on unification. Washington could afford to be generous, as it only wanted to preserve NATO and free trade. Paris vacillated between historic suspicion of a stronger neighbor and newfound friendship. London did not relish abandoning the last vestiges of its imperial past. With twenty-seven million World War II victims, Moscow was deeply troubled by the prospect of losing its Western bastion. Bonn wanted, above all, to avoid a general peace treaty that might become "a second Versailles." Tirelessly, Kohl and Genscher reiterated that they would not go it alone. By stabilizing the center, unification would "not create but solve a problem concerning all of Europe."²⁸

On May 5 the two-plus-four negotiations began in Bonn. FRG leaders had carefully prepared the ground by consulting with their Western allies and Eastern neighbors. In order to speed the talks, Foreign Minister Genscher invoked Thomas Mann: "We do not want a German Europe, but a European Germany." Representing the civic revolution, Markus Meckel vainly tried to establish an independent East German stance favoring neutrality. U.S. Secretary of State Baker challenged the meeting to find "a formula to end all remaining four-power rights and duties and to transfer them to a completely sovereign Germany."²⁹

Under pressure from angry generals, Eduard Shevardnadze suggested "decoupling" the internal from the external aspects of unity. Though he privately considered unity inevitable, he publicly cautioned that any solution would "have to take the domestic situation in our country into account." While Genscher was willing to give ground, Kohl eventually balked, as he did not want to remain subject to foreign controls. In spite of "serious differences" in security questions, the ministers resolved to speed up the timetable. Genscher felt encouraged by the good start: "All participants agree that the process of German unification can take place and that no temporal limitations are put in its way."³⁰

The Germans campaigned hard to wear down Russian resistance. Neither Bonn nor East Berlin wanted to turn the GDR into another independent Austria. Soviet opposition to NATO membership threatened to transform the two-plus-four negotiations into a confrontation of one against five. Afraid of provoking a veto backed by 380,000 troops, Bonn tried to dispel Moscow's fears by promising to meet its security needs. In Geneva, Windhoek, Brest, and Münster, Hans-Dietrich Genscher ceaselessly reiterated to Eduard Shevardnadze that the competing alliances needed to be developed into cooperative structures, preferably within the framework of the CSCE.³¹

Through diplomatic channels, Chancellor Kohl "proposed the idea of

a comprehensive bilateral treaty." Ending past enmity, a general settlement would put future relationships on a constructive footing. Prodded by Bonn, East Berlin, though more sympathetic to Soviet wishes, also expressed its own desire for quick currency union. During his Moscow visit, Lothar de Maizière assisted in the "first-class funeral" of the Warsaw Pact and supported NATO membership as well. As a tangible token of goodwill, Kohl unceremoniously responded to Soviet financial difficulties by offering a five billion DM credit. Bonn diplomats, pleased that such efforts were improving the climate, announced, "We are on the right track."³²

Close consultations with Western allies produced a common stance. During the fifty-fifth Franco-German summit, Chancellor Kohl stressed that German unification and European unity were two sides of the same coin. President Mitterrand slowly warmed to Bonn's historic chance. Before the Atlantic Alliance, European Community, and other audiences, the German leaders denounced German neutrality as "old thinking." Instead of upsetting the balance, NATO membership would enhance European security by maintaining proven multilateral ties. Even if Western insistence failed to overcome the reservations of Soviet hardliners, the united front increased the pressure for compromise.³³

During a mid-May visit to Washington, Kohl reiterated his loyalty to NATO. To meet Soviet wishes, he emphasized "that the alliance must adapt itself to the circumstances." Thanking the American president for his vital support during the past difficult months, the chancellor called Bush "a stroke of luck for the Germans." Kohl pleaded that helping Gorbachev was in the West's own interest and underlined the importance of American military presence in Europe. To explain the breathtaking speed of unification, the chancellor compared his situation with that of "a peasant who wants to bring in his crop because a thunderstorm might threaten."³⁴

The Polish border dispute had to be resolved first. Kohl's foot-dragging had created unnecessary doubt about German sincerity. To calm popular fears in its new western provinces, the Warsaw government kept pressing for a treaty before unification. In rejecting concessions, Bonn argued that an initialled draft would be less binding than a legislative resolution. "Only a future united German government can finally recognize the frontier in a legally binding manner through a treaty with Poland." Since he needed their votes in the general election, Kohl tried to prepare conservatives for the inevitable by arguing that failure to recognize the Polish border would make unification impossible.³⁵

In a special briefing, the chancellor implored skeptical leaders of German refugees expelled from Poland to listen to reason. With all allies demanding acceptance, responsible Germans had no choice but to accept the World War II borders. "Recognition of the Oder-Neisse-frontier" was an inescapable precondition for "the chance to realize the dream" of unity. Over a few negative votes, the Bundestag and Volkskammer adopted a

resolution on June 21 that promised "to affirm the border between a united Germany and the Republic of Poland through an international treaty in perpetuity." While Polish leaders were still not entirely satisfied, the German public was relieved and the international community reassured.³⁶

The second session of the two-plus-four negotiations convened on June 22 in Berlin. In a symbolic gesture the ministers watched the demolition of the Allied border crossing, called Checkpoint Charlie. Then Shevardnadze surprised his colleagues by proposing a draft treaty on "fundamental principles for a final legal settlement with Germany." Preliminary consultations had produced unanimity that the new borders would comprise the FRG, GDR, and Berlin. As a guarantee of peace, Germany would renounce nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. But the Russians further insisted that all GDR and FRG agreements be extended "for a transition period of five years." To preserve its victory, Moscow demanded reducing German troops to a token force of 250,000 men.³⁷

The Soviet proposal provoked heated opposition, because it took back prior concessions. Already during his Washington visit in early June, Gorbachev had conceded to Bush that alliance membership was "a matter for the Germans to decide." The perplexing idea that united Germany belong to both NATO and the Warsaw Pact appealed only to the neutralist Meckel. Secretary of State Baker objected that Bonn should not be "singularized" by having its sovereignty reduced. Genscher insisted that there be no "open questions" left and suggested redefining relations between the blocs. Shevardnadze's hint that his draft was not Gorbachev's view but a "politburo statement" aroused hope that a solution would be found before the November CSCE conference. Since domestic Soviet opposition had yet to be overcome, the Berlin round produced "no breakthrough, but tolerable prospects."³⁸

Compromise required improvement in the military and economic climate. Following Moscow's hints, Bonn suggested as solution that NATO needed to change its threatening character. In early June, Kohl urged Bush to "send a message . . . which would help Gorbachev." Two weeks later, the American President took the initiative and proposed a declaration that would make the alliance posture less offensive. A delighted Genscher wanted to transmit a "clear political signal" to Moscow by revising alliance strategy. In order to overcome objections by Russian hardliners, NATO leaders met in London on July 5 to show their commitment to change.³⁹

In conciliatory words, President Bush extended "the hand of cooperation" to the former enemy. Concretely NATO offered to abandon the doctrine of forward defense, use nuclear weapons only as "a last resort," withdraw atomic artillery, and establish consultations with the Warsaw Pact. German leaders were pleased with the spirit of the "London Declaration." The shift of emphasis from defense toward politics succeeded in

helping Soviet reformers by allaying the military suspicions of the hard-line faction of NATO's intentions. The subsequent World Economic Summit in Houston also resolved to "strengthen democracy" in the East. Though lack of funds and business skepticism prevented the granting of fresh credits, the group of seven leading industrial nations endorsed aiding the transition toward a market economy.⁴⁰

After the Nazi defeat, Moscow had been able to choose among three alternatives. In a one-Germany solution, social strife might drive the entire country into the Communist camp. In the GDR version, occupation and support of the SED could create a puppet state. In an Austrian variant that would repeat the state treaty of 1955, relinquishing the East might gain neutrality and economic cooperation. When the Economic Miracle spoiled the first option, Moscow settled for its second choice and occasionally flirted with the third. With perestroika, liberal advisers began to argue that "German unification lay in the Soviet national interest." Stalinism could only be reformed at home by ending confrontation abroad and moving Russia back into Europe.⁴¹

Western concessions and internal reform facilitated the Soviet reversal. Between June 1989 and July 1990 the Soviet government shifted from GDR support to an Austrian approach and reluctantly recognized the German right to self-determination. Only after the Twenty-eighth Communist Party Congress defeated the hardliners could Gorbachev's reformers act more freely. Orthodox Leninists and Soviet generals put up much "bitter resistance" against the surrender of Germany. But after heated debates Shevardnadze's conviction that "it is impossible to found one's own security on the division of another country" won out. The chancellor's visit would show how much Moscow could get in return for its new flexibility.⁴²

Detailed preparation and personal sympathy produced the diplomatic breakthrough. Remembering the suffering of World War II, Gorbachev and Kohl seized the historic opportunity to improve Russo-German relations. To the amazed media, they announced agreement on controversial two-plus-four issues: (1) "German unity comprises the FRG, GDR and Berlin." (2) "At the moment of its merger, united Germany receives its full and unlimited sovereignty." (3) Bonn would remain in NATO, able to decide freely "to which alliance it wants to belong." (4) A bilateral treaty would regulate "troop withdrawal from the GDR which shall be completed within three to four years."⁴³

The remaining points focused on military matters: (5) During the transition, "NATO structures shall not be extended" to the East but territorial forces would be allowed. (6) As long as Soviets are present, "troops of the three Western powers shall remain in Berlin." (7) In the Vienna disarmament talks, the FRG would declare its obligation "to reduce armed forces within three to four years to the strength of 370,000 men." (8) Finally, "a united Germany shall renounce production, posses-

sion and control of ABC weapons." Grateful for removing the security obstacles, Kohl promised to explore "further possibilities of economic and financial cooperation."⁴⁴

The Caucasus agreement was the "single point at which the Cold War ended." Rising above emotional traumas, Kohl and Gorbachev realistically redefined their national interests. The combination of contentious issues into a comprehensive package made compromise possible. Gorbachev artfully argued, "The FRG has not gotten part of what it wanted and we have not achieved some" aims either. But the Soviets "had capitulated on the single most troublesome and dangerous issue of the Cold War." Conceding more than the Germans dared to hope, Moscow abandoned decades of division and accepted German unification. Gorbachev broke with hallowed taboos and promised to withdraw Russian troops, restore German sovereignty, and permit NATO membership.⁴⁵

In return Kohl offered inducements that would aid the Russian reform process. The cooperation treaty replaced antagonism with friendly relations. Conventional disarmament and renunciation of ABC weapons would reduce the security threat and allow military expenditures to be cut. Payments for troop withdrawal, fresh credits, and Western expertise would assist in rescuing the ailing Soviet economy. Though Communist hardliners denounced the deal as "one of the most hated developments in Soviet foreign policy," Moscow preserved enough elements of neutralization (neither Western troops nor nuclear arms in the GDR) to salvage some of its pride.⁴⁶

Bonn and East Berlin acclaimed this "fantastic result." A tired but happy Kohl explained "the breakthrough in regulating the external aspects of German unification," admitting, "I have been fortunate." The CDU/CSU was naturally pleased with the coup, and FDP chairman Lambsdorff lauded the deal as "a very successful day for German foreign policy." SPD spokesman Horst Ehmke was pleased that the government had adopted some opposition positions. Only the Greens demanded the withdrawal of NATO allies as well. East German Premier Lothar de Maizière was also satisfied, but Foreign Minister Meckel seemed chagrined by the extent of Russian concessions, which rendered his own office superfluous.⁴⁷

At home and abroad, the press celebrated. Headlines proclaimed, "Gorbi sets all of Germany free," "Lucky Kohl," and "Unity on Credit." The media praised the chancellor for "achieving his lifelong goal" and becoming "a political giant." Even foreign papers were impressed with Kohl's "greatest accomplishment." International approval undercut domestic opposition to unity by robbing it of the argument of foreign hostility. Even if Western leaders were miffed at having been excluded, this favorable response accelerated the pace of diplomatic and domestic negotiations.⁴⁸

A few days later, the Paris two-plus-four meeting approved the Cau-

casus deal. Bonn quickly assured its uneasy allies that it was not embarking on a "separate path" with Moscow that would replicate the Rapallo treaty of 1922. The Soviet-German talks had produced so much progress that the external and internal aspects of unification could now proceed synchronously. Almost euphorically Shevardnaze signalled that the comprehensive settlement with Bonn made Moscow willing to relinquish its four-power rights. Hence already the third two-plus-four conference started drafting a final document that would substitute for a peace treaty.⁴⁹

Discussions in the French capital focused on guaranteeing the Polish-German frontier. When Warsaw demanded that Bonn's sovereignty be postponed until ratification of a border treaty, an offended Genscher countered that the multilateral agreement would provide "final recognition." Unwilling to allow Poland to hold up matters, the meeting issued a statement claiming that "the border question has been solved to the satisfaction of all sides." James Baker declared that "we are on the way to a sovereign and united Germany as well as a stable security context for Europe." Though German revanchists grumbled, Kohl promised to work toward full reconciliation as precondition for European peace. In overriding the Polish veto, the meeting removed the last diplomatic obstacle to unity.⁵⁰

Germans were relieved by such unexpected international approval. The common folk viewed foreign policy as grand theater, an entertainment without direct relation to their own lives. They followed the international moves of statesmen on TV or in the papers much as they cheered for sports teams. Though many Western citizens still found it too fast, Kohl's unification policy steadily gathered support against SPD criticism. A solid two-thirds majority favored NATO membership, and less than one-tenth opposed recognition of the Oder-Neisse frontier. The international success also noticeably boosted the re-election chances of Chancellor Kohl's government. Between June and August, the CDU-led coalition regained the opinion lead in the West (see Table 8).⁵¹

Easterners were similarly surprised by the diplomatic settlement. Even after the Warsaw Pact was discredited, almost nine out of ten preferred a European security system to extending the Atlantic Alliance eastward. Fearing for its jobs, an overwhelming majority preferred neutrality and opposed the restoration of the Reich borders of 1937. To counteract "the open arrogance" of West German power, Meckel worked for an

TABLE 8. Eastern and Western Party Preferences, 1990 (Percentages)

	East					West				
	Feb.	Apr.	June	July	Aug.	Feb.	Apr.	June	July	Aug.
CDU	13	32	35	33	37	41	40	42	43	43
SPD	53	26	26	30	25	41	40	40	39	38

over-arching security structure that would transcend the military blocs. But the crumbling of the GDR and unexpected Russian concessions rendered his suggestions irrelevant. The diplomatic breakthrough strengthened Bonn's hand in the accession negotiations with East Berlin.⁵²

The Unification Treaty

An orderly transition required a second state treaty between the two Germanies. In the March election East Germans had rejected the slow process of a constitutional convention and stepped onto the fast track, joining the existing system of the FRG. The precedent for using Article 23 of the Basic Law was the accession of the Saar as a tenth state after the plebiscite in 1956. Against the wishes of Chancellor Adenauer the population of this coal-mining region under French occupation voted overwhelmingly to return to Germany. To avoid "a legal vacuum," Western regulations had to be introduced quickly but sensibly into the East. Since transition rules touched on countless interests, their precise shape triggered a long struggle.⁵³

The Bonn cabinet proposed a minimal approach that would alter its proven practices as little as possible. Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schäuble saw "no reason for changing the Basic Law" except for a few modifications, such as dropping the now superfluous Article 23. But the SPD adopted the aspirations of the civic movement and demanded "a widening and deepening of the democratic substance of the new republic." The Social Democrats proposed adding principles like the right to a job, worker codetermination, direct democracy, more federalism, multiculturalism, and gender equality to the constitution. The unification talks faced the challenge of fusing two incompatible legal systems and meshing opposing political cultures.⁵⁴

The negotiators shared a basic pragmatism despite their different experiences. The Western spokesman was Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble. Born in the Badensian university town of Freiburg in 1942, he was a soft-spoken lawyer. A long-time CDU legislator, he rose to head the chancellor's office in 1984 and became minister five years later. Above all, Schäuble was an efficient organizer and problem solver. More credible than other party politicians, he was even mentioned as Kohl's potential successor. As the civic revolution was beginning to unfold, he had begun to worry about its implications and to advocate unity.⁵⁵

His Eastern counterpart was Parliamentary State Secretary Günter Krause. Only thirty-one years old, he hailed from the Saxon-Anhalt city of Halle, where he had been an outstanding student. An engineer by training, he taught computer science at the Technical College in Wismar. Even before 1989 he had dared to promote market economics, since he was impressed by the superiority of Western technology. As an untarnished newcomer, Krause became chair of the CDU delegation in the Volkskam-

mer and a vigorous proponent of "clearing up the debris" of the SED. Though pressure often made him polemical, this adaptable technician of power optimistically promoted a rapid union.⁵⁶

Bonn had begun to prepare the unification treaty long in advance. In February 1990, Schäuble created a working group on "state structures and public order" within the cabinet committee on unity. Germinating ideas, this bureaucratic nucleus prepared various scenarios. By March it submitted a first draft to the states and the cabinet, sketching positions for accession legislation. During April, the Interior Ministry produced "discussion elements" that contained all the essential features of an agreement. Already within his own camp, Schäuble had to "juggle many balls" to gain agreement among ministries such as justice, finance, and foreign affairs.⁵⁷

East Berlin was slower to start deliberations, since Lothar de Maizière preferred a longer transition period. Though overworked, Günter Krause drafted his own proposal that detailed many "concrete concerns" of GDR citizens. The negotiators exchanged texts on May 29, and the West presented another version on June 23. Less confrontational than Kohl, Interior Minister Schäuble drew in the opposition by keeping the SPD majority in the Bundesrat informed. In increasingly public meetings with the CDU, cabinet, states, and Bundestag, he tried to build a consensus. But such consultations transformed his minimalist outline into an omnibus text, loaded down with special requests.⁵⁸

On July 6 the first negotiating session convened in East Berlin. Voicing Eastern hopes, Lothar de Maizière asked that the document be called "unification treaty." Since "division can only be overcome by sharing," GDR interests needed to be fixed in a legal agreement. Though accession required no treaty, Schäuble was ready to negotiate because he understood that "Easterners want to be able to find themselves in a united Germany." In order to finish by the end of the summer, the GDR premier proposed a simple approach, consisting of a preamble, specific provisions, and detailed appendices. Surprisingly, he emphasized "symbolic questions of unity," such as name, flag, anthem, and capital of the united state.⁵⁹

"This is the accession of the GDR to the FRG and not the reverse." Schäuble countered with benevolent paternalism: "We have a good Basic Law that is proven. We want to do everything for you. You are cordially welcome. We do not want to trample coldly on your wishes and interests. But this is not the unification of two equal states." De Maizière also pleaded for restructuring the Treuhand and for new constitutional goals. Though many issues remained open, the Eastern and Western approaches were remarkably similar. Schäuble was relieved that things had gone well: "The start was a success."⁶⁰

Slowly, outlines of agreement began to emerge. Through July, the Eastern and Western ministries prepared lists of changes and cleared them with each other as well as the European Community. In fact on transferring their own rules, the labor, finance, and justice departments proposed

immediate conversion to Western law. Though retaining GDR codes would have reduced disruption, East Berlin surprisingly yielded, insisting only on enumerating exceptions. The second round of talks in early August revealed much common ground: Both sides agreed on revising the preamble to the Basic Law, striking Article 23, and adding a "paragraph 143" to permit legal differences during the transition. However, tough problems such as rules for civilian service, revenue sharing, the location of the capital, and creation of a reconstruction ministry remained unresolved.⁶¹

When the SPD felt left out of drafting proposals and of setting an election date, the talks broke down. Undeterred, Wolfgang Schäuble continued discussions with his own delegation and reached further compromises. Berlin would be designated as capital without specifying the seat of government. A new Article 5 stipulated that the disputed constitutional issues had to be settled within two years. In spite of the unwillingness of Western states to share their rich revenues, the new states would gradually be phased into obtaining their portion of sales tax receipts. Starting out with only 55 percent, the East would receive the full amount in 1995.⁶²

Political confusion complicated preparations in East Berlin. Though uninformed about the East, Bonn bureaucrats realized that orderly accession required a credible partner. Overstressed GDR negotiators worried that strikes and continued rumors about Stasi activities would make public order disintegrate. Faced with economic collapse, the GDR representative Günter Krause warned time and again: "We cannot make it alone. . . . We will only get going when we have also completed political unity." Because of many neophytes in the cabinet, the de Maizière government often seemed to perform like a "group of amateur actors." Threatening disorder left no time for gradual transition but led to excessive haste.⁶³

In late July, the Eastern FDP left the coalition in a dispute over the election date. When two of its ministers were dismissed because of criticizing the negotiations, the SPD followed suit on August 19. Chairman Wolfgang Thierse threatened to reject the treaty unless financial conditions were improved, land reform safeguarded, a new constitution elaborated, and conscientious objection and abortion allowed. Ideological differences, Western interference, and the impending election created clashes about the preferred path to unity. These quarrels took up much time and weakened the negotiating position of the East. Schäuble could only hope that the inexorable approach of unity would compel agreement in the end.⁶⁴

On August 20, the final round of negotiations began under a cloud. An enraged Western SPD demanded that central points be changed and reopened many issues that had already been dealt with. To keep the treaty from failing, Wolfgang Schäuble warned that a Bundestag "conversion law" would be even more time consuming, expensive, and confusing. The talks succeeded in tying up loose ends, setting differential dates for transition rules, keeping the door open for constitutional change, and debating

financial burdens. But these final compromises left many details to be filled in by later legislation.⁶⁵

The continuing disputes resulted in a treaty that was legalistic and vague. Since SED victims deserved to be recompensed but funds were short, Article 17 promised "appropriate indemnification." According to Article 36, radio and TV were to become independent and regional, though institutional arrangements remained unclear. Specific ministries rather than a central office would reduce excessive public service personnel, who would be retrained during a waiting period (*Warteschleife*). In the costly area of ecology, Article 34 promised that Western standards would be introduced. Although a more flexible approach might have speeded recovery, bureaucrats created elaborate rules on transition practices.⁶⁶

When the document seemed ready for initialing, new obstacles arose. On August 24, Günter Krause signalled agreement: Negotiations had produced a draft that contained provisions for "the approximation of laws," secured conditions for "GDR reconstruction," and offered "special measures" for conversion to a market economy. Because ratification required Social Democratic approval in the Bundesrat, Kohl reluctantly invited the leaders of the major parties to the chancellery on August 26. In a lengthy session, SPD chairman Hans-Jochen Vogel demanded improvements in property issues, state finances, abortion law, and constitutional reform.⁶⁷

Specific working groups pressed on to clarify the remaining points. The touchy question of the future capital required a further debate, and could be decided by the Bundestag alone. When the GDR designated October 3 as the accession date, this day was accepted as a new national holiday. Complicated maneuvers produced a compromise on the number of votes in the Bundesrat that would guarantee the larger states a veto. Against local government objections, the negotiators also turned most of Eastern power generation over to three FRG companies that were big enough to make the necessary investments. The final controversies involved competing interests in the West rather than objections by the East.⁶⁸

The most emotional issue was abortion. In the East, women were able to terminate pregnancies on demand within the first trimester (*Fristenlösung*). In the West, a fetus could be aborted only if a physician decided that medical, psychological, or social conditions warranted it (*Indikationslösung*). Secular definitions of women's rights clashed with Catholic teachings on the protection of unborn life. While the SPD saw unification as a chance to extend choice to the West, some CDU circles wanted to impose pro-life restrictions on the GDR. Unable to reconcile these views, the draft stipulated that the previous rules should continue in each area until the Bundestag passed a new law for the entire country.⁶⁹

The FDP broke this tenuous compromise by switching sides. The Liberals shifted from treating abortions according to where a woman lived (*Wohnortprinzip*) to where they were performed (*Tatortprinzip*). To save the

agreement, CDU legislators reluctantly swallowed the locality principle, but the SPD objected to shortening the transition period with different laws to two years. On August 30 the Socialists accepted a compromise for Article 31 of the unification treaty that promised women "help instead of punishment." Though they remained irreconcilable, the antagonists realized that nobody would understand the failure of the treaty over the abortion issue (paragraph 218).⁷⁰

Another hurdle was the question of property. Once again, incompatible principles created an impasse. Righting old wrongs of expropriation required committing new injustices which would take hard-won possessions from their new owners. Satisfying the West meant alienating the East. In formal statements, the Soviet Union and GDR had insisted that the pre-1949 "land reform" not be undone. But the Basic Law gave priority to restoration of property over compensation for illegal losses. Since ownership disputes hindered investment, litigation had to be curbed so as to create jobs. Local governments also requested the return of community property.⁷¹

When it affirmed limited restitution, the unification treaty aroused heated objections from all sides. Landed interests in the Western FDP and CDU were so eager to overturn the postwar expropriations on GDR territory that they appealed to the Supreme Court, which turned them down. The SPD and the East German government preferred compensation, because it would leave present ownership untouched. In the end, however, the FDP's legal arguments in favor of restoration prevailed. While Westerners could live with the compromise, East Germans were horrified by the prospect of future claims.⁷²

The last obstacle was the poisonous Stasi legacy. To keep revenge in check, Schäuble wanted to punish only crimes against persons, letting spies who merely gathered information go free. But protests against a "Stasi amnesty" stopped the pardon of transgressions related to German division. The one hundred-eighty km long Stasi files with unsavory material on six million people sparked even greater controversy. To protect personal privacy and public order, the treaty severely restricted their use. The civic movement deplored collective amnesia concerning SED crimes, construed control by the Federal Archives as dispossession, and opposed cooperation with Western secret services.⁷³

On August 24 an agitated Volkskammer demanded wider access to the Stasi files. The GDR parliament called for "political, historical, and judicial investigation," and preservation in Eastern depositories. Public pressure forced Eastern Pastor Joachim Gauck and Western Undersecretary Hans Neusen to work out a last minute compromise: The GDR should put a special deputy in charge of the archives; a five-person board with three Easterners would supervise his work; files would be kept decentralized in the East; and data might be used only for rehabilitation, vetting officials, and prosecuting crimes. Arousing heated emotions, the Stasi dispute was a symbolic struggle over control of the GDR's past.⁷⁴

The final ceremony was almost anticlimactic. On August 31 an exhausted Günter Krause and Wolfgang Schäuble signed the mammoth treaty in the festive Crown Prince Palace in East Berlin. Pleased with its "balance," Premier de Maizière hailed the agreement as "one of the most important treaties of German postwar history." The tough negotiations had brought clarity about property claims, conditions for investment, the transfer of social security, future state funding, ecological improvements, renewed federalism, and cultural support. A deeply moved Schäuble called it a "day of joy and confidence" that would bring unity in an orderly way. "We have created a solid and stable foundation for our community."⁷⁵

The governing parties were delighted that "the last hurdle has been overcome." The opposition accepted the result, satisfied that it had "corrected mistakes." Although the Greens felt excluded, a skeptical PDS resigned itself to the inevitable. The press welcomed "the end of a laborious process" as "a historic day for Germany." In East and West, newspapers praised the great step and paid tribute to the Herculean effort that went into "this bureaucratic achievement." Only intellectual critics wondered whether they should celebrate.⁷⁶

The document was a marvel of "German perfectionism." The preamble set as its purpose "the completion of German unity in peace and freedom as an equal member of the international community." In forty-five paragraphs, the text spelled out the accession date, constitutional changes, the merger of the legal systems, administration and judiciary, public property and debts, social issues, cultural questions, and implementation provisions. In an additional nineteen chapters, the FRG ministries specified endless details. All the fine print swelled the final copy to more than a thousand pages!⁷⁷

For the FRG, the adjustments were minor. The document announced six modifications of the Basic Law, beginning with alterations in the preamble to strike the unification mandate. For the GDR the treaty spelled out a plethora of changes in laws, rules, and regulations. In effect, it systematically superimposed a democratic legal system upon a communist order. To reduce transition difficulties, the appendixes specified the nature and duration of exceptions as well as the manner of convergence. In a number of contentious questions, the document simply deferred solution to a united German legislature at a future date. The speed and thoroughness of this legal blueprint for unification were impressive.⁷⁸

The treaty was better than detractors allowed and worse than supporters claimed. Much left-wing criticism sprang from illusory premises. The wish that East and West would meet halfway ignored the impossibility of combining dictatorship with democracy. The hope that negotiations would proceed between equals overlooked the disintegration of the GDR. The desire that unity would bring previously stalled reforms disregarded parliamentary majorities. Some right-wing praise was similarly exaggerated. The blessings of a proven legal order were undermined by the lack of a competent bureaucracy in the East. The advantages of an

extensive social safety net were vitiated by inequalities of coverage. Transferred Western funds were consumed by massive Eastern deficits.⁷⁹

The agreement "made a crucial contribution by forcing an unruly stream into predictable channels. Some compromises solved ancient problems, but haste also produced mistakes that triggered new conflicts. Though allowances for exceptions cushioned the shock, special interests destroyed valuable Eastern institutions such as public health clinics. In spite of hard bargaining, Bonn's preferences won all too often over East Berlin's sensibilities. The treaty effectively incorporated the GDR into the FRG. Yet many skeptics wondered: Would extending Western patterns produce a truly united Germany?"⁸⁰

An Orderly Transition

A key challenge of unification was to keep the transition orderly. With emotions running high, the people might take matters into their own hands. Foreign observers feared that "provocations" against Soviet garrisons would unleash widespread bloodshed. The civic movement tried to focus public anger on the SED in order to force domestic reforms. Western elites wanted to channel protest into established institutions, since they associated citizen participation with radical violence. The de Maizière government sought to direct popular hopes toward unification.⁸¹

The desire to control the process governed external and internal negotiations about the conditions for unity. The danger of military clashes prompted the international community to work out a procedure for unification. To pre-empt unilateral steps, the diplomats created the two-plus-four framework for negotiating multilateral solutions. Concern over violence also spurred domestic antagonists to find compromises regarding contentious issues of accession. Both Germanies preferred a unification treaty to a Western "transition law" with little chance for Eastern input.⁸²

Another constraint was the press of time. Critics coined the neologism of *tempocracy* to decry the lack of reflection caused by the rapid changes. The Bonn cabinet blamed the need for haste on East German impatience. At the same time Kohl repeatedly used popular expectations as a rationale for shortening deadlines and advancing the timetable. The decision to conclude talks before the November CSCE conference eliminated much maneuvering room for Soviet opposition to NATO membership. Similarly the designation of December 2 as the joint election date tightened the schedule and forced compromise.⁸³

The participants yielded to the acceleration as if mesmerized by its speed. The demand to keep both sets of negotiations synchronized further increased their tempo. Supported by the Gulf crisis, the argument of a fleeting international "window of opportunity" shortened the time horizon. The virtual fiscal collapse of the GDR after the currency union compelled Lothar de Maizière and Oskar Lafontaine to switch from grad-

ual transition to immediate accession. The partly real but partly contrived time pressure contributed heavily to pushing through solutions within three short summer months.⁸⁴

Great power negotiation fit a remodeled Germany into the European house. After half a century of division, other countries realized that reintegrating Eastern into Western Europe required rejoining the Germanies. Based on the FRG's good behavior, the World War II victors did not insist on a general peace treaty and asked the vanquished to be present at the conference table. The two-plus-four format combined great-power responsibility with German participation. While Genscher's diplomacy transformed the line-up into five versus one, American leaders strove for general consensus.⁸⁵

In contrast to Bismarck's wars, the second unification received foreign consent. Bonn politicians like Theo Waigel could take pride: "Never before has German unity come in peace and freedom, with the neighbors' approval." Even left-wing critics admitted that Soviet concessions "surpassed all expectations." The result balanced removal of postwar restraints (such as Russian occupation forces) with maintaining Western ties to NATO and the European Community. The settlement transformed central Europe from a Cold War battleground into an arena of East-West reconciliation. By quelling fears of a Fourth Reich, diplomats hoped to turn Germany from a trouble spot into a pillar of stability.⁸⁶

The unification treaty was the result of corporate politics. Its provisions were hammered out between East and West, the federal government and states, and the coalition and opposition. Unlike the currency union, it drew on a GDR draft and incorporated SPD amendments. To the chagrin of the civic movement, however, the deliberations remained confined to the elite, and the people were relegated to the role of spectator. Intellectuals' hopes for more new departures were disappointed, since the pressure for quick solutions postponed broader constitutional discussions. Left out of insiders' talks, Greens and dissidents could only criticize from the sidelines.⁸⁷

The provisions of the treaty turned unification into a bureaucratic process. In effect, the unification agreement (*Einigungsvertrag*) inserted a bankrupt Eastern system into a functioning Western state. To reduce the uncertainties of transition, the Germans adopted a predictable procedure, specified in countless rules. To resolve difficult conflicts, an army of lawyers codified compromises in innumerable regulations. Instead of inspiring national town meetings, insistence on an orderly and swift transition produced a voluminous legal compendium. The complexity of reunifying two estranged states took the process out of the public's hands and turned it over to distant bureaucrats.⁸⁸

9

Forging Unity

The GDR vanished on October 2. Hammer and compass emblems disappeared from official buildings, leaving blank façades. Enough red flags for an entire parade piled up in garbage cans. East German embassies closed their doors, leaving not even janitors behind. Ministries stood deserted while skeleton crews sealed files and wrote dismissal notices. With a grand tattoo the People's Army turned its command over to the former arch-enemy. The Volkskammer met in final session "to write its own obituary." With 164 laws in 181 days, the freely elected parliament had "fulfilled its task of completing German unity in self-determination."¹

On the eve of accession the popular mood was "strangely split. Hope and fear, concern and curiosity, resignation and tentative optimism" alternated. Three-quarters of the Westerners were glad to see unification come. Even if Easterners expected a turbulent transition, many were happy to escape the anarchy of the interregnum. The revolutionaries of the previous fall were "a bit sad" about the unexpected result of their rising. Though resentful of their cramped lives, intellectuals looked back at the dissolving GDR with a touch of nostalgia. Only a brisk trade in memorabilia recalled forty-one years of a separate state.²

The union was celebrated with quiet dignity. In the Berlin Schauspielhaus, Leipzig conductor Kurt Masur dedicated Beethoven's *Ode to Joy* to freedom: "We are one people [who] are becoming one state." Lothar de Maizière announced the end of the GDR: "It is a farewell without tears. . . . What was for most only a dream is becoming reality." Throughout the evening hundreds of thousands of spectators gathered in front of the old Reichstag building by the Brandenburg Gate. Waving black-red-gold flags, they peacefully awaited the historic moment. It seemed hard to believe that the national anthem's promise of "unity, justice and freedom" was about to be fulfilled.³