

## TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY —OR ANSCHLUß? THE TWO GERMANIES AND EUROPE

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### *Abstract*

*In this paper, Klaus von Beyme discusses the causes and consequences of the German unification process, in the frame of transitions to democracy in ex-socialist Europe. Firstly, he shows that classical models of democratic transition available in political science are not suitable for the German case, being necessary to deal with specific factors like cultural penetration of the Federal Republic into the Democratic Republic, conditions for a transition were more favourable than in other socialist regimes, and this fact, at the same time, removed any possibility of claiming a «third way» to democratic socialism. Finally, the author goes on from German national context to international situation, analyzing upon wich options world leaders gave at last green light to unification in its present form.*

### *Resum*

*En aquest article, Klaus von Beyme discuteix les causes i conseqüències del procés d'unificació alemanya, en el marc de la transició cap a la democràcia de l'Europa ex-socialista. En primer lloc, ens mostra que els models clàssics de transició democràtica disponibles en ciència política no són aplicables al cas alemany, i, per tant, la necessitat de tractar factors específics com ara la penetració cultural de la República Federal en la República Democràtica, o la qüestió nacional. En segon lloc, von Beyme argumenta que a causa d'aquesta especial situació de la República Democràtica, les condicions per a una transició democràtica eren més favorables que en altres règims socialistes, i que, al mateix temps, això allunyava qualsevol possibilitat de propugnar una «tercera via» de socialisme democràtic. En darrer lloc, l'autor passa del context nacional alemany a la situació internacional, per analitzar quines opcions portaren els líders mundials a donar carta blanca a la unificació en la seva forma actual.*

### *Resumen*

*En este artículo, Klaus von Beyme discute las causas y consecuencias del proceso de unificación alemana, en el marco de la transición hacia la democracia de la Europa ex-socialista. En primer lugar, muestra cómo los modelos clásicos*

*de transición democrática disponibles en ciencia política no son aplicables al caso alemán, y que es necesario tratar factores específicos como son la penetración cultural de la República Federal en la República Democrática, o la cuestión nacional. En segundo lugar, von Beyme argumenta que, debido a esa especial situación de la República Democrática, las condiciones para una transición democrática eran más favorables que en otros regímenes socialistas, y que, al mismo tiempo, ello alejaba cualquier posibilidad de propugnar una «tercera vía» de socialismo democrático. Por último, el autor pasa del contexto nacional alemán a la situación internacional, para analizar qué opciones llevaron a los líderes mundiales a dar carta blanca a la unificación en su forma actual.*

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To analyse the German question in this transitory moment is risky in several respects. The German novelist Martin Walser who underwent a metamorphosis from a fellow traveller of the Communists to a German nationalist put it bluntly: «He who does not get below his intellectual level when talking about Germany has no intellectual level at all». The topic has pitfalls everywhere:

- it is highly connected with emotions whatever the view of the writer,
- it is in flux, «words are outdated in your mouth» as a cynic put it. The increasing number of actors who claim to have a say in the German unification process makes prognosis almost impossible.
- Scientific analysis of this unique event lacks concepts. Transition to democracy in a highly penetrated system does not follow the established rules of this branch of knowledge.

The transition to democracy in East Germany surprised the world in two respects as an event quite unexpected by experts:

- 1) The sudden collapse of the socialist regimes was anticipated not even by experts. The insights of former research on *transition to democracy* proved not to be applicable to the new cases.
- 2) Within this regime shift the East German case deviant in so far, as few had expected the *rise of nationalism in Germany*. Unexpected too was the enormous speed in which all the major allies and former foes in Eastern Europe recognized the right of the Germans of self-determination on the question of unity. The only justified concern were the conditions for a new security system after the shakeup of the old one.

## I TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY

In third world countries many scholars in the tradition of *modernization theory* developed a *theory of functional prerequisites of democracy*. A Hungarian ambassador recently mentioned in an international symposium that scholars in his country took it for granted that below the level of \$ 6000 of gross domestic product per capita there were no chances to develop a stable democracy (Ende, 1989, p. 13).

This conclusion is highly questionable because it ignores the proper political conditions, specially those within the European international system. The search for correlations between developmental stages and prospects of stable democracy are even more problematic in the case of the socialist countries than under Third World conditions for several reasons:

- Communist regimes imposed equalization and social and political *Gleichschaltung*. Thus the social heterogeneity and fragmentation is less developed than in developing countries. The *ancien régime* has, so to speak, created some prerequisites of democracy which are lacking in developing countries.
- Typologies of communist countries showed little correlation with the degree of *repression* in the respective country. The poorest country, Romania, and the richest countries such as the GDR and Czechoslovakia were on top of the repression scale.
- The degree of *experience with democratic politics* showed no correlation with development. Romania started only late, the GDR led the movement in its final stage. But the true forerunners were Poland and Hungary, countries in the middle of all developmental scales. Czechoslovakia started after the GDR, but than developed the ambition —as one of the rebelling students put it in front of western cameras— to finish in one week what the GDR did in two months in order to enter the Guinness book of records.

It is noteworthy, however, that a whole group of countries, independent of its stage of development joined a peaceful revolution. Its foes in the spirit of the *ancien régime* spoke of a conservative revolution, in order to avoid the insult of a *contre-revolution* (Ende, 1989, p. 1). The main explanation is an international one: there were clear indicators that Moscow would not suppress the upheaval by renewing the *Brezhnev doctrine*.

After the approach of functional prerequisites genetic and organizational explanations of democratization spread in the social sciences. Rustow (1970, p. 346) was one of the first to reintroduce more political variables against the

sociological and economic explanations. He ended up, however, with *genetic sequences of stages* in the tradition of Brinton's «Anatomy of Revolution». The explanation was highly individualized and hardly any general theoretical conclusion was left.

Recent approaches concentrating on *actors* and *organizational theories* seem to be more promising in explaining the peaceful revolutions of Eastern Europe.

The main actor, the masses, were too weak to explain the success. Why did the security forces with the exception of Romania give in so quickly? The formation of masses via *peaceful training by churches* (Poland, GDR, CSSR) and reinforcement of the actors via *international TV* and other organizational variables are important conditions of success, but they do not suffice to explain why the establishment did not fight more fiercely.

Adam Przeworski (1986, p. 50) listed four reasons to explain why cracks begin to appear in authoritarian regimes and liberalization becomes possible:

- The authoritarian regime has *realized the functional conditions* that led to its establishment.
- The regime has *lost its legitimacy*.
- *Conflicts in the ruling bloc*, particularly in the military led to an appeal to outside groups for support by some factions.
- *Foreign pressure* to put on a democratic face leads to compromises.

The four propositions can be tested in the case of the collapse of communist regimes:

1) Socialist countries have hardly a *function*, as many military dictatorships which were meant to prevent a state from drifting to the left (the case of Franco Spain), or a counterrevolution against socialist transformation such as in Chile. Only the collapse of the Greek colonels may be explained by this functional consideration. The GDR is a good *deviant example*: it had no temporary function but was founded for permanence. The nation was split to make possible a socialist state on German territory. The functional argument must be reversed: as soon as the GDR gave up its bureaucratic socialism, it lost its function and *raison d'être*. The slogan *we are the people* within a month was substituted by the motto *we are one people*.

In the middle of the 1970s the author of this article still assumed that communism had a strong capacity for renewal of its ideology (von Beyme, 1982, p. 445). Reforms under Khrushchev and the early Brezhnev era made this plausible. In the last 20 years, however, bourgeois systems have shown much more capacity to adapt certain socialist political instruments (welfare

policies, radical democratization, coherent planning), whereas socialist countries petrified and proved unable to adopt the achievements of western democracy (legal state, pluralism, market forces).

Only Gorbachev was able to organize such a development form above. After 5 years of half-hearted measures he carried out the decision to renounce the leading role of the party and to acknowledge a de facto multiparty system which exists already in some republics. Gorbachev dated the loss of the lead of socialist ideology about 1973 when the oil crisis imposed radical changes in capitalist countries whereas socialist countries still exercised the mentality of ideological self-righteousness. The GDR in her propaganda was more aggressive and less capable of learning than most of the other regimes because of its *shaky legitimacy* in a divided nation. Every night the class enemy came to the living rooms of millions of GDR citizens, influences which the official propaganda tried to counterbalance. This negative competition made the system still more incapable of adapting to new needs.

2) A second hypothesis is that authoritarian regimes collapse when they *lose legitimacy*. Modern democracy systems are legitimized mainly by four principles which they developed in a rather uniform historical sequence:

- legal state
- national state
- democratic state
- welfare state.

a) The *legal state* was the only institution except of the national state which was developed in most of the East European countries which never experienced full democracy. The territory of the GDR was part of a German tradition to pay off demands of democracy with the minimal requirements of the legal state (Rechtsstaat), which still explains the *legalism* of the German political culture.

Carter's campaign for emphasizing human rights was considered by many actors—even in the West—as a kind of interference. But the process of the *Helsinki conference* which was considered in the first years a victory of Soviet diplomacy became an ideological boomerang. Increasingly the Soviet Union was accused for violating human rights, increasingly oppositions claimed these rights. Especially in East Germany the violation of these rights was so visible because of the *monstrosity of the wall*. Though the GDR was milder in its repression than many other countries from Czechoslovakia down to Romania, the violation of rights was more severely felt because of permanent comparisons with the Western part of Germany.

b) The *national state* principle was violated in two respects: many socialist countries had losses of territory to the Soviet Union (in the Hungarian case to other neighbours but because of Soviet interference). The Brezhnev doctrine of *limited sovereignty*, several times demonstrated via armed interventions of the red army (GDR 1953, Hungary 1956, ČSSR 1968) reminded the communist countries every day of the limits of national statehood under socialist conditions.

The GDR was a special case of national underlegitimation. Kissinger ironically has called the Federal Republic an economy in search of higher purpose. For the GDR the bonmot could be reversed: the GDR had a high ideological goal but was an underdeveloped economy (compared to West Germany, and its former standards). The Federal Republic clung to the idea of national unity under the notion of a *cultural nation*. The *class nation* which the GDR had launched into the international debate, contained *reifications of the objectivist definition*, whereas the Western notion of a nation would rather aim at the subjective side of an *everyday-plebiscite*.

The West German economy «in search of a higher goal» continued to speak for the whole of Germany. Sometimes with grotesque consequences. Already the name of the German state —literally translated «Federal Republic Germany» does not make sense in most other languages. This may have a late reward: the most likely name of a unified Germany DEUTSCHE BUNDES-REPUBLIK makes a difference only in German many other nations can keep the name they have used so far for the Western part of the country. The *latent racism* that the Federal Republic considered everybody of German tongue as a West German citizen, even in those parts of the former Empire which were considered as being lost for good is backfiring. This brought the Bonn regime into serious difficulties. When Gorbachev made possible the exodus of hundred thousands of German speaking Soviet citizens and encouraged his allies in Poland and elsewhere to do the same, the influx was hardly tolerable. *Social unrest* in the Federal Republic and the rise of the *new right-wing extremists* were a consequence. Bonn came close to the latent desire to rebuild the wall from the other side, but it was *prisoner of its own pan-german constitutional mythology*. No foreigner and hardly any German understood that the Karlsruhe Constitutional Court ruled in the case of the basic agreement with the GDR, in 1973 (BVerfGE 36, 1/26) recognizing a second German state, that the border —though being the most impermeable building since the Chinese wall and certainly less permeable than even the limes the Romans built in Britain and Germany— was said to have a legal quality not different from the boundaries between West German Laender.

All this would have been political mythology without importance had not the majority of the East Germans used West Germany as a *reference culture*.

Most of the prominent East German literature —which was, maybe the most unique and autonomous product of the GDR in the last 40 years— was printed in the Federal Republic. One of the major advantages of unification for German literature will be that it looses on both sides of the former iron curtain its excessive preoccupation with la *querelle allemande* and its human dimension. If one reads Böll, Grass, Johnson or Walser to mention only some of the authors also known abroad, it becomes obvious that postwar German literature provincialized in a way similar to the captive nations of Eastern Europe in the 19th century. There was a predominance of two topics: *love* they had and the *nation* they had not. I expect that German culture will return to its former cosmopolitanism in the tradition of Goethe, Heine or Thomas Mann and this would be a welcome byproduct of the unification process. A nation like others has no longer to reflect its precarious situation.

Not only the two German cultures remained closely related. Churches, trade unions and many other *social institutions* were kept apart by force, but preserved their organizational similarity. The GDR did not develop a national consciousness of her own —in spite of so much propaganda about the *class nation*. The West Germans in their majority had an identity feeling of their own, and the younger generation showed little interest in the East. But the public opinion polls were frequently misinterpreted. West German was —after Belgium, a bi-ethnic nation— the lowest low-scorer on all the scales of national pride. Until the late 1980s about two thirds of the West Germans thought that reunification was impossible. But also two thirds were in favour of national unity if it proved to be possible in the future (von Beyme, 1986). In the light of these paradoxes those who are afraid of a new German nationalism get some comfort. The Germans have not changed their opinion very much: Even now, in wave of enthusiasm only two thirds of the Germans are firmly in favour of reunification.

c) A *democratic state* was the most important aim which triggered the peaceful revolution of 1989. How was it possible that East Germany led the final stage of the process in the Eastern bloc? One explanation is that the *church* functioned as a training ground for peaceful resistance. The Lutheran church has an old etatist tradition and unlike Calvinist denominations hardly any revolutionary traditions. The church trained people to peaceful resistance, but not to revolution.

The SED establishment shortly after the turmoil blamed *West German interference* for the revolution. This was hardly true in terms of direct support form the Bonn government. Interference occured in an indirect way, via TV. *Western TV* in the days of upheaval had a *mobilizing function*. The people was informed about the number of demonstrators last night and got news where

and when the next rally was to take place. This reinforcement encouraged the people in a country without revolutionary tradition. Look at the history of West European democracies such as Britain, France or Italy. Shakespearean dramas of killing kings everywhere. In the German Empire one hardly finds a case even in the middle ages. Germans needed encouragement for deviant political behaviour. Even in the West, Germans are normal in many respects of participation, but still show slightly less tolerance towards *unconventional behaviour*.

The *regulation of language* in the GDR in turmoil shows how little independent revolutionary thinking was involved. The new events and institutions were called with *West German names*. The revolution was a *Wende*—the expression for the change in government of 1982. When the *Stasi* was abolished something was to substitute it. They found no other word than the West German *Verfassungsschutz*. Compared to the Soviet Union the revolution is played down. Gorbachev, however, emphasizes the revolution of perestroika in order to demonstrate continuity with Lenin's impetus after 1917. It does not prevent the perestroika leaders from accepting what a PCI-leader, Sergio Segre, recently advised to all communists: «All of us should finally become revisionists» (*Die Zeit*, 29. Dec. 1989, p. 2, col. 5). The events of Leipzig are called a revolution sometimes by its adversaries. Jürgen Kuczynski, the nestor of SED loyalists in the social sciences, dubbed it a *conservative revolution*. He quoted Marx, but the more familiar connotation is a quasi-fascist tradition of thought in the Weimar Republic (*ibidem*, p. 1, col. 3).

The breakdown of the authoritarian regimes in Southern Europe according to Schmitter (1986, Vol. 1, p. 5) was facilitated by the *subservient role of the military* with the exception of Greece. This argument has explanatory value also in the case of East Europe. Subordination of the military was a double one: two the national communist party and the Red Army within its bloc. The Brezhnev doctrine, oddly enough, undermined socialism though it was meant to protect it. The military of most socialist states was used to rely on the leading role of the Red Army. Once Moscow made it clear that they would not interfere, defense collapsed very quickly. It is not by chance that Romania is the only deviant case. Romania has emphasized its role independent on Moscow for 20 years and did not take part in the suppression of the Prague spring. Romania therefore relied on her own internal security system. Ceausescu's main mistake was, however, that he created a counter-army in the *Securitate*. This competition of two armies encouraged large parts of the military to join the opposition in a critical moment of the rebellion.

Democratic traditions had older roots in the GDR than in other socialist countries. Czechoslovakia had been considered more democratic than Germany before the Second World War, but it is difficult to compare. Czechos-



lovakia was one of the main winners at the peace treaties in the suburbs of Paris, whereas «Versailles» was considered as blatant injustice in Germany which did not strengthen the new system of the victors, e.g. democracy. But even without any democratic tradition the East Germans would have seen how well the other Germany fared with democracy. Western propaganda emphasized that market economy and true democracy are closely interrelated, and since most GDR citizens preferred the former they were also ready to buy the latter. Democracy as the form of government of the more succeeding part of the country had more legitimacy even in East Germany than the socialist democracy as a disguise of party dictatorship.

d) The *welfare state* was the fourth concept to legitimize modern political systems when social conflicts aggravated in the 20th century. Socialist systems committed the error to pretend that the enshrine *per se* a social state and therefore do not need a social policy. From this rule the GDR was, however, again a certain exception. In 1965 Ulbricht's daughter wrote the first book defending social policy. The two German states already in the Adenauer era behaved like communicating tubes. Adenauer tried to compensate national legitimation of his rump state by promoting welfare in order to immunize the West Germans against communism. The other side had to act in the same direction in order to prove that socialism is superior and to prevent that the mass exodus continues which weakened the GDR until the construction of the Berlin wall in 1961.

This was probably the most solid part of the legitimacy of the GDR. Until recently many GDR citizens believed that the GDR had better achievements in the social sphere though they knew that the economy of the West was superior.

3) The third reason for the breakdown of dictatorship is *dissent among the elites* in a time of eroding ideological zeal. This erosion was not as strong as in Franco Spain (von Beyme, 1971, pp. 123ff.). But in a moment of crisis it worked in the same direction. Parts of the middle level cadres of the party and some Lord Mayors of big cities such as Leipzig and Dresden, were no longer willing to use force against mass demonstrations. Some politicians like Hans Modrow (who became prime minister) or Berghofer (who stayed Lord Mayor of Dresden in spite of leaving the party) were able to win the confidence as individual politicians, not via the party. The first suspended his party membership, the second gave it up *altogether*.

The party as a whole missed its chance to reform itself. In Czechoslovakia even the old Dubček crew had little chance to play a major role. By senatorial courtesy of President Havel Dubček was given the honorary but not very

important post of a parliamentary chairman. Emigré intellectuals of Dubček's former government such as Ota Šik or Zdenek Mlynař returned to Prague and continued to preach their theories of a *third road-socialism*, but only few were ready to listen. The GDR had not even these uncompromised figures of former reform attempts.

4) The explanation of the accelerated breakdown of the communist regimes is impossible without reference to *international factors*. In Southern Europe the three authoritarian systems wanted to join the European community. The GDR was already indirectly a member and it was a completely *penetrated system*. Western cultural and lifestyle hegemony in the young generation became evident. West Germans were sometimes worried by hundreds of political groups. They forgot the lesson that in Spain around 1977 existed more than 300 parties. In the first elections they were cut down to 6 relevant parties. This process of *streamlining the party system* back to internationally relevant groups is accelerated in the GDR. Some parties, such as the SPD, initially did not dare to call itself exactly the way the Western equivalent was named. But by the beginning of 1990 it became clear that only groups which got Western help and had West German equivalents had a chance. In the case of the liberals, Genscher and the party leader Lambsdorff, were pushing three groups to merge for a common liberal list. Under these conditions of a penetrated system no third road had a chance. Not even in the sphere of the trade unions. The metal workers union in the West encouraged some loose talk on a future democratic socialism. What they actually did was training cadres for bargaining and striking. Trade unionism without politics and tough revindication policies were on the agenda of common meetings not the foundation of a third road working class paradise in the East. Some of the Marxists may have remembered that Marx and Engels had always ridiculised dreams of a third road to Prussian socialism in the work of Rodbertus, Dühring or Wagner. Engels polemized against Rodbertus the «misjudged genius who sticks to his astonishing ignorance about everything happening outside Prussia» (MEW, vol. 21, p. 176).

Even the Green Party in East and West Germany has abandoned in the meantime dogmatic views about the necessity of two German states. Left-wingers hailing the people's will had for quite a time some trouble to push a third road to socialism though the masses in the street had transformed the slogan «*we are the people*» into the slogan «*we are one people*». The major effort of West Germany policy for the last 40 years was to be recognized as a nation like others. It is noteworthy that the majority in East Germany shares this feeling that Germany should never again pursue a *Sonderweg*, a special road to any ideological goal.

These were the four main reasons for the collapse of authoritarian rule. All of them apply in different weight also to the breakdown of authoritarian socialism. Kant, however, taught us «who offers too many reasons has no sufficient reason for explaining causality». This applies to this type of typological descriptive analysis of most transition studies. Still more speculative tend to be those parts of the transition literature which guess about the *stability of democracy* after the breakdown of authoritarianism. In the German case we are in a privileged position. The former GDR is about to slip into a new *paternalistic relationship* in order to let all its problems be solved by some big brother.

There is *not* the slightest *solidarity* among the former socialist countries—hélas: Competition for a good start is almost darwinistic, only tempered by the fact that some countries still reluctantly sit on COMECON boards and therefore have to recognize what the others do. This is true in spite of loose confederation talks between Poland and Czechoslovakia, which are unlikely to be implemented, Slovakia would become still more obsessive, and which —after all— does not make much sense in a *Europe des patries* to come.

## 2. THE PROSPECTS OF TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY IN EAST GERMANY—A PSEUDOPROBLEM BECAUSE OF A PATERNALISTIC SOLUTION

In the years to come Philippe Schmitter and others will not fail to spread the transition to democracy literature into Eastern Europe. The GDR might prove to be not a very rewarding case, because under conditions of unity, but even in a case of continuing two German states, the GDR will develop as a highly developed *penetrated system*.

Prospects for democracy are better in East Germany than in the other socialist systems for several reasons:

1) The *military* might play an important role in Romania or Poland —certainly not in East Germany because of international supervision and restrictions.

2) The *former communist parties had different options* in the process of transition.

a) Only in the Soviet Union and to some extent in its most faithful ally, Bulgaria, the *party initiated the process of liberalization from above*. In Bulgaria —and in the long run maybe even in the Soviet Union, it failed, however, to keep this process completely under control. The *road for a multiparty system is open* in both countries.

- b) In a second type the *party was disbanded* and reappeared as a socialdemocratic party as in Hungary and Poland. The Communist remained a splinter group, though most deputies and leading figures in both countries did not join the new party. The results of forthcoming elections might change this latent attentism, however.
- c) In a third type the *party defends its positions* and tries to recover lost ground. In Romania this led to new demonstrations. Suspicions arose that the Revolution was «stolen». In Czechoslovakia the party remained comparatively strong and lost only about 30% of its members. In the GDR the former SED tried to keep its positions —with little success so far because the dissatisfied masses, too weak for open resistance, have a unique instrument of blackmailing the old guard: they leave to the West and cause an increasing damage to the native economy.

3) The *development of the new market economies will determine the fate of democracy in all the states*. Only the GDR is doomed to success. West Germany already blackmailed the old elites and drives the GDR into a position in which it has to accept West German notions of democracy and market economy. The «gnomes of Frankfurt» in these tactics are even more successful than the «giants of Bonn». The process is a strain on the self-esteem of East German elites. The nasty word of *unconditional surrender* is quoted time and again. But the final result will look similar to the nasty word, and the masses accept it because they do not trust any dream of a new socialism or a third road between Stalinism and the «ugly late capitalism of Bonn».

The *adaptation of the economy will cause enormous problems*. The questions of the preservation of a big socialized sector and the maintenance of collectivized agriculture will cause serious conflicts. But the dreams of a *third road to socialism* (still maintained by the GDR left, the former SED, the Greens in both parts of the countries and left-wing trade unions such as the union of metal workers), have hardly any chance. Hundred thousands of West German citizens own houses and small property in the GDR, never legally confiscated. Millions of skilled people from the East in the service of West German enterprises who buy firms, cooperate with others or form joint ventures. It is dreadful to see how Eastern representatives lose almost their dignity. But capitalism precisely for being successful —will show its most cruel sides.

A *third road to democratic socialism* was ruined by the Brezhnev doctrine. Dubceks experiment spreading over the whole bloc 20 years ago, might have given these ideas a chance if implemented with the solidarity of all the former bureaucratic socialist countries. But it is naive to expect that West German capitalists will fund socialist experiments which do not even meet with approval of the majority of the GDR citizens.

There are better chances to respect a certain autonomy of the GDR in the *political sphere*. But even here prospects are dim. All of a sudden the new groups discover that they have been talked into alliances by West German party leaders and they soon will end up in a completely *streamlined party system* «made in West Germany». Some people hope for *constituent assembly* where a new German constitution will be worked out. But the tendency is growing to impose the Basic Law of the Federal Republic because many people on both sides are afraid that there is not much time for initiatives in the two Germanies because of the restrictions in the international sphere. Hegel developed the hypothesis that history happens twice. Marx ironically completed the statement the first time it happens as a tragedy the second time as a farce. When West Germany created the Basic Law the allied powers talked the constituent parliamentarians into undue haste and did not permit a popular approval of the new constitution. By radical democrats this was considered as a tragedy. The same now might happen as a farce. Again, our allies talk the Germans into undue haste because they do not trust the stability of transition to democracy in the Soviet Union.

### 3. TRANSITION AND ANSCHLUß IN THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The GDR is a special case in the transition to democracy because the German question is too important to leave it to the Germans alone.

The *bipolar security system* in Europe until now was characterized by a simple rule: *keep the Soviets out-keep the Germans down*. The first goal seems to have been attained to an extent which was unthinkable until recently. The *new thinking* is now concentrating on finding a solution for a united Germany which links Germany to the legitimate security interest of both East and West without leaving underdog feelings in Germany.

Several options for settling the German problem are available:

- 1) The veto against unification from outside.
- 2) To release the two German states into a unified neutrality.
- 3) To keep Germany in the NATO and find a solution for Soviet security needs.

1) The *veto against unification and to keep up the status quo*.

Egon Krenz shortly before his downfall reminded the Germans of the fact that nobody outside Germany wanted reunification of the two German states. Indeed, there were plenty of hints that this was true also for the elites in the

West. Andreotti had caused a good deal of resentment in the early 1980s by a variation of the old Mauriac dictum that he loved Germany so much that he wanted to have two of them. The United States had always paid lip service to German unity—but it seemed to be easy to give comfort to German feelings without any obligation, because everybody agreed until mid 1989 that the German problem was not on the agenda. Gorbachev has repeated this even at the end of the same year. As his predecessor Brezhnev he never excluded that the problem one day might enter the political agenda, but he referred to some vague historical future. Once he mentioned that nobody could tell what history will materialize in 100 years. The public opinion polls among the masses were more favorable to the issue. Latent patriotism among the other nations could hardly imagine that Germany could be excluded from the national revival in the rest of the world.

When the German problem entered the political agenda—even to German surprise—most of the responsible leaders in East and West *accepted the German desire for national unity*. Shamir or Thatcher became quickly isolated. Even ministers of their respective cabinets broke away from the former consensus. Even Andreotti changed his mind. *Political science*—like meteorology, the other topic discussed by most people in the pubs—frequently *does not predict but postdicts*. Social science has not anticipated the democratic revolution and has failed to predict the quickly developing consequences in Germany. How can we explain this rapid change in the *verbal behaviour*—if not in the *attitudes* of the elites in East and West? There are five explanations:

a) *A sense of fairness* and equal rights for Germans, Poles or Armenians motivated the elites in East and West not to stick to the Mauriac type of statement in favour of keeping up a permanent division of Germany. Among the wiser actors there were additional considerations:

b) *Preventing the rise of a new German right-wing extremism*. As a French intellectual put it: «every generation in Europe gets the Germans it deserves». This dictum is certainly not true of 1939. No generation deserved the outrage of chauvinist racism in Hitler's Nazi regime—not even the Germans themselves. But the kernel of truth is that fair treatment of normal national aspirations is the best prevention against the rise of new irrational nationalism.

c) More pragmatic and short-term was the consideration of the *European responsibility for the GDR*. It was agreed from the outset that the GDR should have privileged access to the European community. Keeping a democratic GDR as a separate state would amount to *burdensharing with the Federal Republic* for the social and economic adaptation of East Germany to West Euro-

pean standards. In the long run it might also prove an advantage for the EEC members not to have a completely penetrated system of the GDR always voting with the Federal Republic but increasing the weight of German votes. As soon as *majority decisions* will prevail one Germany has advantages for the rest of the community. When the Bonn government will take the budding costs of unification as a *pretext to neglect its financial obligations in the European community*, the neighbours will probably not be too impressed by the German arguments: No doubt, the West German economy is burdened with billions of DM in the future. But as soon as the Bonn government tries to avoid additional taxes or special burdensharing levies (*Lastenausgleich*) it apparently feels capable of *making the deal profitable* without major losses for the Western parts of the country:

- The minister of finance, Waigel, mentioned already that *40 billions of subsidies to the GDR* which have been paid in the past *will come to an end*. Division was almost as expensive as unification, especially because Bonn permanently bought good will in East Berlin for the benefit of West Berlin.
- Large parts of the necessary infrastructure and economic investments will be *paid by West German firms*, and they tend to keep an eye on profits as well. Germany thus has good chances to avoid major breakdowns of the boom which are to be expected after 1993 when many West-European firms will discover that they have overinvested in order to be prepared to a relentless competition on a European scale.
- West German *federalism* and its horizontal burdensharing will impose hard losses to some Laender in the West. But it is an excellent device to organize financial help in a fairly equitable and tolerable way over large spans of time.

*d)* The *balance of power* originally pointed in the direction of keeping Germany divided. A «fourth Reich» caused misgivings. Shamir was afraid even of a *new holocaust*—to quote only the most excessive statement. Henry Kissinger was one of those pragmatic experts who changed his mind in a couple of weeks. He warned in December 1989 not to create the German problem by the excessive attempt to avoid it. He hinted to German history in the light of *vacuum theory* and reminded those who only recognize the tradition from Bismarck to Hitler that central Europe invited wars rather because Germany was too weak than too strong (FAZ, 14.02.1990, p. 16). Indeed, if we compare the wars in the time of Reformation, the 30 years war, the wars in the periods dominated by Louis XIV or Napoleon wars were quite frequently caused because Germany was too weak. Concentration on recent history of the 2nd and 3rd Reich overlooks that during long periods Germany was ri-

dicalized in the international theory of state of being no state at all (Bodin) or a state «*monstro simile*» (Pufendorff). The torchbearers of a *raison d'état* school of thought from Machiavelli to Boccacini looked at the Germans rather with pity: petty little communities with nice industrious people, fortunately so frequently drunk that nobody was able to try to abolish his neighbour's freedom. Surely this idyllic Germany is not imminent in the 21th century. But the risks of an economic giant remaining politically and in military matters a dwarf have to be considered.

When the most eminent scholar in German history in the United States, Gordon Craig, was honoured at his 70th birthday, the president of Stanford University praised him as a man who made sense of German history though everybody agrees that German history does not make sense. There are, however, more experts who recognize that the onesided view from «Luther to Hitler» (and hopefully this will apply also to Russia with similar simplifications such as «from Bakunin to Lenin») is no good guidance for settling security problems in Europe. Craigs option in December 1989 for Germany was still a «big No» and a «small Ay» to unification (Zu groß für Europa? 1989, p. 183).

The main problem for experts on Germany is, however, that Germany has 20 million more inhabitants than the other bigger nations, though the Germans on both sides of the former iron curtain did their best by the lowest birthrates in the whole world to shrink back to a size which entitles them to one national state. They tried to undo the consequences of accelerated growth which caused Germany to overtake France in population figures in the 19th century. In the light of coming social problems it is likely that the Germans will make further efforts in the same direction. But do they have to wait until a nation larger in size, such as Russia can be accepted as part of the European community? They would have to wait still quite a time. The loose talk about the «*European house*» may apply to economic and military questions, but even Gorbachev faces reality that Europe in close integration for quite a time will not mean «*from Lisbon to Vladivostok*», and not even De Gaulle's old vision «*from the Atlantic to the Urab*», but «*from Brest to Brest*»!

e) Timetables of *European unification* are in danger and cause a trade off between West European integration and German unification. In order to prevent Bonn from blocking the European integration concessions to German wishes in their national feelings had to be made. Mitterrand in one statement hinted to this predicament. Blamed for having made too many concessions to Kohl he said: «*alors Monsieur Kohl est un patriote*». This was said with an undertone that Kohl as a personality for the first time became plausible to his French partner. Patriotism is an acceptable word to French ears.



The discussion of the reasons European elites had for changing their mind on the German question makes it unlikely that the veto-solution will be pursued unless Gorbachev is toppled by a coup. The prospects for this *worst case scenario* fortunately are dim, since Gorbachev in February 1990 diversified his political support by renouncing the leading position of the party and ushering into a multi-party system. A kind of *Gaullist semi-presidential system* might be the solution for a president who does not want to disband the Communist party altogether as Hungary and Poland or the GDR, nor wants to be dependent exclusively on the party majority. When Gavril Popov led the demonstration on the red square in February 1990 most of the speeches and the shouting of the masses amounted to «Down the whole Central Committee —but Gorbachev can stay». If Gorbachev listened carefully he will have discovered the advantages of this mixed solution for his own intentions.

In a similar paradox Gorbachev seems to have discovered certain advantages in German unification. It will certainly be his scenario for the negotiations to come to revive the «*spirit Rapallo*» without alienating the Western powers.

2) *Neutrality* of a unified German state was Gorbachev's first choice. But quickly Western observers discovered that the Soviet policies in this respect were not simply a continuation of Stalin's initiatives of 1952. The «common house in Europe» and the Soviet search of a security system overarching the former two blocs were serious. That is why neutrality —opposed by all Western and Eastern neighbours of Germany for good reasons (after all the Weimar Reichswehr was «neutral» and cooperated with the Red Army)— was no goal per se for Gorbachev's German policy.

Neutrality meets with opposition in Germany. It was unaccepted by the Christian Democrats. The Social Democrats in Germany paid lip service to the NATO but in a recent paper they saw neutrality of Germany as a «*goal in the long run*». Only the Green party was firmly in favour of neutrality —and this aroused new suspicions by the rest of the actors in and outside the country. For the time being neutrality is the least likely development.

3) *Germany remains in the Western system* but compromises are found for Soviet security interests.

When Kohl came back from Moscow he celebrated himself as having got a free hand for unification. What are the conditions? asked every journalist in the interviews. No condition —was the answer. But there were hints to two main bodies to be consulted who might come up with conditions:

- the *four victors* over Nazi German,
- and the *Helsinki succession conference* to be held by fall 1990.

Genscher promoted the formula 2 (the German states) plus 4 (the victors): but without *vae victis* —e.g. gathering on German initiative and on German territory. The main minimal expectation will be that Germany solemnly declares that the borders of 1945 are sacrosanct. This was promised for the moment after the GDR elections producing a legitimized government anyway.

The *border question* is largely overrated in its importance. It will be hard to ask the necessary material sacrifices from the West German population. But hardly anybody (except a few refugee organizations) have an interest East of the Oder-Neisse. These areas have always played a minor role. Quite a few prejudices continued to despise them as «underdeveloped» and not «completely» German. (Born in Silesia the present author can dare to mention what hardly any West German would say in public). In the cultural sphere the loss of Breslau and Königsberg certainly weighs less than the loss of Wilno and Lvov in Polish culture. The areas have been populated and rebuilt by Poles. Which German would claim to be in favour of pushing the multicultural society in the direction to start with integrating millions of Poles. The Polish problem will be a strain on German budgets and a reserve for German exploitation anyway. You can push Germany as far to the West as possible —the Poles follow westbound as a huge army of migrant workers and this tendency will grow as soon as they border directly with an established hard-currency country. Moreover no serious politician can ask the restoration of the Polish corridor which by its very oddity as a solution might have provoked a war even in a case that not a Hitler was available to push the issue. Oddly enough, the main victor, Stalin, created a new corridor. If Lithuania in the long run breaks away from the Soviet Union, Gorbachev inherits the corridor which separates a Russian speaking part of former East Prussian from the Slavic territory. Königsberg's little revenge over Kaliningrad!

For the time being there is only one problem with Poland Germany cannot settle. As a consequence of the most unequal treatment of the «guest victors» —France on De Gaulle's impertinent insistence got in— the Poles having suffered much more than France were kept out —now, they are again excluded from the formula 2 plus 4. Some actors might be ready to give in —but they are afraid that every country involved would ask to be present and the victors end up with a conference even bigger than the Helsinki succession meeting.

The United States assured Gorbachev that they would not onesidedly try to benefit from Soviet dilemmas at this moment. The new proposal to reduce the troops to about 195 000 gives the United States an advantage. They benefit already moreover, quite substantially by getting the Soviet to abandon the corner stone of the Soviet system, the GDR. The claim to keep Germany in the Nato is close to unconditional surrender policies. Baker in February

1990 launched a new proposal to keep Germany in the NATO only *as a political member*. In military matters even in the *French solution* is hardly acceptable to Moscow. Unfortunately recent riots in the Soviet Union prevented the leadership from offering a clear policy standpoint. It is touching to see how quickly the former «njet-foreign policy» transformed itself into the confusing picture of contradicting actors. In the morning Shevardnadze said only neutrality is a solution, in the evening Gorbachev hinted at more flexible options! Unprofessional dilettantism and «ad-hocism» of Soviet policies in this moment are a certain danger in domestic as well as in foreign policies.

Genscher's compromise of membership in the NATO, but no *Western troops in East Germany*, is highly artificial. Soviet troops can stay in East Germany. I think only to invite certain parts also into West German territory would be a substantial offer from the Western side.

Whatever solution will be the outcome, it is unlikely that the four victors will follow Margaret Thatcher's self-defeating concept that all the Helsinki-states have to agree to a solution, and that even little Malta should have a right to veto. The *Helsinki group* should have not a *negative function to veto* but rather the *positive function to create new institutions for a European security system*.

The West European countries were puzzled by the acceleration of German unification which happened for two reasons:

- The *exodus of the GDR population* did not stop: unification seems to be the only solution to prevent the GDR from bleeding out.
- The *international situation* did not exclude the attempt to *roll back* the development by Moscow policy planners.

Oddly enough the Community started to push the rapid *Anschluß* solution via Art. 23 of the Basic Law in order to avoid the necessity of changes in the treaty of Rome.

We should be aware of the fact that a similar acceleration is operating among the other Comecon countries. At the end of 1989 it was still feasible to envisage a loose confederation with newcomers such as Austria, the EFTA countries and the former Comecon states. By spring 1990 it became evident that the Community should not discriminate Austria which found its application in a condition worse than the former Moscow satellites, and that the Comecon countries accepted no solution without prospects for full membership at the earliest convenience.

Western Europe is not completely prepared to cope with the exigencies of this new momentum of European integration from Brest to Brest —as Germany has not yet any convincing plan for handling unification and its

enormous monetary costs but both Europe and Germany are forced to *muddle through*. *Economic integration* will be more costly by this undue haste: but *political integration* of Europe especially the formation of a common foreign policy, contrary to many fears will get easier by this great «salto mortale integrativo» in a period of diminishing East West tensions.

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