

A Twentieth Century Fund Paper

AFTER THE WALL

**American
Policy
Toward
Germany**

by
Elizabeth Pond

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Foreword

The transformation taking place in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe will command the attention of scholars for decades to come. At this time, we neither know where these changes will lead nor can begin to comprehend exactly how or why they happened. But we must try; for, in effect, we must bear witness. Some of the accounts written today will become the critical raw material for the greater understanding that will emerge with time and perspective. In this spirit, we asked Elizabeth Pond to write this paper on the unification of Germany.

Pond, a distinguished journalist who was based in Bonn for ten years and is now the James and Joan Warburg Professor of International Relations at Simmons College, was already at work for the Twentieth Century Fund on a book-length project on U.S.-West German relations. Her work, like that of others in the field, has been delayed by the quite sensible desire to await further clarification of recent events. But rather than be entirely becalmed by the rapid reshaping of European affairs, she agreed to press on with a timely and thoughtful interim report. Her account focuses on the tumultuous events of the past two years that will culminate in the reunification of Germany on October 3, 1990.

Perhaps her work as a reporter has accustomed her to putting herself on the line; whatever the reasons, Pond writes with boldness, acknowledging that others working later may see things differently. For now, given the pace and significance of events in Germany, her efforts will be of immediate value, adding a richness of information and insight to the lively debate about the meaning of these changes.

At this critical juncture of history, the Fund has several books on U.S. foreign policy as well as a small number of concise reports on the chang-

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ing face of Europe similar to Pond's work slated for publication in 1991. We hope that these publications will provide detail and insight to the inevitable reformulation of American policy facing policymakers, for the task ahead is anything but normal.

It is conventional to lament the constraints on national policy; but, oh, how we depend upon them. They provide form and substance for our discussions about the present and the foreseeable future. Now, at the beginning of the 1990s, we are all a bit like travelers on a suddenly frozen lake, delighted and uncertain about the prospect before us. The way forward seems freshly clear and easy, but we are hesitant, nonetheless, for who can tell if the bright new surface is firm enough to support a new direction.

Richard C. Leone, DIRECTOR
The Twentieth Century Fund
September 1990

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Chapter 4

2 + 4 = 1 Germany

On January 30, the Soviet Union and the GDR accepted the inevitable. Just before receiving Modrow in the Kremlin, Gorbachev declared to journalists that "no one ever cast doubt on the unification of the Germans." Two days later, Modrow presented his own plan for "reconstitution of the unity of Germany," but set German neutrality as a precondition. The West rejected this proviso, and the East German prime minister promptly downgraded his prerequisite to nothing more than a basis for negotiations.

Four days thereafter, at an enlarged Central Committee plenum, Soviet conservatives openly attacked Gorbachev for the first time over his policy on Germany.

This was the moment when any serious Soviet bid to veto NATO membership for a united Germany might well have succeeded. So long as there was no risk of war, foreign policy was no urgent concern of the man in the street. But East Germans took it for granted, random interviews suggested, that weapons are bad, neutrality is good, and the two Germanys would end membership in their respective military blocs as soon as they merged. West Germans, too, favored neutrality for a unified Germany, plus full American withdrawal from the Federal Republic, opinion polls showed.*

* Studies in March by the Mannheim Institute for Applied Social Research and the Institute for Social Research in Ann Arbor for the Friedrich Naumann Foundation recorded a high 50 percent in favor of neutrality and an even higher 57 percent for American withdrawal. See the German Information Center's *This Week in Germany*, April 13, 1990, p. 2.

Assessing the mood, then, analysts from across the political spectrum in West Germany believed that if a collision were to arise between NATO and German unity, as seemed programmed in February, NATO would lose. NATO enjoyed consistent 70 to 80 percent support in opinion surveys in the Federal Republic, but the assumption was growing that with the vanishing Soviet threat, NATO had finished its work and could now be dismissed. In West as in East Germany, conventional wisdom equated fewer weapons with more peace, and many voters (between 40 percent and 80 percent, depending on the phraseology in the questionnaires) were distressed by NATO's reliance on nuclear deterrence.

Moreover, a recurring strain of German self-pity—this time over the real lack of support for German unification by France and Britain at the end of 1989, and over the popularly perceived lack of support from the United States in American insistence on impossible German membership in NATO—had not yet dissolved into the energies required for the myriad practical tasks of union. If unity were really at stake, this environment too could have strengthened the urge to part with allies.

Here, the SPD was not the only question mark. Among West German conservatives, there were vestiges of old Gaullist longings (associated in the 1960s with Bavarian potentate and nuclear enthusiast Franz Josef Strauss). Some Western diplomats feared that even the Americanophile Kohl, whose most highly developed faculty was his instinct for the political jugular, might sacrifice NATO if anti-NATO sentiment developed in the Federal Republic.

As it turned out, latent Gaullism on the Right never found a spokesman. Misgivings about NATO on the Left did, in the persons of Egon Bahr on the SPD's own Left and the more weather-vane SPD Bundestag member Karsten Voigt. Moscow would never tolerate the slippage of the GDR into NATO membership, they contended (as did Mitterrand and a number of other, conservative European politicians, with somewhat different conclusions). Gorbachev was making so many concessions to the West that he was already under fire by hard-line domestic opponents for "losing" Eastern Europe, ran the analysis. If the GDR added insult to injury by going beyond neutrality to join the adversary alliance, that could be the end of Gorbachev and of detente in Europe. It was much too dangerous a gamble.

The SPD corollaries were implicit: If a united Germany could not be a member of NATO, that meant that *West* Germany would quit the Western alliance. And if the Federal Republic left NATO, Congress would

surely pull back U.S. forces deployed in the Federal Republic and elsewhere on the continent. That several hundred thousand GIs remained in Europe forty-five years after the end of World War II was, in any case, something of a miracle; the slightest irritant would stimulate their return home. More than one Western diplomat was worried that the Soviets might finally achieve through weakness what they had never managed to accomplish through strength: severance from NATO of the alliance's most important (and hitherto most vulnerable) European member, with subsequent withdrawal of American troops and collapse of collective defense in Western Europe.

Yet continued U.S. presence in Europe was essential, the allied governments agreed. Only the United States could provide insurance against Soviet nuclear missiles still targeted on Europe; and only the United States could carry out the third of NATO's missions as described by the alliance's earliest secretary-general, Lord Ismay, in keeping "the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down."

By 1990, it was no longer a question of keeping the democratically reformed Germans "down" as in the unreconstructed 1940s. But there was a more subtle need—which the West Germans consciously endorsed—for the American counterweight to growing German might to assure the anxious French, Italians, and Dutch that they would not be overwhelmed by the Germans. And for a West Germany whose legitimacy in foreign policy was still overshadowed by the memory of Hitler, there was an even more subtle need for a partner whom Bonn could work with to launch its own initiatives and minimize backlash.

For a quarter century, France had performed this function in Europe in a symbiosis in which the Germans provided economic clout, the French licitness. But with the new ascent of Germany in 1990, France was too small and parochial (and unwilling) to be Bonn's main friend in dealing with the Soviet superpower. Only the United States had the size and the range of global contacts with the Soviet Union to be able to affect Soviet thinking on German unification.

Washington tended to conceive of its own evolving role as mediating between Bonn and Moscow—and to view foreshadowed West German credits to the Soviet Union as a bribe to achieve unification. The triangular relationship was actually much more complex, however. To be sure, Bonn wanted Moscow's blessing, and surplus West Germany was far more able to help the Soviet Union financially than was deficit America. But the Federal Republic was also the Western country that first dis-

cerned in Gorbachev's stated goal of a "common European house" a real yearning to be part of Western Europe—and not just a trick to push the United States off the continent. And West Germany knew intuitively the psychological dangers should the Soviet Union be isolated from the West as Weimar Germany was ostracized in the Versailles peace treaty.

American spokesmen, including the president himself, averred that the West must not gloat over Soviet reversals. Germans went further, seeking to reassure Gorbachev that the Russians would be treated with dignity, as full Europeans.

The Genscher Plan

The first Western officials to define the parallel needs of avoiding humiliation of Moscow and confrontation between NATO and unification in West Germany were Foreign Minister Genscher and Kohl's security adviser, Horst Teltschik. As early as 1987, Genscher had counseled the West to take Gorbachev at his word—and had drawn the Reagan administration's suspicion for it. Now, a few short days after the melting of Soviet resistance to German unification, Genscher proposed an idea that Teltschik had floated in a previous press interview:

NATO would promise that after the German merger, it would not advance its troops or nuclear weapons onto the territory of the present-day GDR (in peacetime). During a transitional period of several years, the Federal Republic also would not move its forces assigned to NATO, as the bulk of them were, to that area. Further, the Soviet Union—which was already having difficulty absorbing soldiers returning from Hungary and Czechoslovakia and was housing tens of thousands of them in tent cities—would be able to keep troops in the GDR for another three or four years before removing them all.

The last point was as much arrogation as promise; even half a year earlier, no Western leader would have presumed to "offer" Moscow the opportunity to keep in East Germany for a few more years the forces it had stationed there for decades.

This package quickly became NATO's position. It extended NATO protection to the area of the GDR (though this was not immediately clear), yet still offered unilateral restraint. It could, the West hoped, save face for Gorbachev and let him argue to his domestic critics that NATO was not, as the Americans put it, "taking advantage of" the Soviet loss of empire.

At this point Bonn—already gratified by Bush's open support for Ger-

man self-determination—urged the administration to shift from passive to active promotion of German unification. To this end, in early February, Genscher unexpectedly flew to Washington on the eve of U.S. Secretary of State Baker's scheduled trip to Moscow.

In one sense, the United States now had to make its most fundamental policy choice in deciding whether to commit its own prestige to promote operationally the cause of a German unification that France and Britain still dreaded. In another sense, the United States had already set its course two months earlier, when Baker had gone to Berlin to back German self-determination. Bush and Baker, both educated in New England, felt the New Englanders' affinity for the Old World, and their instincts in backing Europe and Germany the previous spring had been rewarded so far. After initially staking out ground to the right of Ronald Reagan in superpower policy, they had continued the evolution, begun in the last two years of the Reagan administration, away from interpreting every new concession from a weakened Soviet Union as nothing more than sly peace propaganda designed to lure Europe away from the United States. They did not feel the need to put the same impossible negative burden of proof on the West Germans that their predecessors (and the French) had repeatedly done in forcing the Germans to demonstrate that they were *not* neo-Nazis or were *not* striving for economic hegemony in Eastern Europe or drifting into an unholy new Rapallo conspiracy with the Soviet Union.

Moreover, the Americans were persuaded by Kohl's assurances and by the "Genscher plan," as it came to be called, that the West Germans had finally focused on the issue of NATO membership and were themselves determined to preserve this membership as a factor of stability in Europe. Baker's stipulation in Berlin six weeks earlier of German adherence to NATO was being fulfilled.

Then too, in the last analysis, the United States had no choice. The train of unification had left the station, as the Germans were fond of saying, and there was no point in lying down in front of the locomotive. The French and British did not yet acknowledge this reality. The Americans did.

Under the circumstances, Baker responded positively to the new German call to action—and then raised eyebrows by a rare slip in a post-midnight press briefing in Moscow in which he spoke of possible German "association" with NATO as an alternative to full membership. The State Department quickly smoothed over the gaffe, and Gorbachev politely paid little attention to it.

Hot on the heels of the secretary of state, Kohl and Genscher too visited Gorbachev. After their own talks with Soviet counterparts, they announced jubilantly that Gorbachev had "promised [them] unmistakably that the Soviet Union will respect the decision of Germans to live in one state, and that it is up to the Germans themselves to determine the time and the way of unification."

On the flight home, Kohl popped open the champagne bottles. Teltchik shortly declared that the key to German unity now lay in Bonn.

The Federal Republic's allies reserved judgment, and suspected that Kohl was interpreting the Kremlin's signals much too optimistically. NATO membership was only the most obvious controversy that remained unsettled.

At this stage, Soviet policy called for a united Germany to be neutral and demilitarized—and Gorbachev's earlier advocacy of continued occupation of Germany by Soviet and American forces was still on the table. Yet Moscow was not making a major pitch for this outcome. Gorbachev said nothing about neutrality in approving German unification on January 30, nor did he reinforce Modrow's concurrent bid for neutrality. He did not exploit Baker's subsequent faux pas, and he conspicuously did not go over the head of the Bonn government to court the West German Social Democrats as the Soviet Union had done in the early 1980s. Whether out of preoccupation with Kremlin infighting, the floundering Soviet economy, and Lithuania's gathering independence movement, or out of a hunch that German anchoring in NATO would actually best serve Soviet interests, Gorbachev initially let the issue ride. The most precise expression of the core Soviet concern, perhaps, was Gorbachev's assertion, a week and a half after his talks with Kohl and Genscher, that while the two Germanys had a right to unity, Moscow too had an "inalienable right" to ensure that reunification did not lead to "moral, political, or economic damage" for the Soviet Union.

By the time Gorbachev put some vehemence into his rejection of German membership in NATO in March and April (and even sought to reclaim a Soviet say in the internal aspects of German unification), it was too late.* Without having thought about it especially, West German

* See Fred Oldenburg, "Sowjetische Deutschland-Politik nach der Oktoberrevolution in der DDR," *Deutschland Archiv* 1, 1990, pp. 68-77, and Gerhard Wettig, "Stadien der sowjetischen Deutschland-Politik," *Deutschland Archiv* 7, 1990, pp. 1070-78.

citizens were convinced by then that the Soviet Union would not block unification over NATO. They simply ignored the Soviet nyet.

Even the SPD-West fit this pattern, if by a more conscious process. At this point, the party pragmatists vigorously contested the Left's thesis that the Western alliance must be disbanded and replaced by an undefined East-West "security order." The moderates won a partial victory; a week after the SPD-East lost the GDR election, the SPD-West would agree to NATO membership, if the alliance abandoned much of its existing strategy, and if membership were only provisional, pending establishment of that new pan-European security order.

2 + 4

The forum the principals devised to resolve differences over the "external aspects" of German union was a series of roving "two plus four" conferences of the foreign ministers of the two Germanys and the four occupying victors of 1945: the Soviet Union, the United States, Britain, and France. "Two" preceded "four" in the formula at American (and West German) insistence, to stress that the Germans were equal partners in the talks and were not being dictated to by the others.

In intense brainstorming before sounding out Moscow, the Americans and West Germans had considered prolonging four-power rights for as long as Soviet forces remained in the GDR, as a means of keeping an American sanction on Soviet deportment. But the West Germans, in particular, noted Soviet agreement to full military withdrawal from Hungary and Czechoslovakia. They trusted the inherent dynamics of Gorbachev's shedding of external burdens—as well as growing Soviet frustration with maintaining divisions in the GDR that were too few for military operations but exposed too many idle recruits to Western resentments and temptations—to ensure fulfillment of Soviet promises of pullback.

In the end, Bonn and Washington chose the cleanest option and specified that the special status of the four powers in Germany must not be protracted after unification. The only business of the six foreign ministers' consultations would be the restoration of full sovereignty to Germany and termination of the still nominally occupying powers' "rights and responsibilities" in Germany left over from the Potsdam Conference, the cold war, and the absence of any formal peace treaty ending World War II.

"Two plus four" could act as a clearinghouse on other issues, to shuttle them to appropriate venues, but would not itself negotiate them. It would

report final results to the thirty-five-nation summit of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) planned for late 1990, but the thirty-five would have no say in the conditions of German unification. Nor, at this late date, would there be any formal peace treaty that would put an onus on today's Germany and make it liable for reparations claims against Hitler's Germany from the dozens of real or formal belligerents in World War II.

With two plus four and the Genscher plan in place, the United States no longer needed to hammer home the importance of German membership in NATO; the Bonn government itself was now doing this. Washington could move on to champion the goal of German sovereignty (including the right to join alliances acknowledged by all signatories of the CSCE Helsinki Agreement of 1975).

The potential collision in February between NATO and German unity was thus deflected to a very different potential collision in March between full and limited German sovereignty. In this new context, Washington would not be tarred with blocking German unity. If Moscow turned adamant in refusing NATO membership, however, the Soviet Union would be tarred with blocking German sovereignty.

Prophylactically, the United States emphasized Bonn's old principle of the 1980s that there must be no "singularization" of the Germans. The Soviets had not yet focused on demanding that the pan-German army be limited to less than half the size of the two existing German armies. They soon would do so, however, and the United States wanted to head off any Soviet demand for a special ceiling on German forces outside the twenty-three-nation conventional arms-control negotiations in Vienna.

Additionally, both the Kohl government and Bonn's NATO partners wanted to avert any premature rush to huge unilateral German military cuts of the sort the Social Democrats were already proposing. These cuts would come as the nations distributed their collective "peace dividend," but the allies did not want to give away their bargaining chips before Gorbachev actually signed the first Vienna accord bringing the Warsaw Treaty's old superiority in tanks and artillery down to parity with NATO.

In a related issue, the United States moved beyond the very concept of parity to establish a new principle of inequality between the still-sturdy NATO and the disintegrating Warsaw Treaty Organization. For forty years, when the persistent Western aim had been to reduce Soviet su-

periority in heavy ground weapons, the goal of equivalence had provided a useful public shorthand in arms control. But now that Gorbachev had agreed to parity (even if he had not yet signed on the dotted line in Vienna)—and now that East Germans, Hungarians, Czechoslovaks, and Poles were further reducing Warsaw Treaty strength by pulling their armies out from the Soviet military command—the West wanted to signal that its voluntary political alliance should not be confused with the old compulsory Soviet military alliance. NATO was not about to dissolve just because the Warsaw Treaty Organization was vanishing. It intended to preserve a qualitative and not just a quantitative balance between the Soviet power that would be withdrawing troops only 600 kilometers across relatively easy land lines of transport and the American power that would be withdrawing troops 6,000 kilometers across the sea.

Washington therefore proposed for the next stage of arms cuts—and Moscow accepted surprisingly swiftly—new reductions in military personnel that would leave equal American and Soviet numbers only on the central front, while allowing the United States to keep an additional 30,000 troops elsewhere in Europe.

Deciphering Soviet Policy

An anomalous four months followed, in which official Soviet spokesmen categorically rejected German membership in NATO, while various Soviet semi-officials indicated privately to Western visitors that Moscow would actually prefer not to leave an enlarged Germany as a loose cannon, but would like to see it bound to NATO. Gorbachev would not be able to voice this preference aloud, the moderate Soviets surmised, until after the battle for authority was fought out at the forthcoming party congress in July.

During this period, the West found it difficult to decipher which was the real Soviet policy. This was an old conundrum, of course. Ever since Leonid Brezhnev had decided that the oil crises of the 1970s were not the death throes of capitalism and that a minimum of cooperation between the two systems was necessary for economic well-being as well as for nuclear survival, contradictory motives had been at work in Soviet policy toward Germany and Western Europe.

Defense, intimidation, security overinsurance, feelings of superiority and of inferiority, justification of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe, maximization of Soviet influence in Western Europe, gaining a Leninist

breathing space now the better to combat capitalism later, holding Western Europe hostage against U.S. strategic missiles, exorcising the trauma of World War II occupation, playing Europe against America, pushing America out of Europe, keeping the Americans in Europe to restrain the Germans, deciphering the sometimes enigmatic American superpower, persuading Europe to persuade America of particular policies, tapping Western technological wizardry, then simply muddling through the multiple Soviet domestic crises—all these strands fed into declaratory Soviet policies that might develop in any of several directions.

By 1990, the puzzling out of Soviet policy was made even more difficult by the lag of official statements behind the logic of Gorbachev's "new thinking" and by the new cacophony of voices in Moscow. It was hard for Western military analysts to believe that the Soviet superpower, with its strategic nuclear arsenal and the largest army in Europe, really feared the fully civilianized and Europeanized Bundeswehr. If it did, however—and if Moscow wanted to avoid any urge by Germans to acquire their own nuclear weapons—then unofficial Soviet expressions of sympathy for German anchoring in NATO were prudent and made much more sense than the official Soviet policy of detaching Germany from NATO. And they were certainly matched by the explicit preference of the Poles, Hungarians, and Czechoslovaks for German membership in NATO, expressed both unilaterally and in an unprecedentedly captious Warsaw Treaty foreign ministers meeting in mid-March.

In this context, official Soviet policy seemed inexplicably counter-productive. It could only increase the stakes in terms of Soviet prestige and make it ever harder for Gorbachev to reverse course eventually without losing face. Yet Gorbachev's and Shevardnadze's negative pronouncements and backtracking continued, and convinced numerous senior Western analysts that the Kremlin would not yield on NATO membership, even if the Soviets shot themselves in the foot in their stand for Leninist principle.

Thus, in 1989, Gorbachev accepted the guideline of bringing Soviet and Warsaw Pact heavy ground weapons down to NATO levels—to the initial astonishment of the West—only to balk in 1990 at completing the Vienna negotiations to confirm this. Shevardnadze agreed early on in contacts with the United States and West Germany that there need be no formal peace treaty, but then resumed talking about a peace treaty at the first two-plus-four meeting. Shevardnadze paid an unprecedented,

friendly visit to NATO headquarters one day, only to seek a loosening of Germany from it the next—by requesting German membership in both alliances, or perhaps political but not military membership in NATO on the French pattern, or perhaps Soviet membership in NATO.

The Soviet Union further slowed down its unilaterally planned withdrawals of troops from the GDR in 1990, and spokesmen vacillated between attributing the deceleration to technical problems or bargaining pressure on the West. Moscow proposed, variously, an "international" referendum on German unification; a leisurely decision on German unity a year hence by the thirty-five-nation CSCE; oversight by the Soviet Union (and other World War II victors) even over domestic aspects of German union; leaving external security arrangements ambiguous even after the two Germanys merged; no nuclear weapons in Europe; minimal nuclear weapons there; a kind of Guantánamo enclave of residual Soviet forces in eastern Germany; departure of all American troops from Western Europe as all Soviet troops left Eastern Europe; and continued stationing of Soviet and American troops on German soil. The Soviet suggestions seemed almost random; they never added up to any coherent alternative to the Western proposal.

Nor were unofficial Western conversations with Russians unanimous in their thrust. For every Vyacheslav Dashichev of Moscow's Institute of East European and Foreign Policy Studies—who told the newspaper *Die Welt* just after the GDR election that the NATO issue was not a major problem—there were dozens of contrary hard-line comments. And the latter issued from the more authoritative Soviet specialists on Germany, including current and former ambassadors to Bonn and the senior Foreign Ministry official on German policy.

Throughout this period, the West, with Bonn in the lead, opted to interpret each new Soviet rejection of German membership in NATO primarily as rhetoric for domestic Soviet politics—and to stick to the Genscher plan without budging. Genscher himself kept meeting with Shevardnadze both inside and outside two plus four; each time he declared afterward that the Soviet utterances were positive and Gorbachev had not yet said his "last word."

In part, the West German optimism rested on the assumption that Gorbachev would eventually choose the lesser evil of acceding to inexorable developments to gain international tranquility and German help with Soviet admission to the European club over the greater evil of bucking the trend and isolating the Soviet Union. And especially after the Baltic

declarations of independence from the Soviet Union in mid-March, West German resolution in sticking with the Genscher plan rested on the judgment that Gorbachev's troubles were so severe anyway that whatever the West did could hardly increase them.

There was also considerable bluff involved in Bonn's wager that Gorbachev would, in the end, overcome the formidable political and psychological barriers to Soviet accommodation to history. Even if Gorbachev himself made the conceptual leap, no one in the West was sure that he could in fact hang on in the Soviet Union, and no one wanted to contemplate what the transition in Central Europe would look like without this unique Soviet leader.

CSCE

The one area in which the West gradually modified the Genscher plan to try to help Gorbachev save face was in "institutionalizing" CSCE. Beginning in February, Genscher energetically lobbied the United States to offer the Soviets a kind of pan-European security council that would guarantee them a voice in European affairs even after their troops left Eastern Europe.

Baker was skeptical. The CSCE had been a political football in the United States ever since its initial Helsinki conference got caught up in the ideological battles that eventually brought Ronald Reagan to the White House. The American Right considered the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 a sellout that legitimized Soviet-imposed postwar borders in Europe.

Yet in the intervening years, the minimal statement on human rights inserted into the Helsinki agreement at the insistence of the West Europeans stimulated astonishing ferment inside the closed East European regimes. A series of ad hoc review conferences kept the spotlight on repression of dissidents, and governments that acknowledged the legitimacy of foreign states' interest in their human rights performance kept releasing political prisoners in order to avoid international criticism. This, in turn, emboldened more citizens to discover and speak their minds.

The fateful Hungarian decisions to dismantle the barbed wire on the Austrian border in May and not to force East German emigrants to return to the GDR in August could both be traced to the moral suasion of CSCE. More broadly, Western assurances at Helsinki that the East-West borders were "inviolable" (though not "unchangeable," if peaceful means were used) had allowed Solidarity to spring up and demand domestic change

in Poland without fearing exploitation of any resulting Polish crisis by German "revanchists." Helsinki—and the rise of the unorthodox Mikhail Gorbachev to lead the Soviet Union—paved the way for the peaceful revolution of 1989 throughout Eastern Europe.

In retrospect, the Americans acknowledged the political virtues of CSCE. In the realm of security, however, they certainly did not want utopias about vague collective security among erstwhile adversaries to replace NATO's proven collective defense among democratic friends. And, initially, they were wary lest Genscher slip into trying to substitute CSCE for NATO—or let Soviet troops stay on in the GDR without any departure deadline in an effort to help Gorbachev. Such an ambiguous arrangement, Washington thought, could threaten stability by generating pressures—from German citizens wishing to be rid of the Soviet forces—to get rid of Western allied troops as well, as a price for hastening Soviet withdrawal.

The United States therefore rejected any grandiose ideas of a European security council with real powers. Once the Americans were persuaded that Genscher intended CSCE to supplement rather than supplant NATO, however, and that Bonn would eventually pin down Moscow on the removal of Soviet divisions from the GDR, they saw no harm in elevating CSCE modestly. They agreed to the CSCE summit at the end of 1990 that Moscow had proposed—if the Vienna agreement on conventional arms control were already signed and ready to be blessed by the summit. They reckoned that giving the floating CSCE conferences some regularity—and even permanence in the form of a small secretariat—would do no harm. If this then helped Gorbachev sell Soviet retreat from East Germany and Eastern Europe in the Kremlin, so much the better.

The volatility of Gorbachev's and the Soviet Union's position might well have recommended caution (or paralysis) in the historic reunification of Germany. The West Germans decided, however, that loss of momentum constituted an even greater risk than leaping into the unknown. Events were more controllable if they were moving, they thought, than if an unpredictable GDR or Soviet Union were dead in the water. Besides, if Gorbachev might fall, that possibility should provide all the more reason to press ahead with unification before a hard line or sheer chaos returned in Moscow. Bonn, mindful too of growing unease among West German voters in the limbo before currency union about just how much they would be asked to pay, began accelerating

things once again. This time, the Federal Republic floated the idea of full political union by the end of 1990.

The United States, despite some misgivings about West German disregard for bruised egos among the smaller European nations that had not been consulted in setting up two plus four, essentially backed Bonn in its choice of tactics and tempo.

Among the smaller nations, the most agitated was Poland.

Chapter 5 Denouement

The great postwar reconciliation still pending in early 1990 was that between Poland and Germany. Israel and West Germany had long since developed their "special relationship." France and West Germany had long since concluded their "alliance within the alliance," even if Mitterrand was currently possessed of the seven-year itch. Even the Soviet Union and West Germany had worked out a *modus vivendi*, and by the late 1980s Bonn was in many ways Moscow's most understanding partner in the West.

Only Poland, the country that had suffered the highest casualties per capita at the hands of the Nazis, remained unreconciled with today's Germans. The reason was the legally unsettled Polish-(East) German border, left over from the Potsdam Conference's awarding of the eastern third of prewar Poland to the Soviet Union, with compensating German lands attached to Poland in the west.

The Federal Republic had pledged not to change the boundary by force, both in its treaty of 1970 normalizing relations with Poland and, more generally, in the 1975 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Yet Bonn had always maintained that final recognition of the Oder-Neisse border would have to await a government that could speak for a united Germany. The West German conservatives, in particular, had stressed this legal position after they came to power in 1982, and some of the Bavarians in the CDU's sister party, the Christian Social Union, even insisted that the German boundaries of 1937—with Silesia and Pomerania still part of Germany—were the proper, legal ones.

Kohl consistently cited the legal reservation on the finality of the Oder-Neisse line, even when Foreign Minister Genscher and one bold Christian