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THE USSR AND THE REUNIFICATION OF GERMANY, 1989–90

It has been said that the reunification of Germany was achieved “so smoothly and amiably that it is easy to impute a kind of inevitability to the outcome.”¹ But seeing the outcome as inevitable would be misleading. On the contrary, due to the particular interests of the numerous heads of state, governments and other political forces involved, it was a struggle to find a solution. Without dismissing the efforts of anyone, it seems fair to state that of all the heads of state, it was the Soviet leader who had to travel the longest road to make the reunification possible.²

It is the aim of this chapter, which is based on both Russian and Western edited sources, to analyze the crucial decisions that were made along this road and to point out the research lacunae that still exist. Although the state of research can be considered good, some questions still remain. By the mid-1990s, a few key documents³ had been published as well as the memoirs of the leaders, advisors and experts who were most involved.⁴ A number of milestone analyses were

¹ Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 2.

² Ekkehard Kuhn, *Gorbatschow und die deutsche Einheit: Aussagen der wichtigsten russischen und deutschen Beteiligten* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1993), 8.

³ E.g., Michail S. Gorbatschow, *Gipfelgespräche: Geheime Protokolle meiner Amtszeit* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1993); Wjatscheslaw Daschtschew, “Aus den Anfängen der Revision der sowjetischen Deutschlandpolitik: Ein Dokument aus dem Jahre 1987,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 44, no. 14 (1994): 36–46; idem, “Die sowjetische Deutschlandpolitik in den achtziger Jahren,” *Deutschland Archiv* 28, no. 1 (1995): 54–67.

⁴ Eduard Schewardnadse, *Die Zukunft gehört der Freiheit* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1991); Horst Teltchik, *329 Tage: Innenansichten der Einigung* (Berlin: Siedler, 1991); Frank Elbe, *Die Lösung der äußeren Aspekte der deutschen Frage* (Bonn: Europaunion 1993); Valentin Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen* (Munich: Droemer Knaur, 1993); Richard Kiessler and Frank Elbe, *Ein runder Tisch mit scharfen Ecken: Der diplomatische Weg zur deutschen Einheit* (Baden: Nomos 1993); Julij A. Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm: Erinnerungen eines Diplomaten* (Berlin: Siedler, 1993); Anatoli Tschernajew, *Die letzten Jahre einer Weltmacht: Der Krenl von innen* (Stuttgart: DVA, 1993); Wjatscheslaw Kotschemassow, *Meine letzte Mission: Fakten, Erinnerungen, Überlegungen* (Berlin: Dietz, 1994); V. A. Medvedev, *Raspad: Kak on nazreval v mirovoi sisteme sotsializma* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1994); idem, *V komande Gorbacheva: vzglyad iznutri* (Moscow: Bylina, 1994); James A. Baker, III. with Thomas M. Defrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War and Peace 1989–1992* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1995); Hans-Dietrich Genscher, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Siedler, 1995); Michail Gorbatschow, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Siedler, 1995); Mikhaïl Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday,

quick to follow. Among the first, Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice analyzed hitherto unpublished US records, Rafael Biermann East German sources, and Mikhail Narinskii and Alexander von Plato, Soviet protocols.⁵ Since the late 1990s, volumes have appeared containing documents from the West German Chancellery, the Gorbachev administration and the CPSU Politburo, and most recently from the British and the German Foreign Offices. Collections of GDR, Soviet and US sources have also been published.⁶ Significant numbers of docu-

1996); Helmut Kohl with Kai Diekmann and Ralf Georg Reuth, „*Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit.*“ (Berlin: Propyläen, 1996); Georgi Schachnasarow, *Der Preis der Freiheit: Bilanz von Gorbatschows Berater* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1996); Valentin Falin, *Konflikte im Kreml: zur Vorgeschichte der deutschen Einheit und der Auflösung der Sowjetunion* (Munich: Blessing, 1997); Pavel Palazhchenko, *My Years with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze: The Memoir of a Soviet Interpreter* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998); Michail Gorbatschow, *Wie es war: Die deutsche Wiedervereinigung* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1999). Among more recent publications, see Helmut Kohl, *Erinnerungen 1982–1990* (Munich: Droemer, 2005); A. Tschernjaew, *Mein deutsches Tagebuch: Die deutsche Frage im ZK der KPdSU 1972–1991*, ed. Rudi Meier (Klitschen: Elbe-Dnjepr-Verlag, 2005); A. Chernyaev, *Sovmestnyi iskhod: Dnevnik dvukh epoch 1972–1991 gody* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2008); Igor' Maksimychyev, *Padenie Berlinskoi steny: iz zapisok sovetnika-poslannika posol'stva SSSR v Berline* (Moscow: Veche, 2011).

⁵ Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*; David H. Shumaker, *Gorbachev and the German Question: Soviet-West German Relations, 1985–1990* (Westport: Praeger, 1995); Nikolai Pawlow, *Die deutsche Vereinigung aus sowjetisch-russischer Perspektive* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996); Rafael Biermann, *Zwischen Kreml und Kanzleramt: Wie Moskau mit der deutschen Einheit rang* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1997); Angela Stent, *Russia and Germany Reborn: Unification, the Soviet Collapse, and the New Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Tanja Wagensohn, *Von Gorbatschow zu Jelzin: Moskaus Deutschlandpolitik 1985–1995 im Wandel* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2000); Alexander von Plato, *Die Vereinigung Deutschlands—ein weltpolitisches Machtspiel* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2002); M.M. Narinskii, “M.S. Gorbachev i ob”edinenie Germanii: Po novym materyalam,” *Novaya i noveishaya istoriya*, no. 1 (2004): 14–30; A.A. Akhtamzyan, *Ob’edinenie Germanii: Obstoyatel’stva i posledstviya* (Moscow: MGIMO, 2008); A.M. Filitov, *Germaniya v Sovetskom vneshnepoliticheskom planirovanii, 1941–1990* (Moscow: Nauka, 2009); Mary Elise Sarotte, *1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Peter Grieder, “‘When your Neighbour Changes his Wallpaper’: The ‘Gorbachev Factor’ and the Collapse of the German Democratic Republic,” in Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, eds., *The 1989 Revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe: From Communism to Pluralism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 73–92.

⁶ Hanns Jürgen Küsters and Daniel Hoffmann, eds., *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik: Deutsche Einheit: Sonderedition aus den Akten des Bundeskanzleramtes* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1998); Aleksandr Galkin and Anatolii Chernyaev, eds., *Mikhail Gorbachev i Germanskii vopros* (hereafter *MGGV*) (Moscow: Ves’ mir, 2006); A. Chernyaev, A. Veber, and V. Medvedev, eds., *V Politbyuro TsK KPSS, 1985–91* (Moscow: Alpina, 2006); Patrick Salmon, Keith Hamilton, Stephen Robert Twigge, eds., *Documents on British Policy Overseas III, vol. 7: German Unification 1989–1990* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2009); M.S. Gorbachev, A.S. Chernyaev, A.B. Veber, eds., *Otvechaya na vyzov vremeni: Vneshnyaya politika perestroiki: dokumental’nye svi-detel’stva* (Moscow: Ves’ mir, 2010); Svetlana Savranskaya, Thomas Blanton, and Vladislav Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces of History: The Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe 1989* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010); Ines Lehmann, ed., *Die Außenpolitik der*

ments have been made available online by the Cold War International History Project and the National Security Archives in Washington as well as other websites.⁷ Most of the former East German records in the party archives and the German Foreign Ministry are available. At the Gorbachev Foundation, the Russian Foreign Ministry's Archive and the former CPSU archives some, albeit un-systematic, access is allowed to records from the 1980s. In the Russian State Archives, the papers of Aleksandr Yakovlev have been declassified. Further documents are due to be declassified and/or published in 2019–20.

Soviet-German relations, 1985–89

Until 1989, Mikhail Gorbachev had not officially questioned the status quo in Germany or the continued existence of the Berlin Wall. While he had pondered the partition of Germany during his trips to the communist (East) German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1966 and to the (Western) Federal Republic of Germany in 1975, he had come to the conclusion that it was a natural consequence of World War II as well as *Western Cold War policy*⁸ and destined to last for several more decades until “history” resolved the issue. In 1984, he launched the project of a future “Common European Home,” which was expected to make it easier to move from one German room to the other.⁹

With regard to East Germany, Gorbachev did not seem to share his predecessors' conviction that the GDR was “unable to exist without Soviet support.”¹⁰ In

DDR 1989/1990: Eine dokumentierte Rekonstruktion (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010); Andreas Hilger, ed., *Diplomatie für die Deutsche Einheit: Dokumente des Auswärtigen Amtes zu den deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen 1989/1990* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011).

⁷ <http://www.2plus4.de>; <http://wiedervereinigung.de>; <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/program/cold-war-international-history-project>; <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/index.html> (accessed December 2012).

⁸ Gorbatschow, *Erinnerungen*, 700–1; Andrei Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble: Soviet Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), 131. In the 1990s, Gorbachev still depicted the West as being responsible for the partition of Germany. Gorbatschow, *Wie es war*, 15–54.

⁹ The “Common European Home” had been mentioned by Brezhnev in 1981 and was re-launched by Gorbachev on his visit to London in December 1984, without making clear what was actually meant. Marie-Pierre Rey, “‘Europe is our Common Home’: A Study of Gorbachev’s Diplomatic Concept,” *Cold War History* 4, no. 2 (2004): 33–65. Based on US evaluations, Tom Blanton characterized Gorbachev’s vision as intended to stabilize the status quo in Europe by building a “semi-attached house, so to speak, with a wall down the middle, perhaps a common front porch for receiving visitors and a common back yard for barbeques and a garden, but you live on your side and we’ll live on ours.” Tom Blanton, “US Policy and the Revolutions of 1989,” in Savranskaya, Blanton, Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces*, 49–98, 97.

¹⁰ Cf. Brezhnev’s statement to Honecker 1970: “The GDR is [...] our achievement [...] Erich, I’m telling you openly, never forget this: the GDR can’t exist with its power and strength without us, without the Soviet Union. Without us, there is no GDR.” Jochen Staadt, ed., *Auf höchster Stufe:*

contrast, the leader expressed “an almost naïve belief in the GDR’s economic prowess.”¹¹ Doubtlessly, the communist half-state could be seen as a jewel in the crown of the Soviet empire—a powerful symbol of the Soviet victory in World War II, the westernmost bulwark of the Soviet army in Europe, a model pupil in communist orthodoxy and rigidity, and the USSR’s most important ally, trading partner and producer of technology. Nonetheless, Gorbachev must have been aware of the inherent weakness of the East German state and its communist regime. The CPSU’s International Department had informed him in February 1989 that “the GDR was founded not on the national, but on the ideological—on a class basis; therefore, a rapid transition to democratization, openness, and free speech might be accompanied by special problems in this country.”¹² Together with communist suppression and economic paucity, this flaw had led to a mass exodus out of the GDR from the late 1940s, the erection of the Berlin Wall, and countless shootings of people trying to flee. These weaknesses did not, however, prevent Gorbachev from demanding some sort of perestroika to be introduced into this country as well. Still, Erich Honecker rejected any calls for liberalization, suppressed publication of Soviet hints at perestroika in the GDR, and moved to correct Gorbachev, whom he privately regarded a “traitor.”¹³ The SED leader’s stubborn refusal placed further tension on the bilateral relationship, which had already been strained by the GDR’s rapprochement with West Germany. When from the 1970s Moscow had appeared less and less willing to subsidize the East German economy due to volatile energy prices and later due to its own economic troubles, Bonn had stepped in with large loans, which indirectly paid for improvements in the GDR authorities’ treatment of their citizens.¹⁴ This raised the suspicion in Moscow that its ally was becoming dependent on a capitalist country.

Gespräche mit Erich Honecker (Berlin: Transit, 1995), 12–13. Honecker, in return, declared the GDR’s alliance with the USSR being “irrevocable.” Helga Haftendorn, “The Unification of Germany,” in Melvin Leffler and Odd Arne Westad, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Cold War III: Endings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 333–55, 334.

¹¹ Stent, *Russia*, 55.

¹² Memorandum CPSU International Department, “On a Strategy for Relations with the European Socialist Countries,” February 1989, in Savranskaya, Blanton, Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces*, 353–64, 356. Another report mentions “authoritarianism and harsh control” in the GDR and forecasts that the reforms “may trigger a change in the status quo in the center of Europe [...] Only in the long term, if détente and the construction of a ‘common European home’ progress sufficiently, will the issue of a unified German confederate state be possibly be put on the agenda. From the international angle, this will most likely end up in the neutralization of both parts of Germany.” *Ibid.*, 374–77. Cf. Jacques Lévesque, *The Enigma of 1989: The USSR and the Liberation of Eastern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 103–9.

¹³ Grieder, “When Your Neighbour Changes His Wallpaper”, 76–81.

¹⁴ Hans Hermann Hertle, “Die Diskussion der ökonomischen Krisen in der Führungsspitze der SED,” in Theo Pirker et al. eds., *Der Plan als Befehl und Fiktion: Wirtschaftsführung in der DDR* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995), 309–47, 319–22. Cf. André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan: Eine Wirtschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Munich: DVA, 2004), 191–203.

Regarding West Germany, Gorbachev, in his first two years at the helm of the CPSU, continued to steer the hard line inherited from his predecessors and aimed at weakening Bonn's Christian Democratic chancellor, who had proved himself a steadfast supporter of Western Europe's rearmament against Soviet SS-20 missiles.¹⁵ In the Politburo, Gorbachev declared repeatedly that it was correct to "reduce the political dialogue" with Helmut Kohl and "teach him a lesson" about "what the USSR means for Germany."¹⁶ In order not to give the chancellor any chance of exploiting an official visit during the German election campaigns, Gorbachev assured the oppositional social democrats that he would not travel to Bonn in 1986 and called on Honecker to do the same.¹⁷ It was the East German communist who warned Gorbachev against isolating the West German Christian democrat. When Kohl, in an interview with *Newsweek* in October 1986, retaliated by likening the charismatic Soviet leader to the Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels, a bad situation only became worse.¹⁸

But during West German president Richard von Weizsäcker's trip to Moscow in July 1987 and Kohl's follow-up visit in October 1988, Soviet-West German relations began to thaw.¹⁹ Several factors may have convinced the Soviet leader to change his stance. First, until then the building of the "Common European Home" had made little progress. This was at least in part due to Gorbachev focusing on stopping the arms race with the United States during his first two years in power. As this goal took into account the European theater as well, it also seemed wise to foster détente in Europe and, in particular, to improve relations with West Germany. As Gorbachev later stated in his memoirs, he had had this insight in 1987.²⁰ Indeed, at a Politburo session of July of that year, he declared

¹⁵ Werner Weidenfeld, with Peter Wagner and Elke Bruck, *Außenpolitik für die deutsche Einheit: Die Entscheidungsjahre 1989/90*, Geschichte der deutschen Einheit 4 (Stuttgart: DVA, 1998), 46. When Helmut Kohl in March 1985 and Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher in July 1986 traveled to Moscow, they were confronted with Soviet attacks regarding the counter-deployment of US missiles in West Germany. After Genscher's visit, Gorbachev stated on 24 July 1986 in the Politburo that "We taught the Germans a lesson." *MGGV*, 16.

¹⁶ Politburo protocols, 27 March, 26 May and 13 June 1986, in *MGGV*, 3; 5; 6. For an English version, see Savranskaya, Blanton, Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces*, 227. A similar statement was made by Gorbachev in the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact on 11 June 1986. Text in Vojtech Mastny and Malcolm Byrne, eds., *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005), 531–38, 534.

¹⁷ In addition, Gorbachev told the SPD chancellor candidate Johannes Rau that he would welcome his victory in the elections. Conversation Gorbachev with Rau, Soviet protocol, 25 June 1986, in *MGGV*, 7–14, 13; Hannes Adomeit, *Imperial Overstretch: Germany in Soviet Policy from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1998), 239–40. On Gorbachev's contact with SPD chairman Willy Brandt, see Stefan Creuzberger, *Willy Brandt und Michail Gorbatschow: Bemühungen um eine zweite "neue Ostpolitik"* (Berlin: BeBra, 2014).

¹⁸ Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 245.

¹⁹ Conversation Gorbachev with Weizsäcker, Soviet protocol, 7 July 1987; Politburo protocol, 16 July 1987, in *MGGV*, 44–54; 55–58.

²⁰ Gorbatschow, *Erinnerungen*, 702.

his intention to use improvements in Soviet relations with West Germany, the “main country of Western Europe,” to create favorable conditions for his European policies.²¹ Another reason for unfreezing relations with West Germany was this country’s role as the USSR’s most important Western trading partner. West German economic potency had been underlined by the offers of Lothar Späth and Franz Josef Strauss, the provincial governors of Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria, to foster bilateral economic cooperation with the USSR.²² Last, but not least, after Kohl’s reelection in March 1987, it was clear that Moscow would have to deal with him for another four years and therefore it seemed advisable to improve the personal relations between the two leaders.

Thus, perhaps as a consequence of or at least supported by internal expert advice,²³ in 1987–88 a Soviet reevaluation of its relations with West Germany was initiated. Significant progress in relaxing relations was made during Gorbachev’s visit to Bonn on 12–15 June 1989. Kohl’s declaration in April favoring negotiations on short-range missile disarmament and a postponement of the decision to modernize US missiles in Europe, which met Soviet proposals halfway, set the tone for warm talks, as did the enthusiastic reception of the Soviet leader in the West German capital.²⁴ At the same time, two changes in the international environment fostered a Soviet-West German rapprochement: The review of US foreign strategy, ordered by George H.W. Bush upon his inauguration,²⁵ led to some insecurity in the Kremlin and increased the importance of Bonn as a source of second-hand information about the new president’s intentions. Also the deepening rift between Honecker and Gorbachev made Bonn ever more indispensable for the Kremlin in this triangular relationship. Gorbachev’s visit reflected these developments. The Soviet-West German Joint Declaration explicitly confirming that all people should be free to choose their political and economic system²⁶ placed a time bomb under the communist regimes of Eastern Europe, including the GDR. Nonetheless, the Soviet refusal to accept the official German name of the FRG and the alleged Soviet “outrage” about a speech by Kohl in September 1989 at the CDU convention that dealt with the need to overcome Germany’s status quo indicated that Soviet-West German relations were still far from problem-free.²⁷

²¹ Politburo protocol, 16 July 1987, in *MGGV*, 55–58, 56–57.

²² Conversation Gorbachev with Strauss, 29 December 1987; with Späth, 9 February 1988, in *MGGV*, 62–78; 81–82.

²³ Daschitschew, “Aus den Anfängen.”

²⁴ Biermann, *Zwischen Kreml und Kanzleramt*, 104–41. Translations of the Soviet protocols can be found in Savranskaya, Blanton, Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces*, 463–78.

²⁵ On the “pause,” see Philip Zelikow, “US Strategic Planning in 1989–90,” in this volume, 283–306.

²⁶ Text in Lawrence Freedman, ed., *Europe Transformed: Documents on the End of the Cold War* (London: Tri-Service Press, 1990), 317–21.

²⁷ West German report, “Antrittsbesuch Botschafter Dr. Blech bei 1. Stv. AM Kowaljow,” 15 September 1989, in Hilger, ed., *Diplomatie*, 24–26.

None of these developments during the Soviet-West German thaw, however, brought a visible change in Gorbachev's position regarding the division of Germany. While a reunification was ruled out in his book *Perestroika*,²⁸ Gorbachev evaded a clear statement during the Weizsäcker visit of 1987. In public the Soviet leader philosophized that the partition of Germany was "reality," but might be reevaluated by "history" in the far future—a formulation Gorbachev would resort to many more times.²⁹ This future end is also what he seems to have meant when during his visit to Bonn he opined that the Berlin Wall had not been built "for eternity."³⁰ This was most likely formulated as a palliative to outwardly appease his West German trading partners. When Gorbachev's advisor Anatolii Chernyaev internally criticized the Soviet censoring of the West German president's reference to German unity, he was rebuffed by Gorbachev with these words: "This is the way to deal with Germans. They like order."³¹ During Kohl's visit to Moscow in October 1988, Gorbachev cautioned against "saying that the question of [German] reunification is open."³²

Despite such ambiguities, it would be premature to read a wish to get rid of the Wall or pave the way to German unity into any of the statements made by Gorbachev before the Wall's fall. Most probably the leader did not share Ambassador Yulii Kvitsinskii's assessment that the GDR would not be able to survive without the Wall and thus that the creation of a confederation of the two German states should be actively promoted.³³ Nor did he share the opinion voiced by Vyacheslav Dashichev, who in 1987–89 described the division of Germany as "abnormal," dangerous" and an impediment to the creation of the "Common European Home." This foreign-policy expert recommended that Soviet diplomacy actively tackle the problem of German reunification in order to remove this

²⁸ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 184–86.

²⁹ Similar statements were made by Gorbachev "practically every time the issue of German unification came up." Svetlana Savranskaya, "The Logic of 1989: The Soviet Peaceful Withdrawal from Eastern Europe," in idem, Blanton, Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces*, 1–47, 32. In retrospect, Gorbachev characterized this as being "Gromyko's position, yet with a philosophical perspective," and as meant to reflect "that the partition was not normal" as well as to inspire hope among Germans. Gorbatschow, *Wie es war*, 64. For solving this problem, he gave history a hundred years. Gorbachev, *Perestroika* 186.

³⁰ He added that "the Wall can disappear when the preconditions that produced it disappear." Gorbatschow, *Wie es war*, 82. Cf. Shevardnadze's statement "The Wall will fall when the time is ripe." Conversation Genscher with Shevardnadze, West German protocol, 12 June 1989, in Hilger, ed., *Diplomatie*, 15–21, 19. An almost identical formulation was used by Dashichev in 1988. Daschitschew, "Die sowjetische Deutschlandpolitik," 61.

³¹ Anatolii Cherniaev, "Gorbachev and the Reunification of Germany: Personal Recollections," in Gabriel Gorodetsky, ed., *Soviet Foreign Policy 1917–1991: A Retrospective* (London: Cass, 1994), 158–69, 160.

³² Conversation Gorbachev with Kohl, Soviet protocol, 24 October 1988, in *MGGV*, 131–34, 133.

³³ Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm*, 13.

source of instability in the center of the continent (and in so doing to eliminate the US presence in Germany and thus the main basis for the existence of NATO as well).³⁴ Obviously these opinions did not reflect the assessment of the Soviet Ministry that the “existence of two German states was a basic precondition for security in Europe.”³⁵ When on 3 November 1989, Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze mused in the Politburo that it would be better if the new SED leader, Egon Krenz, removed the Berlin Wall, KGB boss Vladimir Kryuchkov prophesied: “If they remove it, it will be difficult for the East Germans.”³⁶ If this meant the SED leadership, his prophecy was soon to come true.

The opening of the Berlin Wall

Gorbachev’s road toward German unity can be divided into three steps: 1) the retrospective approval of the opening of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989; 2) his consent, expressed in January–February 1990, with the two Germanys’ right for self-determination regarding possible unification; 3) his acquiescence in May–July 1990 with Germany’s right for self-determination regarding a free choice of alliances. The available documents lead to the conclusion that the Soviet leader made each of these decisions separately. Breaking down the entire complex into several steps made each step easier to accept and, thus, influenced a final outcome that at the beginning had hardly been thinkable.

As of today, no evidence has become available which shows that the Soviet acceptance of the Hungarian decision to open its border with pro-Western but neutral Austria (a decision that increased the exodus from the GDR via Hungary) or of the Wall’s opening had been prepared in any way. Nevertheless, in both cases, the GDR and Hungarian communist governments had sounded out whether Moscow would object to the reduction of travel restrictions for GDR citizens. The Soviet foreign ministry declared that the Hungarian choice did not affect Soviet interests and later instructed the Soviet ambassador to East Berlin to accept the new GDR travel regulations,³⁷ and thus Gorbachev’s reaction to the opening of the Wall was somehow predetermined.

³⁴ Vyacheslav Dashichev, “On the Road to German Reunification: The View from Moscow,” in Gabriel Gorodetsky, ed., *Soviet Foreign Policy 1917–1991: A Retrospective* (London: Cass, 1994), 170–82, 172; Daschitschew, “Aus den Anfängen”; Stent, *Russia*, 72, 85; Lévesque, *The Enigma*, 145.

³⁵ Quoted in “Fernschreiben der Botschaft Moskau vom 5. Oktober 1989 über ein Gespräch mit dem amtierenden Leiter des Planungsstabes des sowjetischen Außenministeriums, Gvendzadze, am 4. Oktober 1989,” in Hilger, *Diplomatie*, 39–41, 40.

³⁶ Chernyaev, Veber, Medvedev, eds., *V Politbyuro*, 450–51.

³⁷ Michael R Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston: Little Brown, 1993), 132; Kohl, *Erinnerungen*, 923; Stent, *Russia*, 94.

The increase in public discontent in the GDR and anti-SED demonstrations in the summer and fall of 1989³⁸ convinced some Soviet generals and East German party hawks, including Honecker, to advocate the application of force. Indeed, most of the 350,000 Soviet soldiers in the GDR seem to have been prepared to comply with such orders.³⁹ Yet it soon became clear that not only Gorbachev but also Soviet diplomats preferred to avoid repeating the Soviet bloodshed in cracking down on the East German unrest of 16–17 June 1953 and the further shooting of civilians. In one of their meetings in June 1989 in Moscow, the Soviet leader is said to have told Honecker that no Soviet forces would intervene on behalf of the SED in a conflict with its people.⁴⁰ When the demonstrations received increasing public support, the Soviet ambassador to East Berlin called on the commander of the Soviet troops in Germany to refrain from letting Soviet soldiers be involved in the events; in the following days, similar orders were received from Moscow.⁴¹

Gorbachev was informed about the unrest before and during his visit to East Berlin on 6–7 October 1989 and, some days later, of the plans in the SED leadership to replace Honecker. He signaled tacit support for the impending palace coup. Once the East German leader was replaced by Egon Krenz on 17–18 October, the Soviet strategy seemed to be aimed at creating and stabilizing a “Perestroika GDR” under the new Prime Minister Hans Modrow, who took over on 13 November. This was to be done with Soviet backing and West German funding.⁴²

Regarding the Berlin Wall, while the Soviet side had been routinely informed about planned changes in the travel restrictions of GDR citizens, it learned of the Wall’s opening only after the fact. Later, Gorbachev and his aides declared that they had been prepared for such an event. The reaction came within a few hours, with the Soviet leader welcoming the event. On 11 November *Pravda* praised it as a “courageous and wise step.”⁴³ Perhaps Gorbachev felt some relief that this problem had been solved quickly and non-violently.

This did not mean, however, that the Soviet government had changed its attitude toward the fate of Germany. Although Gorbachev, in a brainstorming session with advisors, had warned the day before the Wall’s fall that Honecker’s removal might put the “topic of German reunification on the agenda,”⁴⁴ on 12 Novem-

³⁸ Cf. the chapter by Hans Hermann Hertle, “The October Revolution in East Germany,” in this volume, 113–35.

³⁹ Frank Umbach, *Das rote Bündnis: Entwicklung und Zerfall des Warschauer Paktes 1955 bis 1991* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2005), 479, 496.

⁴⁰ Falin, *Konflikte*, 150.

⁴¹ Kotschemassow, *Meine letzte Mission*, 169, 185.

⁴² Dashichev, “On the Road to German Reunification,” 173.

⁴³ Hans-Hermann Hertle, *Chronik des Mauerfalls: Die dramatischen Ereignisse um den 9. November 1989* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1996), 232. Cf. Jonathan Haslam, *Russia’s Cold War: From the October Revolution to the Fall of the Wall* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 388–89.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Vladislav Zubok, “Die Krisen Gorbatschows und die Vereinigung Deutschlands,” in Hans Hermann Hertle, Konrad Jarausch, and Christoph Kleßmann, eds., *Mauerbau und Mauerfall* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2002), 245–69, 256.

ber spokesman Gennadii Gerasimov made it clear that any discussion about the country's unification was "idle" talk. The GDR was to remain a member of the Warsaw Pact as well as a deployment area for Soviet troops and nuclear weapons.⁴⁵ A day earlier, Gorbachev had urged Kohl in a phone call to calm the situation down,⁴⁶ and a week later, he told Brian Mulroney, the Canadian prime minister, that the German issue was "not an issue to be solved today" and that the "new Europe [...] would involve two German states."⁴⁷ This assessment did not appear unrealistic. One must keep in mind that at that time, neither Western leaders nor Eastern dissidents had expressed their favor of Germany's unification in the near future; the only thing the West had stipulated was that the country be granted the right to reunify. Moreover, in 1989 Gorbachev was not yet prepared to accept self-determination rights with all of the attached consequences. This held true not only for Germany. The Kremlin had demanded that the newly established democratic government of Poland promise to stay in the Warsaw Pact. With regard to the GDR, its freely choosing alliances seemed as far away as German unification itself.

Gorbachev accepts Germany's right to self-determination

In the weeks following the opening of the Wall, the Gorbachev administration had four choices: They could (a) attempt to openly block the slowly emerging German inclination toward unification; (b) act in the background in order to slow it down; (c) do nothing; or (d) make the path to reunification free, perhaps using this as a concession to achieve other aims, such as the neutralization of Germany, the dismantling of NATO or economic benefits.⁴⁸ For some time,⁴⁹ Soviet foreign

⁴⁵ Biermann, *Zwischen Kreml und Kanzleramt*, 240.

⁴⁶ Telephone conversation between Kohl and Gorbachev, 11 November 1989, in Savranskaya, Blanton, Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces*, 590–92, 591.

⁴⁷ Conversation Gorbachev with Mulroney, Soviet protocol, 21 November 1989, in Savranskaya, Blanton, Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces*, 598–601. The Soviet leader did not overlook the opportunity to peck at "the Americans" and their "itch to give everybody advice [...] this is like an illness—AIDS. [...] It is not an accident that they call the American ambassador in Hungary *Gauleiter*." One wonders, then, what the Soviet ambassador was called.

⁴⁸ Cf. Fred Oldenburg, "Die Rekonstruktion sowjetischer Deutschlandpolitik," in Heiner Timmermann, ed., *Die DDR: Analysen eines aufgegebenen Staates* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001), 745–88, 759–61. Zubok stresses that Gorbachev's list of options was much longer than is usually assumed, but does not elaborate what options he has in mind. Vladislav Zubok, "German Unification from the Soviet (Russian) Perspective," in Kiron Skinner, ed., *Turning Points in Ending the Cold War* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2008), 255–72.

⁴⁹ Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 329. The roots of the Soviet crisis predated Gorbachev's leadership. Whether a "Chinese model" would have saved the USSR and its foreign empire is, due to the increasing de-legitimization of communist and Soviet rule, more

policy vacillated between options *a* and *b*, sending out contradictory, albeit mostly negative signals. In the end, accused by his critics of having chosen option *c*, the Soviet leader finally shifted to option *d*.

While many of these critics charged Gorbachev with having been too soft on Germany, it was one of his conservative diplomats whose track-two diplomacy accelerated Germany's rush toward unification. An unauthorized message by the leader of the CPSU International Department, Valentin Falin, who was striving to discover the intentions of West Germany, was communicated via one of his aides, Nikolai Portugalov, to Kohl's security advisor Horst Teltschik. The message was mistaken in Bonn as a sign of Soviet consent to a possible unification of Germany⁵⁰ and the chancellor was thus encouraged to compose his Ten-Point Plan, which was presented to the Bundestag on 28 November. The plan took up a suggestion Modrow had made in a recent governmental declaration regarding intensified cooperation between the two German states and the creation of a "contractual community."⁵¹ The Ten Points developed this into a strategy envisaging first a confederation and then the unification of the FRG and GDR.⁵² The plan's aim was to stop the exodus of citizens from the GDR and to inspire public hopes for unity by capturing the unification initiative and presenting it as feasible.

While the GDR government, which hoped for further West German funding, criticized the Ten Points only mildly and declared them to be an "interesting

than questionable. With regard to Zubok's claims that "Liberals use violence for liberal aims" and that Gorbachev's rejection of violence meant the loss of public order (ibid., 319), one must keep in mind that the rejection of violence is today a liberal principle as such, and massacres of peaceful civilians (e.g. Tbilisi 1989, Vilnius 1991) can never be justified as being necessary for upholding the public order.

⁵⁰ Teltschik, *329 Tage*, 43–44. Portugalov handed over two Soviet documents, among them Falin's unofficial message that explicitly refers to "reunification," with this option linked to leaving NATO and the EC. Soviet approval of some kind of "German confederation" was mentioned as being possible. These documents are published in *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik: Deutsche Einheit*, 616–18; for an English translation, see <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB296/doc06.pdf> (accessed 31 October 2012). Chernyaev, who had been incompletely briefed by Falin, authorized the mission. Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble*, 145–47.

⁵¹ "Regierungserklärung des Ministerpräsidenten Hans Modrow vor der Volkskammer," 17 November 1989, in Lehmann, *Die Außenpolitik*, 398–99.

⁵² The Ten Points proposed: 1) West German emergency aid for the GDR population; 2) intensified cooperation with the GDR; 3) in case of a fundamental change of the GDR's political system, increased aid; 4) a positive response to Modrow's proposal of a "contractual community" between the two German states; 5) as soon as a democratic government emerged in the GDR, the creation of confederative structures between the two states; 6) integration into the all-European process; respect for international law, self-determination, and human rights; 7) openness of the EC for all states of Central and Eastern Europe; 8) progress in the CSCE; 9) disarmament and arms control; 10) "the attainment of freedom in Europe, whereby the German people can, via free self-determination, restore their unity." Text in Freedman, *Europe*, 376.

basis for negotiations,”⁵³ Gorbachev, who had not yet been informed about Falin’s escapade, reacted furiously. In a conversation with Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the West German minister of foreign affairs, he and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze attacked the plan as a *diktat* that “not even Hitler” would have dared to proclaim.⁵⁴ The day before, the Soviet prime minister Nikolai Ryzhkov had ruled out a GDR-FRG confederation and some days later, on 9 December, Gorbachev emphasized in front of the Central Committee “that we will see to it that no harm comes to the GDR.”⁵⁵

The Soviet initiative to revive the four-power authority over Germany, an initiative that would capitalize on the traditional British and French mistrust of a quick transfer of power to Bonn, was considered a means for securing Soviet veto power against unwanted developments. This plan was implemented by the USSR convening a meeting of the Allied Control Council (ACC) on 11 December. At the meeting the Soviet representative denounced attempts at destabilizing the status quo in Europe and proposed reinstating regular sessions of this supervisory body consisting of the four victors of World War II. After its intensive operations from 1945 to 1948, the ACC had met only irregularly. At the same time, Soviet diplomats and media embarked on a campaign aimed at discrediting the opposition in the GDR and linking the German right to self-determination to certain conditions. Members of the General Staff advocated a hard line with regard to Germany.⁵⁶ On the other hand, foreign-policy expert Dashichev and Ambassador Kvitsinskii forecast a growing leaning in the German population toward unification, which they declared not at variance with Soviet interests, but rather a precondition for the “Common European Home.” In internal memoranda in November, the advisors thus proposed that the GDR propose a scheme for creating a German confederation.⁵⁷

In a speech in Brussels on 19 December, Shevardnadze tried to walk a fine line between Gorbachev’s veto of unification and Kvitsinskii’s demand of a confederation. In an interview with CBS in 10 December, the foreign minister had characterized the German wish for a unified state as “logical” and in a conversation with his interpreter he described reunification as inevitable.⁵⁸ As he was not inclined to modify the Soviet stance, he chose, after repeating Gorbachev’s denouncement of unification, to pose questions that in his mind should be addressed

⁵³ Quoted in Biermann, *Zwischen Kreml und Kanzleramt*, 337.

⁵⁴ Genscher, *Erinnerungen*, 683; Conversation Gorbachev with Genscher, Soviet protocol, 5 December 1989, in *MGGV*, 276–77. In the West German protocol, the reference to Hitler is missing. Hilger, *Diplomatie*, 73–80. In a more moderate tone: Conversation Genscher with Shevardnadze, West German protocol, 5 December 1989, *ibid.*, 61–73, 64, 69, 71–72.

⁵⁵ Text in Freedman, *Europe*, 384–91, 385; Conversation Ryzhkov with Modrow, 4 December 1989, in Lehmann, *Die Außenpolitik*, 402–4.

⁵⁶ Biermann, *Zwischen Kreml und Kanzleramt*, 375–78, 347–48.

⁵⁷ Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm*, 16–17; Daschitschew, “Die sowjetische Deutschlandpolitik,” 64.

⁵⁸ Biermann, *Zwischen Kreml und Kanzleramt*, 366; Palazchenko, *My Years*, 159.

before German unity was restored.⁵⁹ But the objective of demonstrating leadership was not reached, and Western politicians would later refer to this speech as “an expression of [his] understanding that unification is inevitable.”⁶⁰

In the end, it took Gorbachev several more weeks to accept Germany’s right to self-determination. He continued to publicly insist, in contrast to his foreign minister, on the continued existence of two German states. It is not clear when the Soviet leader started to rethink his assessment or when he arrived at the position he communicated to Hans Modrow on 30 January and to Helmut Kohl on 10 February, when the Soviet leader said that the question of whether or not to unify Germany was up to the Germans.⁶¹ Gorbachev has maneuvered around this question masterfully, obfuscating the answer to this day. It is a widely held opinion that the right of self-determination was granted on these two occasions. However it can be shown in East German documents that Shevardnadze indicated this outcome already much earlier, namely on 20 January, when he stated to Oskar Fischer, the East German foreign minister, “that the Soviet Union does not deny the German right to self-determination [...] Their wish for closer cooperation and, if the Germans decide so, for national unity will be respected.”⁶²

In his memoirs, Gorbachev writes that during a conference with his advisors on 26 January, it was agreed that Germany’s reunification “should be regarded as inevitable.”⁶³ While the available protocol does not make this as explicit as one would expect, no one present expressed any doubts about the future unification of Germany. The chief of the General Staff was ordered to prepare for the full withdrawal of troops from the GDR. The conference was characterized by this calm approach as well as a critical assessment of the situation in the GDR. Gorbachev stated that there were “no real forces in the GDR,” and Ryzhkov concluded: “We cannot preserve the GDR.”⁶⁴ As a consequence, Gorbachev felt that the Kremlin

⁵⁹ The issues he mentioned included guarantees that German unity would not threaten peace in Europe; whether Germany would recognize its borders; its place in military alliances; the presence of foreign troops on its soil; its relation to the Helsinki process; and its relation to the unification of Europe. Text in *Europa Archiv* 45 (1990): D 127–36.

⁶⁰ Conversation Gorbachev with Baker, Soviet protocol, 9 February 1990, in *MGGV*, 332–38, 333.

⁶¹ Conversation Gorbachev with Kohl, Soviet protocol, 10 February 1990, in *MGGV*, 339–55, 348; West German protocol, in Küsters and Hofmann, *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik: Deutsche Einheit*, 795–807, 801. Kohl made this explicit in a press conference the same evening and TASS published it the next day. Texts in Freedman, *Europe*, 472–76.

⁶² Conversation Fischer with Shevardnadze, GDR protocol, 20 January 1990, in Lehmann, *Außenpolitik*, 441–43, 441.

⁶³ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 528. Some years later, he was more precise: “The question whether to agree with reunification was not raised.” Gorbatschow, *Wie es war*, 97. The date of the meeting is not entirely clear.

⁶⁴ Protocol of the discussion in the general secretary’s cabinet, 26 January 1990, in *MGGV*, 307–11. While the protocol was published only in 2005, earlier memoirs hint at what was discussed, e.g. Tschernjaew, *Mein deutsches Tagebuch*, 248–55; Schachnasarow, *Der Preis der Freiheit* 150; Gorbatschow, *Wie es war*, 95–97.

would have to “act through the FRG.” Kryuchkov, who later joined the putsch against Gorbachev, recommended “preparing our people for the unification,” and Gorbachev agreed to hold an interview to publicize this. This sober assessment was interspersed, however, by absurd statements such as “we are now in the process of a second Brest[-Litovsk] treaty” (Gorbachev) or “[if we give Kohl everything] Germany will unleash the third world war in 20–30 years” (Ryzhkov).

Secondly, Gorbachev urged “procrastinating” the unification process, which would take at least “several years.” He considered this the “main thing” that needed to be done. The rights of the four control powers in Germany and the creation of an international forum consisting of the two Germans and the four powers (later the “Two Plus Four”) would guarantee that the USSR retained its veto right over Germany’s future; France and Britain were to be recruited as tactical allies in this game. In the discussions, Shevardnadze voiced his (correct, as it turned out) expectation that in a group based on the four powers, the USSR would be in a minority position. Thus he warned against forming a Two Plus Four forum. He did not however convince Gorbachev.

Thirdly, the gathering discussed which political forces could be relied upon in Germany: Kohl was to be told that in the upcoming elections the SPD had better chances. Modrow was to be convinced to join the SPD and to advocate unification, referring to Stalin’s “commitment” to German unity (sic). Aleksandr Yakovlev recommended that the USSR “win the sympathy of the German people” by supporting Modrow’s initiative for a confederation of the two Germans. Nonetheless, the SED should not be “written off” entirely.

Fourth, German unification was to be used for achieving several other goals: Gorbachev wanted to make sure that “we don’t just go home on the 50th anniversary of victory” or that “unified Germany escapes into NATO.” According to him, Soviet forces “could be withdrawn if the Americans also withdraw their forces.” Although he did not mention that eliminating US troops in Germany and the country’s withdrawal from NATO would deal a heavy, perhaps fatal, blow to the Euro-Atlantic alliance, this was something Moscow had attempted to achieve since the Stalin era and perhaps in Gorbachev’s eyes was something for which it was worth giving up the GDR. In addition, unification was to be tightly linked to and “synchronized” with other international processes, such as the Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE) and the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) negotiations. This was something that Kohl’s Ten Points had also signaled. From Gorbachev’s perspective, linking these processes would not only be useful for slowing down and controlling the emergence of a unified Germany, but also for accelerating the creation of the “Common European Home,” which he repeatedly proclaimed as one of his goals.

In retrospect, the Soviet leader has claimed that with regard to the German Question, he was guided by three principles: a moral one, not to “condemn Germans to partition forever”; a political one, not to put *détente* at risk by using force;

and a strategic one, not to strain German relations with the USSR by suppressing a democratic wish for unification.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, he was convinced that unification was not yet the order of the day. While redefining the Soviet strategy, the leader seems to have struggled to unite several aims. These have been extrapolated by Mikhail Narinskii as follows: to avoid violence and interference in the internal affairs of foreign countries; to keep the development in Germany under control; to avoid strain on Soviet-US and Soviet-German relations; and to promote the parallel dismantling of military alliances in Europe and the construction of the “Common European Home.”⁶⁶ If one searches for the various factors motivating Gorbachev’s gradual acceptance of German unity between November 1989 and January 1990, several steps can be recognized:

1) The project of building some sort of “Perestroika GDR,” a reasonable choice for a Soviet leader who wanted to promote perestroika, to safeguard Soviet interests and who envisaged a “Common European Home” with two symmetrical German rooms in it, proved unfeasible. This was mainly for three reasons. First, the GDR, be it reformed or unreformed, became increasingly unacceptable for most East Germans. In contrast to many intellectuals and dissidents, the majority pinned their hopes not on a reform-socialist experiment, but on predictability and prosperity which they believed they would find by emigrating to the West or by supporting unification. This belief was confirmed for many citizens by the continued existence and machinations of Stasi, the infamous state security police, as well as the SED’s failure to distance itself from its past.⁶⁷ Modrow’s attempt to revitalize political surveillance and oppression and to turn them into a “stabilizing force in society” backfired. Thus, after the fall of the Wall the mass exodus continued and even grew. Those who remained at home demanded unification ever more often. Historian Hanns Jürgen Küsters has argued that it was after the Stasi’s breakdown in January 1990 that Gorbachev recognized the impossibility of maintaining the GDR.⁶⁸ Second, as Krenz confessed in a conversation with Gorbachev, the GDR was in deep financial trouble, having accumulated a foreign debt of 26.5 billion dollars and a deficit of 12.1 billion. It was spending 62 percent of its export revenues to service its foreign debt and was rapidly approaching bankruptcy.⁶⁹ Its traditional sponsor, the FRG, proved un-

⁶⁵ Gorbatschow, *Wie es war*, 84, 88. Cf. Anatolii Cherniaev, “The Unification of Germany: Political Mechanisms and Psychological Stereotypes,” *Russian Politics and Law* 36, no. 4 (1998): 23–38, 31.

⁶⁶ Narinskii, “M.S. Gorbachev i ob”edinenie Germanii,” 17.

⁶⁷ Andreas Rödter, *Deutschland einig Vaterland: Die Geschichte der Wiedervereinigung* (Munich: Beck, 2009), 95–98, 120–24; Sarotte, 1989, 96 and 117. Modrow’s quote is from his conversation with Nikolai Ryzhkov on 10 January 1990. *Ibid.*, 96.

⁶⁸ Hanns Jürgen Küsters, “Entscheidung für die deutsche Einheit,” in idem and Hofmann, *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik: Deutsche Einheit*, 21–236, 233.

⁶⁹ Conversation Gorbachev with Krenz, Soviet protocol, 1 November 1989, in *MGGV*, 232–245, 237.

willing to grant additional financial support without fundamental political reforms being implemented in the GDR. Third, Modrow's project of a "contractual community" of two states, which had been conceived to take the wind out of the "unificationists'" sails, and the Modrow Plan with its plans for creating a confederation that was subsequently launched, signaled that even the SED was not convinced in the continued existence of an independent East German state. In a conversation with Gorbachev on 30 January, the East German leader presented his draft for "Germany, United Fatherland" which read: "We strive for the unification of the two German states."⁷⁰ This was to be achieved step by step in a process over years. It would include the neutralization of both states and the creation of a European Confederation. In the meantime, all the major political parties in the GDR had already voiced their demand for German unification. Once the entire political elite of the GDR, the SED prime minister included, was discussing unification schemes, the Soviet leader could not insist on blocking it without alienating the East Germans completely. In his talk with Modrow, Gorbachev approved the SED strategy, including, in his words, "in the long run, the merging [*srastanie*] of the two states into one."⁷¹ Both the scheme and the Soviet leader's approval of it could be expected to improve the SED's chances in the upcoming elections. Publicly, the Soviet leader declared that "nobody had ever doubted, in principle, the unification of the Germans."⁷² In a letter to Kohl on 2 February, Gorbachev described the emergence of a contractual community as realistic.⁷³

2) In the international arena outside the GDR, Gorbachev, who had believed that most Western leaders opposed German unity, was gradually forced to accept the impossibility of forging a strong consensus against unity, as the failure of the ACC session in Berlin had indicated. The British prime minister had been most outspoken in her statements against German unity, statements that, due to the US-British "special relationship," were perhaps mistaken by the Soviet leader as reflecting US policy.⁷⁴ When former US security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski traveled to Moscow in October 1989, his statements had seemed to cor-

⁷⁰ Conversation Gorbachev with Modrow, Soviet protocol, 30 January 1990, in *MGGV*, 312–26, 324. Modrow had stated that "the idea of the existence of two German states is not supported by a growing part of the population of the GDR. Apparently it is not possible to uphold the idea." *Ibid.*, 315.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 320. Gorbachev recalled that the conversation left the impression that Modrow was not the "master of the situation." Gorbatschow, *Wie es war*, 100.

⁷² Quoted in Biermann, *Zwischen Kreml und Kanzleramt*, 392.

⁷³ Gorbachev to Kohl, 2 February 1990, in Küsters and Hofmann, *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik: Deutsche Einheit*, 748.

⁷⁴ "Britain and Western Europe are not interested in the unification of Germany. The words written in the NATO communiqué[s] may sound different, but disregard them. We do not want the unification of Germany." Conversation Gorbachev with Thatcher, Soviet protocol, 23 September 1989, in Savranskaya, Blanton and Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces*, 530–32. For Gorbachev's mistaken conclusion that this represented the US stance, see Savranskaya, "The Logic of 1989," 33.

roborate this impression.⁷⁵ In the Politburo, on 3 November, Gorbachev had forecast that “the West does not want the unification of Germany, but wants to disrupt it with our hands, to set us against the FRG in order to preclude a possible ‘arrangement’ between the USSR and Germany.”⁷⁶ However, as became visible for the Soviet leader in December and January 1989–90, Margaret Thatcher and François Mitterrand, despite their shared opposition against unification, were not prepared to openly join a temporary alliance against German self-determination after it had been claimed by Kohl and endorsed by the United States.⁷⁷ At their meeting on 6 December, the French president had joined Gorbachev in criticizing Kohl’s swiftness, and yet he had made it clear that he was not “afraid of Germany’s reunification.” Nonetheless it had to be preceded by European integration.⁷⁸ Giulio Andreotti, the Italian prime minister, who in a conversation with Gorbachev had “absolutely agreed” with the Soviet leader’s claim that German unification was “not a current question,”⁷⁹ was neither willing to stick his head out nor did he carry enough weight to create a substantial barrier. On the contrary: Under the US aegis, a consensus grew among Western leaders not to block German unification. The US president not only repeated his endorsement of Germany’s right to self-determination in a conversation with Gorbachev on Malta on 2–3 December,⁸⁰ but also endeavored to be considerate of the Soviet mood and to create incentives, including disarmament as well as reforms of NATO and the OSCE, to gain Gorbachev’s consent. At a summit in Strasbourg on 9 December, the heads of all EC member states confirmed that they were committed to seeking “the strengthening of the state of peace in Europe in which the German people will regain their unity through free self-determination.”⁸¹

⁷⁵ “[O]ne Germany, united and strong. This does not correspond to either your or our interests.” Conversation Yakovlev with Brzezinski, Soviet protocol, 31 October 1989, in Savranskaya, Blanton and Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces*, 563–68, 567.

⁷⁶ Chernyaev, Veber, Medvedev, eds., *V Politbyuro*, 450. The same formulation is used in Chernyaev’s diary entry of 9 October. Savranskaya, Blanton, Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces*, 547.

⁷⁷ Jacques Lévesque, “In the name of Europe’s future: Soviet, French, and British qualms about Kohl’s rush to German unification,” in Frédéric Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey, N. Piers Ludlow, Leopoldo Nuti, eds., *Europe and the End of the Cold War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 95–106. Mitterrand was quoted with the words: “I don’t have to do anything to stop it; the Soviets will do it for me.” Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 637.

⁷⁸ Conversation Gorbachev with Mitterrand, Soviet protocol, 6 December 1989, in *MGGV*, 286–91, 287–88.

⁷⁹ Conversation Gorbachev with Andreotti, Soviet protocol, 29 November 1989, in *MGGV*, 264–66.

⁸⁰ Bush said that despite some ambivalence among US allies in NATO, “you cannot expect us [i.e. the United States] not to approve of German reunification.” Soviet protocol, in *MGGV*, 268–72. For an English translation, see *Masterpieces*, 619–46, 634, 640. Cf. Gorbatschow, *Gipfelgespräche*, 93–129.

⁸¹ Quoted in Haftendorn, “The Unification,” 343.

3) Not only his relations with the United States, France, Britain and Italy, but also with West Germany may have convinced the Soviet leader to acquiesce to German unification. Confronted with the choice between a consensual solution and straining his relations with Kohl, Gorbachev opted for the first—as Mitterrand did in a similar dilemma. The French president was held in high esteem by Gorbachev, and French-German reconciliation, as personified by Mitterrand and Kohl, was perhaps a model for the Soviet-German reconciliation. In addition, the German economic capacity and its goodwill, which was impressively demonstrated by a West German program in January 1990 of express deliveries of food rations, sponsored by the federal government with 220 million marks, created a strong incentive for acquiescing to unification.

4) When looking for Gorbachev's motives in the German Question, an ideological factor also needs to be taken into account. As an enlightened Marxist and guided by an idealist *Weltanschauung*, the Soviet leader aspired to turning theory into practice. Consenting with Germany's self-determination enabled him to solve two grave contradictions between theory and reality: first, the contradiction between the Soviet endorsement, in theory, of the principle of national self-determination and the denial of it to the German people; and second, the divergence between the Soviet claim of having advocated German unity and the Soviet two-state policy. By acquiescing to German unification, Gorbachev managed not only to resolve these two inconsistencies but also to legitimize this decision by referring to the Soviet tradition of propagating German self-determination and unity. In a well-considered distortion of the historical record, the Soviet leader claimed that "We never denied this right [of self-determination] to the Germans,"⁸² whereby it was not necessary to modify the *official* Soviet stance. Such outward consistency enabled Gorbachev to receive the approval of German unity by the majority of the Soviet population; in an opinion poll in March, 60 percent approved of German unification.⁸³

5) As Gorbachev's statements indicate, the leader seems to have expected to be able to use German unification to realize his project of a "Common European Home." This was to lead in the long run to some sort of security system involving the USSR and Europe and replacing NATO. Yet it soon became clear that it would not be easy to realize these expectations.

Gorbachev accepts Germany's right to choose an alliance

When the Soviet leader acquiesced to Germany's self-determination with regard to unification, Gorbachev still felt that the developments could be controlled.

⁸² Gorbachev's answers to questions posed by the Pravda correspondent, 21 February 1990 in *MGGV*, 371. Cf. Gorbatschow, *Wie es war*, 114. Stent, *Russia*, 109, calls Gorbachev a "prisoner of past pronouncements."

⁸³ Plato, *Die Vereinigung*, 173.

This outlook was fundamentally changed by the SED's defeat in the parliamentary elections on 18 March, the landslide victory of Kohl's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in the East, and the creation of a non-communist coalition government under Lothar de Maizière (CDU). Not only was the election outcome perceived as a referendum favoring unification. In addition, the GDR had become even less manageable by Moscow than it had been under Honecker and Modrow. Since a non-communist government in Berlin could be expected at some point to terminate its alliance with the USSR, the GDR was—from a Bolshevik point of view—already lost for the Kremlin. The Soviet loss of control on developments concerning German reunification was fostered by the West German strategy, supported by the US administration, of deliberately downgrading and decelerating the Two Plus Four process while creating facts by speeding up the process of “inner” and economic unification. Thus the economic union of both German states was signed on 18 May; two months after the GDR elections, but four months ahead of the Two Plus Four treaty.⁸⁴

In his conversations with Bush and with Mitterrand in December 1989 and on other occasions, Gorbachev had raised the question of whether the unified Germany was to be neutral, or a NATO or Warsaw Pact member. He did not propose an answer. In the brainstorming session with high officials and advisors on 26 January, Gorbachev had explicitly ruled out NATO membership⁸⁵ and repeated this statement in an interview with *Pravda* on 7 March and in the Politburo on 3 May.⁸⁶ In the same session, Shevardnadze's draft instructions for the Two Plus Four negotiations, a draft that provided for “the tacit [Soviet] approval of Germany remaining in NATO,” were voted down.⁸⁷ Falin, who had proposed in several internal memos since December 1989 that the USSR bring forward its

⁸⁴ Hanns Jürgen Küsters, “Entscheidung für die deutsche Einheit,” in idem and Hofmann, *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik: Deutsche Einheit*, 21–236, 79, 89, 119.

⁸⁵ Protocol of a discussion in the general secretary's cabinet, 26 January 1990, in *MGGV*, 307–11, 308.

⁸⁶ According to Chernyaev's diary entry of 5 May, Gorbachev said in the Politburo session on 3 May: “[Do] not let Germany into NATO, that's it. I will risk bursting the Viennese negotiations [on conventional forces in Europe] if that happens.” Chernyaev, *Sovmestnyi iskhod*, 855. Chernyaev criticized this stance in a memo to Gorbachev as contradicting the principles of the “new thinking” and having no chance of being maintained in practice. http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB317/chernyaev_1990.pdf (accessed 8 August 2012). The memo of 4 May is published in Tschernjaew, *Mein deutsches Tagebuch*, 257–60; an abridged version is found in *MGGV*, 424–25.

⁸⁷ Tschernjaew, *Mein deutsches Tagebuch*, 257–58. Shevardnadze seems to have accepted the NATO membership of the unified Germany much earlier than Gorbachev. In a conversation on 10 February 1990, the same day Baker had left Moscow, Shevardnadze told Genscher: “The most complicated question is that of the unified Germany in NATO. What happens with the Soviet troops in the GDR? How should everything look in practice? Should the S[oviet] U[nion] withdraw all her forces from the GDR, while US forces remain in the Federal Republic of Germany?” West German protocol, in Hilger, *Diplomatie*, 98–105, 102.

demands in exchange for granting unification, had severely attacked the softer strategy. Shevardnadze was ordered to maintain the tough position. According to Falin's memoirs, some weeks later Gorbachev said that "we were both right not to listen to Eduard [Shevardnadze]."⁸⁸

Shevardnadze duly repeated the mantra that the USSR wanted guarantees that the unified Germany would not become a NATO member in his conversation with Genscher and in his speech at the first ministerial meeting of the Two Plus Four in Bonn on 5 May.⁸⁹ He referred to the Soviet people, of which 97 to 98 percent were allegedly against such an outcome. As a solution he proposed the transformation of both alliances and their final replacement through the "Common European Home" of all CSCE states. Until this had been accomplished, Germany would be entitled to unify but not to regain full sovereignty. With regard to four-power control over Germany, Soviet diplomacy demanded postponing its dissolution until the end of a transition period of several years, during which foreign troops were to withdraw from Germany and a new security organization for Europe was to emerge.⁹⁰ As Shevardnadze had used his visit to Bonn to ask for West German loans, his position was considerably weakened.⁹¹

In the meantime, from January till May, the West was confronted with what Kvitsinskii has called a "tangled surrealist mess of ideas."⁹² The Soviet side aired several proposals, sometimes even more than one at the same time: 1) the dissolution of the two military alliances and the creation of an all-European security system (with or without the United States and Canada⁹³); 2) the ongoing existence

⁸⁸ Falin, *Konflikte*, 179; the memos *ibid.*, 153; 156–61; 165–78; 314–16. Falin's conditions included Germany's neutralization and demilitarization. If Germany would not comply with these demands, Soviet troops should remain in the GDR, and the USSR would consider reunification as an aggression against the GDR, which was a member of the Warsaw Pact. Obviously the diplomat wasted no time on ideas of self-determination or on the possibility that the GDR might withdraw from the Soviet alliance.

⁸⁹ Conversation Genscher with Shevardnadze, West German protocol, 4 May 1990, in Hilger, *Diplomatie*, 129–36, 131, 134; Shevardnadze's speech at the Two Plus Four, 5 May, *ibid.*, 136–44. In the end, the Western partners of the Two Plus Four did not perceive the Soviet conditions as an obstacle. Entry, 7 May 1990, Chernyaev, *Diary*, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB317/chernyaev_1990.pdf (accessed 8 August 2012). On the Two Plus Four process, see Zelikow, Rice, *Germany Unified*, 243–63; Biermann, *Zwischen Kreml und Kanzleramt*, 420–767; Rödder, *Deutschland*, 233–35.

⁹⁰ In contrast, Germany insisted on ending four-power control as soon as possible and granting a transition period only with regard to the Soviet military withdrawal from the GDR. Conversation Genscher with Shevardnadze, West German protocol, 18 June 1990, in Hilger, *Diplomatie*, 194–211, 204–5 and footnote 32.

⁹¹ Teltschik, 329 *Tage*, 220–27. Küsters and Hofmann, *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik: Deutsche Einheit*, 1087.

⁹² Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm*, 12.

⁹³ In his conversation with Bush, Gorbachev stated that US presence in Europe was "for the time being necessary." Second conversation Gorbachev with Bush, Soviet protocol, 31 May 1990, in *MGGV*, 466–76, 469. Cf. Conversation Gorbachev with Bush, Soviet protocol, 2–3 December

of the two alliances plus Germany's neutralization and demilitarization; 3) a double membership for Germany in NATO and the Warsaw Pact, either as a full or associated member, leading de facto to the same result as the country's neutralization; 4) the "French solution," i.e. Germany's membership in the political, but not military structures of NATO; 5) Germany's full membership in NATO under the condition of the USSR's entry into the Atlantic alliance, resulting de facto in the alliance's neutralization and/or transformation into a European-Soviet-North American security system; and 6) Germany's membership in the Warsaw Pact.⁹⁴

The hectic creativity of the Soviet leadership aimed at circumventing Germany remaining a member of NATO—something that was, on top of the "loss of the GDR," likely to be perceived as a Soviet diplomatic defeat. If, however, Germany were to preserve its NATO membership, Gorbachev wanted to use his acquiescence to either dismantle or transform the alliance into a structure that included the USSR and thus make it controllable by the Kremlin. In April, Gorbachev told the British foreign secretary that a new system of this sort (be it instead of or superseding the two blocs⁹⁵) was his favorite solution, and when Shevardnadze outlined various options to his West German colleague on 23 May, all of them envisaged this outcome in some form or another.⁹⁶ In contrast, the option of Germany's double membership in both alliances was quickly dismissed by the Soviet leader.⁹⁷

The Soviet line of postponing German sovereignty and denying its self-determination with regard to security issues was maintained until the Soviet leader's summit with the US president on 31 May. At this meeting Gorbachev demanded

1989, in Savranskaya, Blanton, Zubok, eds., *Masterpieces*, 619–46, 640–41; Conversation Gorbachev with Baker, Soviet protocol, 18 May 1990, in *MGGV*, here 437 and 445. However in his conversation with the British foreign secretary, Gorbachev proposed a new security system for Europe "from the Atlantic to the Urals," i.e. excluding the United States and Canada. Conversation Gorbachev with Hurd, Soviet protocol, 10 April 1990, *ibid.*, 391–93.

⁹⁴ Conversation Gorbachev with Baker, Soviet protocol, 18 May 1990, in *MGGV*, 437–45, 442. Option 6) was proposed in Gorbachev's conversation with Douglas Hurd on 10 April 1990, *ibid.*, 391–93. Cf. Hannes Adomeit, "Gorbachev and German Unification," in Alexander Dallin and Gail Lapidus, eds., *The Soviet System: From Crisis to Collapse*, rev. ed. (Boulder: Westview, 1995), 465–92, 477.

⁹⁵ Shevardnadze said: "The Soviet Union is sympathetic to the proposal to liquidate the [existing] alliances; however, this has no chance of being accepted and is therefore irrational." Conversation Genscher with Shevardnadze, West German protocol, 12 June 1989, in Hilger, ed., *Diplomatie*, 15–21, 17.

⁹⁶ Conversation Gorbachev with Hurd, Soviet protocol, 10 April 1990, in *MGGV*, 391–93; Conversation Genscher with Shevardnadze, West German protocol, 23 May 1990, in Hilger, *Diplomatie*, 147–62, 153–54. The following options were mentioned: 1) Germany's withdrawal from both alliances; 2) neutrality; 3) not-alignment in combination with an all-European security system; 4) the dissolution of the alliances in combination with an all-European security system.

⁹⁷ Conversation Kohl with Gorbachev, German protocol, 10 February 1990, in Küsters and Hofmann, *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik: Deutsche Einheit*, 795–807, 804.

that a unified Germany be entitled to freely determine whether it be part of a military alliance. However, at the Two Plus Four session in Berlin on 22 June, Shevardnadze returned to the line of postponing German sovereignty and demanded that the four powers retain their rights for a five-year period after unification, a period in which the united Germany was to remain in both alliances.⁹⁸ This posture changed again on 15 July when Gorbachev, now in a conversation with the West German chancellor, conceded that with certain restrictions unified Germany could be entitled to remain part of the Atlantic alliance. Again, several factors can be identified that determined Gorbachev's rethinking of this issue, which had moved from outright rejection of unified Germany being a member of NATO to accepting this option.

1) From mid-February until mid-April, it became clear that not only Bonn advocated NATO membership, albeit under military restrictions for the GDR, the so-called Genscher Plan.⁹⁹ From a telephone conversation with the US president on 28 February, the Soviet leader drew the conclusion that Bush, too, was supportive of this idea.¹⁰⁰ Also Thatcher, Mitterrand and most of the leaders recently elected in the Central European states supported this solution—not so much due to trust in a unified Germany's self-restraint but rather out of the consideration that NATO should continue the mission it had had with regard to Germany from the beginning: to keep the Germans, if not “down,” then at least under control. At the Open Skies conference in Ottawa in February, the new non-communist foreign ministers of Czechoslovakia and Poland, Jiří Dienstbier and Krzysztof Skubiszewski, argued against Germany's neutralization; at the Warsaw Pact's conference of foreign ministers in Prague in March, this was also the majority opinion among the non-Soviet participants.¹⁰¹ Within the GDR, resistance against NATO became weaker, while the discussion about the accession procedure according to Article 23 of the FRG's Basic Law (which did not envision the fusion of the two German states but merely the accession of the GDR's provinces to the FRG) strengthened the fortunes of the Genscher Plan advocates.¹⁰² In a conversation with Gorbachev on 25 May, Mitterrand explained that the FRG, a NATO member, was preparing to “swallow” the GDR, which is why a unified Germany

⁹⁸ “Zweites Treffen der Außenminister der Zwei plus Vier,” 22 June 1990, in *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik: Deutsche Einheit*, 1249–56. Interestingly, Soviet diplomacy sent out signals that these proposals were not meant seriously. Kiessler and Elbe, *Ein runder Tisch*, 160–63; Hilger, *Diplomatie*, 205.

⁹⁹ Text in Freedman, *Europe*, 436–45.

¹⁰⁰ Gorbatschow, *Wie es war*, 119.

¹⁰¹ Adomeit, “Gorbachev and German Unification,” 482; “Bericht über das Treffen der Außenminister der Staaten des Warschauer Vertrages,” 19 March 1990, in Lehmann, *Außenpolitik*, 527.

¹⁰² In a conversation with Gorbachev on 29 April, de Maizièrè said that in the election campaign, he had advocated the Article 23 procedure; hence, he saw his victory as a clear mandate to proceed in this direction. Soviet protocol, 29 April 1990, in *MGGV*, 409–23, 419. Cf. Jack F. Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire: The American Ambassador's Account of the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Random House, 1995), 383.

would remain in the Atlantic alliance.¹⁰³ As the Soviet leader wrote in his memoirs, this conversation, in which even the French president reacted unenthusiastically to Gorbachev's suggestion of a "French solution," i.e. political membership in the alliance without participation in its military structures, for Germany, made it clear that the USSR had no allies in its struggle against Germany's NATO membership.¹⁰⁴ Gorbachev's assistants later concluded from this that the Soviet leader had prepared himself for this outcome.

2) With respect to the conditions of the European framework, Gorbachev launched several attempts to use German unification as a lever for creating a new security system for Europe. A Soviet non-paper in April had declared a new security system as "the solution" for the German problem and, in late May, the Soviet envoy to East Berlin handed over a proposal for an all-European security institution, comprising all 35 signatories of the CSCE final act and including a "Greater European Council," a body of ambassadors, and a permanent secretariat.¹⁰⁵ Some weeks later, Shevardnadze and GDR foreign minister Markus Meckel agreed to set up "in the narrowest circle, with utmost confidence and without delay, a working group for [...] developing common ideas for a European security structure."¹⁰⁶ While the Soviet leader was able to enlist a certain amount of support for his idea among East German leaders, including de Maizière, Meckel and Defense and Disarmament Minister Rainer Eppelmann,¹⁰⁷ it remained unclear whether the new organization would become more than, as the US secretary of state stated in a conversation with the Soviet leader in May, "a beautiful dream."¹⁰⁸ In this situation, three developments became relevant:

First, the Warsaw Pact's military organization, which according to some Soviet conceptions was envisaged as being one pillar of the new system, was showing signs of decay: Hungary and Czechoslovakia had demanded negotiations for a Soviet withdrawal from their territories, and in June 1990 the new non-communist Hungarian government declared that their country would not remain in the alliance under any circumstances.¹⁰⁹ In order to rescue the organization, at the Moscow session of the alliance's Political Consultative Committee, discussions were held concerning the possibility of transforming the Pact into a political alliance.

Secondly, under these conditions, it was promising for the Soviet side that the United States proposed transforming also NATO into a primarily political alliance

¹⁰³ Soviet protocol, in *MGGV*, 451, 461.

¹⁰⁴ Gorbatschow, *Wie es war*, 135–36; Tschernjaew, *Mein deutsches Tagebuch*, 268; Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble*, 158–59.

¹⁰⁵ Non-paper, Soviet government, 16 April 1990; "Notiz eines Besuchs des Gesandten der UdSSR," 25 May 1990, in Lehman, *Außenpolitik*, 542–45; 663–65.

¹⁰⁶ Conversation Meckel with Shevardnadze, GDR protocol, 7 June 1990, in Lehman, *Außenpolitik*, 696.

¹⁰⁷ Sarotte, *1989*, 152–53.

¹⁰⁸ Soviet protocol, 18 May 1990, in *MGGV*, 437–45, 438.

¹⁰⁹ Mastny and Byrne, *A Cardboard Castle*, 71.

and changed its strategy by declaring that the alliance would not consider the East European countries enemies. In February, Dashichev had proposed such a solution to the NATO leadership, and in Germany, historian Boris Meissner had launched a similar idea during a talk with Teltschik in April.¹¹⁰ Ideas for a reorientation of NATO were integrated into US secretary of state James Baker's Nine Points, which were presented to Gorbachev on 18 May.¹¹¹ Chernyaev later said that this plan helped the leader to accept Germany's membership in the Atlantic alliance.¹¹² NATO's London declaration of 6 July (during the twenty-eighth session of the CPSU congress) offered reconciliation, friendship, cooperation and a renunciation of the first use of force to the former Cold War adversary.¹¹³ Shevardnadze recalled that he perceived these guarantees as proof that NATO was moving toward a less military posture, which let the question of Germany's membership in the alliance appear "in an entirely different light."¹¹⁴ From end of May, the media in the USSR began to depict NATO in less demonic colors than it had earlier done.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, transforming the Atlantic alliance into a security system for Europe by including the USSR (an idea that was repeatedly brought up by Gorbachev) turned out to be a goal that could not be reached.

And thirdly, the FRG and the United States (in the Nine Points) offered the transformation of the CSCE. If it was not to become a new security system, then at least it was to be bolstered with new competencies and institutionalized as the OSCE, the first security institution comprising North America, Europe and the Soviet Union. As Soviet leaders had repeatedly demanded the creation of such an institution, the Western proposals could be regarded as a sort of compensation.

3) In the area of arms reductions, further compensation and incentives were offered by the West. The Genscher Plan stipulated that no NATO structures were to be deployed on former GDR territory. Baker's Nine Points modified this pledge somewhat and reduced it to a limited transition period, during which Soviet forces would withdraw from the former GDR; in Gorbachev's meeting with Kohl on 15 July it was

¹¹⁰ Dashichev, "On the Road to German Reunification," 178; Teltschik, *329 Tage*, 192.

¹¹¹ Conversation Gorbachev with Baker, Soviet protocol, 18 May 1990, in *MGGV*, 439–40. The proposals comprised (1) the quantitative reduction of Germany's army in the CFE; (2) new negotiations on tactical arms reductions; (3) German abdication of ABC weapons; (4) no NATO troops on former GDR territory for a limited period; (5) the presence of Soviet forces on former GDR territory for a limited period; (6) the transformation of NATO into a more political organization; (7) a guarantee of Germany's borders; (8) the transformation of the CSCE into a permanent organization; (9) "due consideration" of Soviet economic interests. Cf. Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, 263–64.

¹¹² Hannes Adomeit, "Gorbachev's consent to united Germany's membership of NATO," in Frédéric Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey, N. Piers Ludlow and Leopoldo Nuti, eds., *Europe and the End of the Cold War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 107–18, 107–8, 111–12, 115.

¹¹³ "Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance," 5–6 July 1990, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_23693.htm (accessed 8 August 2012).

¹¹⁴ Schewardnadze, *Die Zukunft gehört der Freiheit*, 248, 251.

¹¹⁵ *Izvestiya* (Moscow), 29 May 1990.

confirmed and agreed upon that no foreign NATO personnel would be deployed in the former GDR during this transition period. Unified Germany would renounce the possession and use of ABC weaponry and it was conceded that its armed forces would comprise less than half of the FRG's and GDR's military manpower taken together; this was offered as a voluntary acceptance of self-restriction in the CFE negotiations. The United States agreed to withdraw nuclear short-range weapons from Germany.¹¹⁶ In addition, a rapprochement between the USSR and the United States in the preparation of START was achieved between Baker and Shevardnadze.¹¹⁷

4) On the bilateral level, the entire process was accompanied by a further intensification of German-Soviet cooperation. One part of the German historian Meissner's package, which was designed to help the Kremlin bite the bullet, was concluding a "Grand Treaty" on good-neighborly relations and the renunciation of force. This was intended to symbolize the historic reconciliation of the former adversaries and build a basis for their future cooperation. Ambassador Kvitsinskii reacted "euphorically"¹¹⁸ when Helmut Kohl aired corresponding thoughts. It seems unlikely that German unity and its NATO membership could have been achieved without this reconciliation. During the chancellor's and the Soviet president's joint visit to Gorbachev's native region of Stavropol in July 1990, this reconciliation was symbolically approved by Soviet World War II veterans.¹¹⁹ The "Grand" Soviet-German Treaty on Neighborhood, Partnership and Cooperation of 9 November included a renouncement of force, and declared the two countries' aim of intensifying their cooperation in bilateral and multilateral matters, including arms reduction. The economic part of the new cooperation comprised compensation for former GDR obligations toward the USSR plus a state-guaranteed 5 billion mark loan. This is what Kohl had promised Gorbachev the previous June.¹²⁰ Later that month, Kohl had agreed to pay additional 1.25 billion marks in stationing costs for Soviet troops in the GDR in 1990; in July, he had proposed a German fund to compensate Soviet victims of Nazi slave labor and, after a meeting with Gorbachev, he was presented a Soviet bill for over 20 billion marks to support the Soviet troops in East Germany until 1994 as well as their housing and retraining upon their return to the USSR.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Weidenfeld, *Außenpolitik*, 554.

¹¹⁷ Küsters, "Entscheidung für die deutsche Einheit," 169.

¹¹⁸ Teltschik, 329 *Tage*, 192, 205. Cf. Conversation Kohl with Kvitsinskii, 23 April 1990, in Küsters and Hofmann, *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik: Deutsche Einheit*, 1026–30, 1028.

¹¹⁹ Statement Gorbachev, Soviet-German press conference, 16 July 1990, in *MGGV*, 533.

¹²⁰ The USSR had demanded 11.5 to 17 billion. Already prior to this loan, the FRG was the USSR's largest single foreign creditor, with 6 of a total debt of 24 billion marks. Teltschik, whom the chancellor had secretly sent to Moscow with the directors of the Deutsche and Dresdner banks, insisted that this loan was part of a Western reward for the Kremlin's consent with the German solution. Teltschik, 329 *Tage*, 232, 234–35.

¹²¹ Sarotte, 1989, 170; 179; 187–93; Rödder, *Deutschland*, 250–51; 261–62. The total costs of German payments and services to the USSR with regard to unification were calculated as amounting to 83.55 billion DM, of them about 50 billion in direct payments and credits. Oldenburg, "Die Rekonstruktion," 775–76.

After tough negotiations with Gorbachev threatening to abandon the reached agreement, the latter sum was reduced to 12 billion plus an interest-free credit line of 3 billion. In addition, the two sides reached the consensus that unified Germany would honor both the GDR's economic agreements with the USSR, as well as the latter's economic measures in the GDR.¹²²

5) The minutes of many of Gorbachev's conversations indicate, again, that when discussing the issue of NATO, the leader often referred to the political idea of self-determination. As James Baker outlined to Gorbachev in a crucial conversation on 18 May, the United States argued that under international law and according to the Helsinki final act, it was Germany's right to choose which military alliance it wanted to adhere to. The secretary of state had been asked by Gorbachev whether the United States was prepared to tolerate united Germany's membership in the Warsaw Pact. While the United States advocated Germany's membership in NATO, it was also prepared to accept any other choice Germany would make, as long as it was taken in a free and sovereign manner.¹²³ The day before, Baker had discussed the issue with his West German colleague when Genscher referred to the CSCE document.¹²⁴ In his conversation with Gorbachev, Baker asked: "You say: if the USA trusts Germany, why include it in NATO? My answer is: if you trust [Germany], why not give the Germans the possibility of making their own choice?"¹²⁵ Gorbachev was evasive and did not give a clear response. Two weeks later, however, at a summit with the US president on 31 May, he had embraced this point and, after first demanding Germany's membership in both alliances, proactively insisted that Germany be given the freedom of choice.¹²⁶ The sudden disquiet within the Soviet delegation shows that this initiative had not been generally agreed upon.¹²⁷ In general, this part of the summit discussion repeats the

¹²² Non-paper, Soviet government, 19 April 1990, in Küsters and Hofmann, *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik: Deutsche Einheit*, 1023–24.

¹²³ Conversation Gorbachev with Baker, Soviet protocol, 18 May 1990, in *MGGV*, 437–45, 443.

¹²⁴ Teltschik, *329 Tage*, 239.

¹²⁵ Conversation Gorbachev with Baker, Soviet protocol, 18 May 1990, 438. Genscher raised this question again some days later in a conversation with Shevardnadze. He asked: "The first question is whether unified Germany has equal rights or not. If Germany has equal rights, then this means, according to the Helsinki Final Act, the right to belong or not belong to an alliance." Genscher offered the following assurances: peaceful intentions, no border changes, no extension of NATO with regard to the GDR, the acceptance of Soviet troops on GDR territory during a transition period, and no ABC weapons for Germany. Conversation Genscher with Shevardnadze, West German protocol, 23 May 1990, in Hilger, *Diplomatie*, 147–62, 158.

¹²⁶ Conversation Gorbachev with Bush, Soviet protocol, 31 May 1990, in *MGGV*, 466–76, 474–75.

¹²⁷ Adomeit, "Gorbachev's consent," 113–14; Biermann, *Zwischen Kreml und Kanzleramt*, 607–11. A week later, the Soviet foreign minister claimed that at the Washington summit, both "the United States and the Soviet Union had been anxious, in their exchange of opinions about Germany, not to decide on anything." At least for the US side, this cannot be corroborated from the summit protocol. Nonetheless, Shevardnadze accepted Germany's right to choose an alliance and, thus, confirmed the main outcome of the summit with regard to Germany. Conversation Genscher with Shevardnadze, West German protocol, 7 June 1990, in Hilger, *Diplomatie*, 164–68, 164.

conversation between Gorbachev and Baker on 18 May—with the decisive difference that on 31 May, the Soviet president was proactive about the issue he had earlier been evasive about. It therefore seems likely that the point of self-determination had influenced Gorbachev’s deliberations with regard to Germany’s NATO membership, and that his consent at the 31 May meeting in Washington was a well-reasoned decision consistent with his “new thinking.” As his closest advisor Chernyaev had stressed in a memorandum on 4 May, a permanent denial of the right to self-determination to Germany was inconsistent with these principles, had no real chance of success, and thus was unwise.¹²⁸ The Soviet leader perhaps expected self-determination to include a public referendum in Germany,¹²⁹ which seemed to be anything other than a safe bet for NATO membership. Indeed, on 25 May the French president had reminded Gorbachev that the ideas of both neutrality and a double membership in both blocs were highly popular among Germans.¹³⁰

Instead of trumpeting that US-Soviet agreement had been reached about Germany’s right to choose an alliance, on 31 May Bush shifted to the formulation that the United States preferred seeing Germany in NATO, yet was willing to accept if the Germans decided otherwise. Thus the US leader missed this opportunity for pocketing Gorbachev’s agreement with military self-determination. Gorbachev subsequently obfuscated this consensus. This can be explained with the leader not wanting to give his critics at the twenty-eighth party congress another reason for discontent.¹³¹ In addition, the Soviet government did not seem prepared to declare its full consent with Germany’s NATO membership without seeing Baker’s Nine Points implemented. In the weeks between the Washington and the Stavropol summits, Soviet diplomacy strove at postponing the issue by pushing that the GDR’s responsibilities with regard to the Warsaw Pact be upheld for the entire transition period.¹³²

The combination of the various decisions that had been reached by mid-July concerning reforms of NATO and the CSCE, arms reductions, German-Soviet cooperation, as well as the conclusion of the CPSU congress most likely allowed Gorbachev to adapt to the line advocated by Chernyaev and Shevardnadze. He casually mentioned in a conversation with Helmut Kohl on 15 July, “Membership

¹²⁸ See above, footnote 86.

¹²⁹ A referendum had been proposed in Falin’s April memo to Gorbachev. Falin, *Konflikte*, 173. Cf. Gorbachev’s own account of his conversation with Bush: “You claim to trust in Germany, yet you drag her into NATO [...] Let us let Germany decide for itself.” Gorbatschow, *Erinnerungen*, 722–23.

¹³⁰ Conversation Gorbachev with Mitterrand, Soviet protocol, 25 May 1990, in *MGGV*, 454–65, 461. According to West German opinion polls, the acceptance of neutrality rose from 33 percent 1978 to 55 in 1983. Daschitschew, “Aus den Anfängen,” 42.

¹³¹ See Gorbachev’s speech at the Supreme Soviet on 12 June 1990, when he said: “I told President Bush: Instead of talking excessively about united Germany’s NATO membership, we should think about bringing Europe’s two dividing blocs together.” http://www.2plus4.de/chronik.php3?date_value=12.06.90&sort=000-000 (accessed 31 December 2012).

¹³² Conversation Genscher with Shevardnadze, West German protocol, 11 June 1990, in Hilger, *Diplomatie*, 172–88, 186.

in NATO will persist.”¹³³ However, this statement cannot be found in the published Soviet protocol; officially, the Soviet leader did not mention this issue and merely repeated his opinion that NATO structures were not to extend eastward and Soviet troops would remain where they were during a transitional period. Kohl said that this meant NATO structures would not extend eastward *while* Soviet troops remained there. The chancellor offered that no foreign or ABC troops were to be stationed in the former GDR after the Soviet withdrawal. Then he pressed for a clear public statement from Gorbachev but did not get one. It is presumable that the president, in order not to cause new uproar among his imperialist critics, asked the chancellor not to mention the Atlantic alliance explicitly in his public statement, but only Germany’s sovereignty and its right to freely choose an alliance.¹³⁴ Kohl recalled that in a previous conversation Gorbachev had placed him before the option of either leaving the alliance or losing the opportunity for unity.¹³⁵

The major points in the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany (the Two Plus Four Treaty) were: a declaration that the two Germanys’ external borders would be the definitive borders of the united Germany; the two German governments’ renouncement of ABC weapons; the reduction of Germany’s armed forces to 370,000; the withdrawal of Soviet troops¹³⁶ by the end of 1994; the right of the united Germany to belong to alliances; and the termination of the rights of the Four Powers with regard to Germany and the latter acquiring full sovereignty. The Treaty was signed by the two Germanys and the Four Powers on 12 September 1990 in Moscow and entered into force after the last ratification document was deposited by the USSR on 15 March 1991, after contentious debates in the CPSU and the Supreme Soviet¹³⁷ were resolved and the Soviets ratified the treaty on 4 March.

Interpretation, outlook, desiderata

In the German Question, Gorbachev had to move through several steps. Immediately after the opening of the Berlin Wall, the event was publicly accepted

¹³³ Conversation Kohl with Gorbachev, West German protocol, 15 July 1990, in Küsters and Hoffmann, eds., *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik: Deutsche Einheit*, 1346. Cf. the Soviet protocol, in *MGGV*, 501: “Regarding Germany’s membership in NATO, the issue is clear [...] Under legal membership in NATO, its [Germany’s] eastern part will be, for the transition period, in the area of the Warsaw Pact [*Bei juridischer Mitgliedschaft Deutschlands in der NATO wird sein Ostteil in Übergangszustand im Bereich des Warschauer Paktes sein*].”

¹³⁴ Teltschik, *329 Tage*, 334; Sarotte, *1989*, 179–84.

¹³⁵ Küsters, “Entscheidung,” 191.

¹³⁶ The details were outlined in a separate bilateral Soviet-German treaty of 12 October 1990, ratified on 2 April 1991.

¹³⁷ Mark Kramer, “The Collapse of East European Communism and the Repercussions within the Soviet Union (Part 3),” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 3–96, 4–67.

by the Soviet leadership. After rejecting Kohl's Ten Points, at the end of January 1990 Gorbachev publicly agreed on the two Germans' right to self-determination with regard to a possible unification. It is possible that at that time the Soviet leadership still hoped to bolster the SED's chances in the upcoming elections. In any case, Gorbachev seemed to expect that the reunification of Germany would be a long-term process taking about ten years. The process would be a chance to dismantle the two alliances and to create a "Common European Home" that included the USSR. The control of the Four Powers over Germany, the ambivalence of Britain and France, and the linking of the reunification process with the deconstruction of the Cold War division of Europe appeared to offer means for controlling the developments.

In particular this referred to the question of the united Germany's future membership in an alliance. After the fall of the SED, this seemed to be the only strategic question of importance. Gorbachev, who in 1989 had accepted a non-communist government in Poland but insisted on the country remaining in the Warsaw Pact, did not envisage a united Germany continuing the NATO membership of West Germany. He rather hoped to keep the issue in limbo until a new security system for Europe, including the USSR, was in place. However, the crumbling of the communist regime in the GDR, including the swelling exodus of its citizens to the FRG (according to projections in February 1990, estimated at becoming one million for the entire year), and the ambivalence of Britain and France turned the projected timetable upside down. In this situation, the West German government, which was concerned with avoiding a collapse due to migration and interested in using the opportunity for unity as well as in stabilizing the perestroika in Moscow, offered the USSR a reliable partnership and relief for some of its towering economic problems. Additional German and US concessions (NATO and CSCE reform, disarmament), the principle of self-determination, and, last but not least, the prospect of the USSR's reconciliation with its World War II adversary convinced the Soviet leader to give his consent.

In the beginning, Soviet options had ranged from preserving the GDR to using reunification for achieving Germany's neutralization. In the end, however, the Soviet arsenal was reduced considerably by pressure from the streets, the opening of the Wall, the elections in the GDR, the economic crisis in both the GDR and the USSR, and both countries' increasing reliance on West German money. Since force or threat of force was ruled out by Gorbachev, only a consensual solution seemed feasible. On the balance, Gorbachev achieved neither Germany's neutralization nor the dissolution of NATO. Nonetheless, economic aid for the USSR, the reform of NATO, and the partnership treaty were rewards of historic size.

Declassified documents from the years before 1990 show that internally Gorbachev spoke much more critically about Kohl and the German Question than one would be led to expect by his allegedly pro-Western stance¹³⁸ and his later

¹³⁸ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 318.

policies. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the issues of the Berlin Wall, Germany's reunification, and NATO membership caused a deep change from November 1989 to July 1990 in Gorbachev's thinking, a change that was essential for Soviet policy in these matters. Rafael Biermann has written that "Reunification had not been possible without his [Gorbachev's] change of mind," and Angela Stent has stated that Gorbachev was not the motor, but an enabler of this process.¹³⁹

Despite the newly available evidence, it is still not entirely clear when Gorbachev became convinced to take each step toward agreeing with the various phases of Germany's reunification, nor is it clear what his motives were. This may be due, on one hand, to some sort of "notorious conceptlessness"¹⁴⁰ and the deep divisions within the Soviet apparatus. It was an apparatus that understood the details but lacked vision, with a leader who had a vision, but did not care much for details. Deputy Foreign Minister Kvitsinskii, the ambassador to Bonn, recalled that "we needed a clear idea of our plan for solving the problem, which was to comprise all the main aspects of regulation and mainly take account of Soviet interests. But there was no such plan in Moscow even in May 1990."¹⁴¹ On the other hand, the available documents simply do not yet allow Gorbachev's (or for that matter, Shevardnadze's and Chernyaev's) deliberations to be assessed more precisely. While many minutes of the president's conversations with foreign leaders are accessible as are a number of internal drafts of advisors like Dashichev, the number of accessible administration, Politburo (whose significance was sinking) and Foreign Ministry papers is still insufficient.

In addition, the role of Eduard Shevardnadze should be analyzed better (and honored more). The foreign minister did not follow a balancing act between the "new thinking" and the USSR's imperialist residue, but apparently—even before the president did—seemed ready to radically implement the former and give up the latter. From the sparsely available documentation, his position seems to have been closer to that of Chernyaev, as became clear in May when they both favored a "realist" approach that did not veto the reunified Germany's NATO membership. As the delegation leader at the Two Plus Four negotiations, Shevardnadze had to press for the tougher position that had been adopted in the Politburo against his wishes. But after his failure to change the direction of the negotiations (and after further Western concessions, such as Baker's Nine Points), the approach of Shevardnadze and Chernyaev was vindicated some weeks later. It is, however, not yet clear whether Gorbachev at the 3 May Politburo session refused Germany's NATO membership (a) out of conviction, (b) in order to appease the anti-NATO forces in his governmental apparatus and to win time, or (c) in order to gain further Western concessions.

¹³⁹ Biermann, *Zwischen Kreml und Kanzleramt*, 41; Stent, *Russia*, 75.

¹⁴⁰ Rödder, *Deutschland einig Vaterland*, 260. Cf. Stent, *Russia*, 121; Hilger, ed., *Diplomatie*, 10.

¹⁴¹ Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm*, 11.

Nonetheless, it is clear that a correct assessment of Gorbachev's (and Shevardnadze's) motives can only be made within the context of a highly complex national and international environment framed by the goals of (1) ending the Cold War, (2) implementing perestroika and the "new thinking," and (3) halting the disintegration of communist rule and Soviet control in the Eastern bloc, as well as an environment determined by an economic crisis, the fierce political struggle between the liberal and imperialist factions of the Soviet apparatus, and the beginning national disintegration of the USSR. While the Baltic states' striving for independence interfered with German unification and vice versa,¹⁴² the factional struggle seems to have increasingly influenced Gorbachev's timetable: The leader was clearly reluctant to announce any major agreements prior to the Central Committee Plenum held from 5 to 8 February 1990, which brought "for the first time sharp criticism" of Gorbachev's foreign policy, or the CPSU congress in July.¹⁴³ The ratification of the Two Plus Four Treaty in the Supreme Soviet became an opportunity for a witch hunt of Shevardnadze by communist hardliners. Under these conditions, Gorbachev tried to avoid premature announcements that would destabilize his own position.

In this process, traditional imperialist claims (or "security interests," as they are sometimes labeled) were gradually given up by the Soviet Union. Gorbachev, in return for Soviet acquiescence with unification and NATO membership, clearly did not demand all that he could have from Germany. Some Russian critics and Western authors have wondered why the Kremlin neither "sold the Wall brick by brick"¹⁴⁴ for political or economic concessions, nor "make the Germans 'an offer they couldn't refuse,'"¹⁴⁵ such as German unification for the price of the country's neutralization when this was still possible, namely, until January 1990. Disregarding the fact that a similar offer (whether genuine or not) had been rejected in 1952, this question seems to contradict the timetable of the Soviet decision making. When Gorbachev decided to grant German self-determination, that is, in late January, he still believed it would be possible to tie this process to the creation of a new security system that included the USSR. When it became clear that this aim could not be achieved, in late May, it was too late to withdraw the earlier promises without upsetting the USSR's Western partners or his perestroika at home.

Russian critics of the "new thinking" claimed that this process involved a "sell-out of Soviet interests."¹⁴⁶ In contrast, Kvitsinskii perceived the solution as

¹⁴² Kristina Spohr Readman, *Germany and the Baltic Problem after the Cold War: The Development of a new Ostpolitik, 1989–2000* (London: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁴³ Conversation Genscher with Shevardnadze, 10 February 1990, in Hilger, *Diplomatie*, 98–108, 101, 108; Conversation Genscher with Shevardnadze, 4 May 1990, *ibid.*, 129–36, 134.

¹⁴⁴ Oldenburg, "Die Rekonstruktion," 779.

¹⁴⁵ Stent, *Russia*, 121. See also Falin, *Konflikte*, and Alexander von Plato, "Opposition Movements and Big Politics in the Reunification of Germany," in this volume, 307–19.

¹⁴⁶ Akhtamzyan, *Ob'edinenie Germanii*, 127.

the “best way to safeguard our interests [...] Combining the Treaty on the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany (Two Plus Four) with the signing of a comprehensive political agreement and a far-reaching economic agreement doubtlessly reflected the interests of the USSR as well as Germany.”¹⁴⁷ Rice and Zelikow have stated: “One could argue that the amicable settlement of the partition of Germany was a farsighted choice for the Soviet Union.”¹⁴⁸ Indeed, a consensual solution better reflected Soviet interests than a renewed Cold War or, at the very least, tension in Soviet relations with its main Western trading partner, Germany. In addition, the West fulfilled a number of Soviet wishes, such as changing NATO’s posture, advancing the CSCE, and offering financial loans and disarmament.¹⁴⁹ Therefore it would seem unfair to accuse Gorbachev and Shevardnadze of having gained nothing in return for their consent. That the “Common European Home” failed to be realized was a consequence of the Warsaw Pact’s and the Soviet Union’s demise. This did not happen because the West brought about their disintegration, but rather because Gorbachev’s adherence to principles of nonviolence was stronger than his will to preserve Soviet domination abroad, centrifugal forces in the former Soviet empire overturned the centripetal ones and the cost for maintaining the empire exceeded Soviet capabilities. While the first reason was clearly a consequence of the “new thinking,” the latter two processes had not been caused by it, as has been claimed by Gorbachev’s critics, but by the past political and economic mortgage of Soviet and communist rule as well as its de-legitimization both at the periphery and in the center.

Second, the compromise that was achieved opened the way for a historical compromise with the West in general and with Germany in particular. It enabled the leader not only to reconcile theory (i.e. past Soviet lip-service to German self-determination and unity) with practice, as Marxism demanded, and thus to resolve one of the many “grand delusions” of Soviet policy. It also paved the way for reconciliation with Germany, which offered better conditions for the USSR’s security and economy and for the country’s relations with its most important Western trading partner than a continued Soviet blockade of German unity would have done. After the signing of the Two Plus Four Treaty, the Soviet media opined that the “time bomb” of the divided Germany had been “deactivated.”¹⁵⁰ Andrei

¹⁴⁷ Kwizinskij, *Vor dem Sturm*, 18, 20.

¹⁴⁸ Zelikow and Rice, *Germany Unified*, xi.

¹⁴⁹ Without, however, pledging a non-enlargement of NATO in Eastern Europe. The respective offers were made with respect to the former GDR. Mark Kramer, “The Myth of a No-NATO-Enlargement-Pledge to Russia,” *Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2009): 39–61 and Kristina Spohr, “Precluded or Precedent-Setting? The ‘NATO Enlargement Question’ in the Triangular Bonn-Washington-Moscow Diplomacy of 1990–1991,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14, no. 4 (2012): 4–54. Gorbachev stresses that negotiating NATO (non-) enlargement into Eastern Europe while the Warsaw Pact still existed would have been “absolute stupidity.” Gorbatschow, *Wie es war*, 103.

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Biermann, *Zwischen Kreml und Kanzleramt*, 754.

Grachev likened German-Soviet reconciliation with the German-French one after World War II.¹⁵¹ Gorbachev stressed the new quality of relations with the “great [velikii] German people”¹⁵² and later wrote in his memoirs: “Thus we drew a final line under the past and recent history of our nations, opening, I hope, a new, lasting period in relations between Germany and Russia, when all the positive common heritage built up over the centuries in German-Russian relations will finally bear fruit.”¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble*, 224.

¹⁵² Gorbachev in a Soviet-German press conference, 16 July 1990, in *MGGV*, 533.

¹⁵³ Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 535. The unification of Germany has not had a negative influence on Russian opinions about Germany. Tatiana Timofeeva, “Russische Reaktion auf den deutschen Einigungsprozess im Spiegel damaliger und heutiger Umfragen,” *Forum für osteuropäische Ideen- und Zeitgeschichte* 14, no. 1 (2010): 85–98.

