



Inter-Germany Common Domestic Policy

Michael Stürmer

There is nothing to be objected against German unity," declared Lord Palmerston exactly 140 years ago, "except that no one seems able to carry it out." And Palmerston's remarks would seem to apply to the situation up to as recently as the latest German revolution of autumn 1989. In the meantime, however, discussion of the concept and significance of German "reunification" is hiding the fact that both the East and West Germans are already proceeding towards some form of interstate common domestic policy, just as had been planned over some 40 years of *Deutschlandpolitik*, but never realised, though long a part of everyday West European life.

Interstate common domestic policy: in the foreseeable future—though what is foreseeable today?—this concept ought to be able to give some form to the opportunities and limits of developments in Central Europe. And it is a question of domestic policy, because the now irreversible freedom of movement of the East Germans together with the factor of having a single national background, made irrenounceable by the Berlin situation, hardly give Bonn and Brussels any choice whether to consider the infrastructure, environment, clinics and so on as an internal matter or not, even though the only reason was to persuade the citizens of Dresden and Leipzig, Löbau and Güstrow to stay put where they are.

Yet it is also a question of policies to be decided by two separate states, because it is still not clear how the majority will decide in the term. In any

case, the obvious fact is that the question of unity will inevitably divide opinion and cause mixed feelings, as soon as it becomes a question of social system in the East and of sharing and redistribution in the West. First and foremost there are the contemporary security interests of the Soviet Union, just as much as Russia's historical ones. It may be that at a certain point the Warsaw Pact will be suitably disposed, and it may even be that the bilateral pacts of mutual assistance which the Kremlin has with its ex-satellites can be renegotiated. At the present moment, however, it is an inescapable fact that the security area of the Soviet Union reaches as far as the Elbe, and that Moscow must insist on some vestige of state sovereignty in the GDR. Within these limits, EEC association is possible, as also a non-Communist government, freedom of movement and many other concessions. Yet whether it can go any further in the future will essentially depend on the stability of East-West relations, and on the progress of *perestroika*—a factor which is anything but certain.

On final analysis it is clear that the German drama will not remain divided between Eastern actors and Western spectators. These roles will be exchanged and mixed during the dual election year 1990, and even more after. The hour of truth is on the way for the stability of the FRG, for Western integration, and for Atlantic security, and there will be many new issues to be solved *en route* to interstate common domestic policy, above all the German question.

The Potsdam legacy

The German question has the wrong name, because it has never been a historical concept to the Germans themselves, and even less so since 1945. The expression also contains the implication that where there is a question, an answer must be waiting. The German question belongs to that kind of question, however, which will never be solved without leaving a remnant of controversy, just as the Palestinian issue has been since Biblical times, or the Dardanelles issue since Homer's *Iliad*. The absence of any peace treaty, which had been planned for in Potsdam in 1945, and which would have united the victorious powers and kept the Germans under control, is the clearest sign of this unsolvability. Thus the opinion, widespread in certain quarters, that all that is to be done is to push the diplomats to work quickly, reach a unification settlement and then get it signed misses the very fact that in 1945 and since, the partition of Germany was the crucial factor in determining the shape of the continent, the distribution of power over large portions of the world and the

total rejection with which the superpowers confronted each others' world-political plans in the centre of Europe. These are the reasons behind the division of Germany in two states, and it is thus not to be done away with by a simple act of will on the part of the Four Powers. Nothing would cause those involved more embarrassment today than a conference on Germany. The nuclear superpowers must be the first to signal the limits to their tolerance. But they can no longer freely shape the centre of Europe. Who, then, could do so?

What Ian Davidson has written on *perestroika* and its European consequences, is true today: "The central unknown factor behind the establishment or not of Europe is Germany".¹ Mikhail Gorbachev, the Hungarian Government, and the first 20,000 refugees have set off a chain of events whose aims and end are not yet known. The postwar epoch is ending, and the German question is no longer only a question of world political systems: it is not a question of the establishment of an enlarged Federal Republic, or even—as Walter Ulbricht and Erich Honecker believed in their best moments—of a "socialist" Germany. At present it is a question of human rights, of the credibility of the West, of the survival of an alternative GDR, and of the provision of external security for *perestroika*, (as also, unfortunately, of its external threats).

Great world political issues are more unresolvable in some periods than in others. For two or three years there have been signs, and today the certainty, that the terms of the German question, immobile during the Cold War and the shaping factor behind the European postwar order, are changing. In the Federal Republic old questions are being brought up again, above all with regard to the Western alliance and the German desire for unification, but also regarding relations with the USSR. Long before October 7, there had already been the opinion in the GDR that this state in its present form could not last, from the points of view of either internal or external policy, that it would become a focal point of international crisis, and that it would become the main threat to *perestroika*, if nothing drastic happened. When Gorbachev audibly said in East Berlin: "Those who arrive too late are punished by life itself", the fact had already happened with the 1953 trauma, with fear over the Russians, and the domination of the SED in its old form had already ended. Where had all this begun, however?

In 1982, the French scholar Pierre Hassner, a pupil of Aron's and a strategic thinker, had already written that the German question was stirring, meaning the internal-political consequences of the missile crisis, which really had brought

out much that had been forgotten or repressed and placed it squarely before our eyes. First, there was the geo-strategic position of divided Germany in the centre of a divided continent. Second, there was the guarantee of European security offered by the broader nuclear deterrent of the USA. Third, there was the burden of this nuclear deterrent, which fell heaviest on the Germans. Since the 1987 INF treaty had granted the Soviets a limited veto over NATO armament, since the "firebreak" theory had been established and since the Germans had found themselves on the wrong side of this "firebreak", this burden began to be felt again in the wake of the SNF conflict in early 1989. Finally, there is the fact that the weighting of nuclear armament is being redistributed, and that the land which—on account of its position and past—has the least nuclear participation, is obliged to bear the greatest burden of all. This is true in a quantitative sense, for the nuclear warhead count. But it is also true in the qualitative sense, because the INF treaty resulted in a weak point in the escalation chain, and thus in the individual links, in the medium-range sector, and thus in Central Europe.

Whoever might think that these considerations and opinions only affect the "strategic community", however, does not recognise the fact that the nuclear mystery has long been removed from the exclusive grasp of the strategic clergy. The Bible has been translated into the language of the people, and thus the German question—in terms of both strategy and mass involvement—has already been receiving new treatment for a decade. Debate is not going to quiet down so soon.

The end of hegemony

In the meanwhile other historical changes are taking place, which do not only alter the role and function of divided Germany, but also reshape the whole framework of the German question. The Bonn politics expert Hans-Peter Schwarz quite recently looked at the question of the features of a future post-Communist Europe, and as a starting point sketched out three possible tendencies:²

Firstly, Europe might experience the inner disintegration of communism as the conceptual and practical basis for large-scale social organisation. This would be a world political phenomenon of the first order, and its medium and long term consequences can only be guessed in outline form for the moment. What would emerge from this disintegration is not yet foreseeable. But 40 years of

East European isolation from modern developments would come to an end. In one or another form, the reunification of Europe would take place. Secondly, the process of European integration within the EEC framework has reached such a qualitative extent that the states involved are no longer able to determine their economic and social policies independently—and these are central elements in the modern concept of sovereignty. Western Europe is thus in the middle of a process of development which will lead to new political and economic unity—"whether this be called union or federation". Thirdly, and parallel to the above, the "American century" is coming to an end. The United States will undoubtedly remain the strongest power in the community of North Atlantic democracies, but its days as an hegemon and sole protective power for Europe are counted.

A fourth tendency could be seen in the revolutions of Eastern Europe: in Poland, Hungary, the GDR and Czechoslovakia. The domino theory is valid, but in a different way than expected. It is clear that the old Stalinist constructions are no longer tenable. What does this mean in foreign policy, however? Eastern Central Europe is searching for a new form—as long as Soviet patience lasts and as long as Western solidarity demonstrates, and really feels, that it would risk its own destiny in the process—above all in Germany. And here it must be pointed out that there is potential for disagreement in the West—disagreement which will be a challenge for all the political ability the Europeans can muster.

The Soviet Union will remain a powerful and difficult neighbour. The ideas of the Cold War have had their day, and this is one of the reasons why German division is obsolete. Willy Brandt has pointed out that "if we talk of the whole of Europe, then Germany is inevitably included. The German question has to be present on the agenda".³ The concept of an agenda is a suggestive one, because an agenda is always cleared up. The German question will remain, but it will change its form—and perhaps for the better.

Today this depends on diverse factors, however. It depends on this change assuring, and not endangering, stability and peace. It depends on West European integration not being harmed, but gaining shaping power and political dexterity above and beyond all economic ends. This also leads to the aim of making Eastern Europe economically and monetarily suitable for the EEC, whatever the consequences might be. It depends on the Atlantic security of Western Europe not being contested from the inside, or becoming an object

for compromise on the outside. It depends on West German liberties not being encroached upon by the confusion consequent to the changes taking place in the other German state. The aims and ends of the latter are still open, and will in any case profoundly alter the distribution of power within the Federal Republic, as also its position in the international system. Finally it depends on the process of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in helping to support and implement dignified and evolutionary solutions to East-West problems.

The changed relationship between East and West can be summarised in one sentence: menace is on the decrease, but danger is on the increase. This gives reorganisation of German affairs a chance, but also invites us to be wary and careful at the same time. And the Germans must avoid the illusion that German unity is a kind of universal medicine for Europe's problems. This view is shared only by a few, while the majority have found the *status quo* a comfortable shield for a long time. The shield is now falling, and this fact both requires and stimulates us to meditate upon the changes, which need both orientation and theoretical solidity. German unity, however, is not hanging like a ripe apple on the tree of history, to be shaken down by discussions and resolutions alone. The Germans will have to argue much more over the form and content of unity than their neighbours.

In fact, if Europe and its periphery—America and the Soviet empire—are on the move as in this period, then the German question will also not remain immobile. Germany has already been unsuitable as a brace between the two systems for some time, and is no suitable balancing weight either. Even though the Germans were courageously to renounce any idea of unification, as has been hinted to them on various occasions, Bonn and East Berlin would even be lacking the authority to do this with regard to the rights of the Four Powers. And any government or party which voiced this idea would shake the legal foundations of the Federal Republic to such an extent as to create resentment of Weimar dimensions. It is not possible to do away with the problem. It has to be posed, and iron can only be forged as long as it remains hot.

Double containment

Above all other considerations, the fact is that the role of the GDR will change, both internally and externally. Internally, because the former regime risked any possible justification with both socialists and non-socialists, and this is not so

easy to win back through mere sacrifice of the former leadership. There are questions which would be capable of leading to a split in the SED, and this just before the elections. This constellation was already untenable by the autumn of last year. The people were tired of being considered politically immature, and of being kept under control. Today the present economic misery of the GDR is the same as the former misery. If nothing drastic happens, neither politically nor economically, then the people will keep leaving, especially the young—at present with their visas in order, but subsequently without any visa at all. And political protest is also mixed with a



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conflict among generations: a conflict with those who compromised with the former regime, and even more with those who overthrew it. Moscow had already made it clear to the SED leadership that no one would provide force to help it out if it did not help itself by using reason: Hans Modrow was the initial reply to this. From outside, the reform movements in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, however different and perhaps contradictory they may remain, can do much to help; the key role lies in Moscow, but also in Warsaw. However; much has also been initiated in the Federal Republic: from historical memories to advice on nuclear-fallout practice, from generation change to a rediscovery of the culture of *Mitteleuropa*. And in the long run nor will the knot which was used to bind the German question between 1944 and 1948 remain unaffected.

“Ein Deutschland” was written on the front page of the London weekly *The Economist* last summer, in German and in Gothic script, on a background of the black, red and gold flag. And the conclusion of the British commentators, who often show an ability for calm and correct predictions in German affairs, was that the time has come for the West to state exactly what Article 7 of the German treaty actually means in the real world. Through this treaty the Americans, British and French pledged themselves to the national aims of the Federal Republic in exchange for German alliance with the West: it is thus not possible to act today as though all that had just been said and written in 1952 for the sake of things. And it is also time for the Federal Republic and its leading political forces to explain what aspects *la chose allemande* (De Gaulle’s term for the German question) will have in Europe at the turn of the millennium. The metaphor of history seeing everything right in the end was already insufficient before November 9, 1989. Here it is not just a question of Western Europe, but of the architecture of the whole of Europe, with, in its midst, the form and content of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The German question in the past sounded in its historical form no different from the German question today: whom is Germany supposed to belong to, and where are the Germans supposed to belong? The various strands of what is termed the “German question” are diverse in their historical, political and constitutional aspects, and here already lies the first difficulty.

The status decided in Potsdam in 1945 belongs to the present political situation of the German question, and contains the Three and respectively Four Power control over Germany as a whole, which in a friendly form also means Four Power responsibility for Germany. To this must be added the status of Greater Berlin, where the Allies assumed sovereignty over the German Reich as a consequence of military occupation, and have still not given this sovereignty back to this very day.

This matter also includes the enemy state clause in the Charter of the United Nations, and the 1937 borders, both points having been used in Potsdam for the redistribution of Germany’s bankruptcy assets, as they had already been settled. Finally, there is the political fact of the absence of a peace treaty, as already planned by the Allies in Potsdam to conclude all previous interim measures. All of this will only finally be resolved after the main German questions have been dealt with. The Four Powers also maintain a right to countersignature, and in reality this is sufficiently important.

The historical aspect of the German question includes the status of German affairs resulting from the great disintegration of the anti-Hitler front which took place as the ideological East-West conflict broke out—first due to quarrelling over Poland, where the West accepted everything, and then due to quarrelling over Germany, where the West stood up to Stalin. And it was after this double refusal to compromise that the Cold War found its focus in Germany. The Federal Republic was called into being in the 300 kilometre security strip of land between the Maas and the Elbe; it was not a state looking for a foreign policy, but rather the side product of a foreign policy looking for a state. Being provisional was a condition of its existence.

The German-American Wolfram Hanrieder has called this process one of double containment: containment of the Soviet Union in the same stroke as containment of the German question. Today, however, there is the question of a third containment, regarding the inevitable risks of instability stemming from inevitable processes of change; here the West will have to exercise self-control in the face of what is happening in the East, as also give proof of tenacious patience and political prudence. This will not proceed without the alliances, and certainly not without their cooperation. Subsequently, however, a double-edged Germany would be capable of acting as a powerful stabilising link, and it is worth meditating on this. And the whole of this will not be without its cost. If the recovery of the GDR were left to the Federal Republic alone, however, it would overstrain its foreign policy, and would quarrel over its domestic policy: over the question as to whether the victor should be Ludwig Erhard again here, or whether it should be the famous “third road” which failed during the first decade of the Federal Republic. Whatever the answer may be, it will certainly cause profound alterations in the Federal Republic.

The GDR followed the foundation of the West German state in a kind of world political contredanse. It must be remembered, however, that the Sovietisation of the Soviet occupation zone in 1945, and the inception of the SED in 1946, had already caused social division and prepared the ground for the “First German Worker and Peasant State”. For a long period it existed simply to be on call, and with all escape blocked in 1961 with the building of the Wall, it offered a generation a symbol of concrete stability. Now the former SED leadership has lost its Soviet guarantee of existence, the loyalty of its citizens is over, and any moral legitimation on the grounds of “anti-fascism” or social welfare no longer exists. The GDR is following an uncertain path in both internal policy and external policy. The end, however, is not simply a question

of time, of Gorbachev's ability to survive, and of the effects of Polish or Hungarian reforms. First and foremost it is a question of Western intelligence and reasonableness, and of the ability to shape a great European plan.

It is a question—the sole question—of Europeanisation of the German issue, which means finding European connections and answers with respect to the German problem. Present day German mouth-to-mouth respiration is seen by the rest of the world as being a passionate and private embrace, though if the Federal Republic were to adopt an isolated German policy, it would very soon find itself very alone, and surrounded by suspicion. There is still validity in the statement Henry Kissinger made in 1972 on announcing his “New *Ostpolitik*”: “The Federal Republic of Germany alone does not possess the power to pursue its *Ostpolitik* on a purely national basis. Without the military umbrella of the alliance, it would be threatened not only in the Berlin question, but even in its own existence. For its security, then, it can feel dependent on the support of its allies, and in particular the United States. *Ostpolitik* can only be successful if applied at the same time by the Western alliance. Otherwise, it would not be possible for the Federal Republic to bring the Soviet Union to real compromise.”⁴

Reshaping security

For unity “à la Bismarck”, though in a reduced form, the Federal Republic would have little to offer the Soviet Union apart from its own existence. This would not only mean an absurd reversal of history since 1945, with the disintegration of Europe and the decline of welfare democracy. It would also put the Soviet Union in the greatest embarrassment, given that at the present moment the latter is so preoccupied with itself and with transforming an empire which refuses to remain one.

German division, as it is today, has no longer any continued future. Yet the consequence of this is not that German unity will come of itself, or is to be observed and timed. Transition from the *status quo*, and definition of the aims of the direction taken, will remain for years one of the great themes of Germany and of Europe—of world politics, in fact—together with the questions as to just how America will be able to assure security with respect to NATO, and on the other hand, how it will be possible to get on well with the Soviet Union under and after Gorbachev. The answer is not only to be found in the control of armament, nor in the acknowledgment of apparently symmetrical

interests. It is a question of security structures which lie beyond policies of containment and the Cold War, but which still take into account the fact that Russia remains the dominant Eurasian power, that one nuclear superpower requires balancing against another nuclear superpower, and that without the North Americans, not only the CSCE process would fail, but also the West with respect to the changes taking place in Eastern Europe. This all requires courage, patience and prudence, and a cool and disinterested look at Europe's past, present and future. Germany remains, however, right at the centre.

At present, the German configuration is described as a confederation—in German a *Vertragsgemeinschaft* (a contractual community). This formula serves to fulfill the wishes of both the friends of state unification, as also the opponents. Whoever uses the term reunification must be sure that the voters will want it on December 2. He will have to go to Moscow, play the role of the pleader, and will then be asked what he has to offer. And apart from respect for Russian security requirements and economic-technical-financial development, there is little to offer which does not affect free Europe.

The European pillar

In reality it is a question of softening, smoothing and confederatively and federatively building over the veto positions of both East and West, positions which meet in Germany, which stalemate each other, and which reflect the division of the countries on the map. This will not take place in the sense that a new, neutral German sovereign state will develop and confront the rest of the world with a new veto position; that once born to the world, this new state will quietly and unreservedly reflect which of the presently existing European treaties and duties are still to be respected—or perhaps not. The whole thing will only work if a great deal of political experience is translated into binding Germany to the rest of the world, and if German *rapprochement* does not strike its neighbours as a jump in the dark, but as a decisive step towards a reunited European continent and stable, long-term and reliable world relations. Whoever believes otherwise is underestimating the conscience and interests of his fellow men. If there exists a powerful argument for German unity in conditions of liberty, then it is not in reminiscences of Bismarck, but in the hesitant joy of that 16-year old boy who showed his passport with its Federal German eagle on British television, and simply said: "Now I am free". Or in the democratic paths of those hundreds of thousands who roared from the Alexanderplatz: "We are the people."

Liberty is the kernel of the German question, and with liberty, the question becomes bearable for Europe and resolvable for the Germans. As a state revolution within Europe, with or without Gorbachev, it remains blocked, and for this reason it is also certain that German unification, if conceivable and achievable, will only take form if it develops from being an upheaval of world-political systems in Central Europe into a factor of stabilisation; from being a revolution of power relations into an important side-product of the same. It therefore follows that nothing is to be achieved frontally, by driving the German head against the European wall, nor either by special inner-German business, nor by Soviet-American arrangement of the geo-political game from Yalta to Malta.

There remain only close contact, the development of confidence, tranquillity and equilibrium. Yet the time has never been riper for this, and this process has never been more necessary, above all in order to stabilise as smoothly as possible all this revolutionary change. The elements are ready, and need only to be pieced together. Whether the Germans are well-advised to be talking so suddenly and loudly of German reunification instead of European integration, will occupy us for some time to come. For the rest, it must be noted that a Federal Republic irreversibly allied to the West enjoys much confidence and negotiating power in the East. On the other hand, a neutralised Germany, estranged from the West, and possibly incorporating the GDR, would be surrounded by mistrust, and, more important, would block diverse Eastern emancipation processes, sooner or later causing the Western security systems to disintegrate. And the rest would be a new journey into the unknown.

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Security is not everything, it has been said, though all is nothing without security. Where is a security framework for these processes to be found? To this question there are three answers: from the Atlantic Alliance, which North America and its guarantees protect as framework and roof for European reorganisation, supplemented by a growing, intelligent European cornerstone; from the Warsaw Pact, which in the form it has had up to now makes no military sense any longer, and could and probably will be transformed from a military security system to a political one, as otherwise the contradictions will



The other reunification: Alsace-Lorraine joins the Reichstag

get too excessive; finally, from the CSCE conference, which will have to be supplied with further responsibility. The CSCE itself was originally invented for European-Atlantic security of "New *Ostpolitik*", then projected the image of the West towards the East, and today has finally developed into a diplomatic congress, able to sound out adjustments and changes, think things over and negotiate, lending influence and weight to neutral or non-allied states, and providing the states of Eastern Central Europe with a vehicle for their interests. The CSCE economic conference in Bonn in March-April 1990 is thus taking place as though made to order.

Above and beyond this, however, conventional armament control in Vienna offers a key to change in military strength relations and in political architecture. The Red Army has long had four tasks: to prop up one-party dictatorships, to take the West a hostage during crises, to maintain the glacis of the motherland, and to watch over the inner empire using the outer one. The democratisation of Poland, Hungary, the GDR, and Czechoslovakia, in addition to arms reduction through CSCE 1 and subsequent agreements, remove the first two tasks, and makes the second two questionable. What does this mean? North American presence and the accommodation of Russian interests will serve to keep this framework of stability. But political reform in the East, and armament control between East and West will and must give another, new sense to NATO and the Warsaw Pact, via the concepts of cooperative, or at least synchronised, security.

A final, supplementary observation on the West European security framework. It is a controversial issue as to whether the European Community should develop its own defence system; on the other hand, security measures are inevitable, from the development of high technology, to the safe-guarding of raw-material sources, to environmental problems (now threatening to grow into potential for international conflict for a long time).

For the rest, however, and precisely because existing alliances still have a role to play, the Community must concentrate on acting as the engine of economic, social, political and moral change. And the Kremlin leaders can rely on that fact—today and tomorrow. But they cannot rely on anything further.

If the European Community accepts the responsibility of associating the Eastern European countries to itself, then it can only do so if it has already set aside the question of defence. The one act requires the other. Incidentally, if necessary the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) could play a role as

half-way house in order to help Eastern European association with the EEC, though this would mean an EFTA linked to the EEC with treaties which would be useful and profitable to the Western industrialised democracies belonging to it. The question of Austrian entry into the EEC will have to be rethought, in order to fit into the new context.

Whatever the conclusion is, the North-Atlantic nations will still need a "European pillar". For this reason the West European Union must be taken seriously. Active and real political-military functions have to be given to it, and if the need arises, it has to be enlarged to include all the European NATO member-countries.

On the other hand, the concept which has already been sounded in right wing American neo-isolationist circles, that Germany should be allowed to have nuclear weapons, and that these have to be integrated into a West European system of deterrence, thus permitting the Americans to withdraw from Western Europe, does not take into account three important factors. First of all, the Germans are rather reluctant to accept this new role and its consequences, which would in the end be less, not more, security. Secondly, of much significance is the non-proliferation treaty, and Russian interest in the limitations set by its provisions. Finally, there are the vested interests of the Western European nuclear powers, Britain and France, vested interests which De Gaulle elegantly expressed in the words: "*Le nucléaire se partage mal*", (nuclear power is difficult to share).

There is no European security without North America. This idea has become widely accepted, even a commonplace, not only in Western Europe, but recently even in the Eastern half of the Continent. Will it remain a principle in North America? European destiny is decided not only in the middle of Europe, but also in the middle of the Atlantic.

Complementary to the question of the protective framework offered by nuclear power as well as by pacts and by armaments control, there remains the question of propelling force and instruments, and these may be expressed by the terms of integration and association. Integration in the West, and association in the East. After the preliminary stage of the Coal and Steel Union, the European Community was not founded primarily as a club of wealthy citizens, intent on increasing profit, but as a framework for European architecture, to unite economic potentials, to balance out economic interests,

and to provide German potential with tranquillity and development, both of which were given. Economic integration was the means of political logic and content used to re-order postwar Western Europe. We must thus be warned against considering European economic and monetary union with less priority than opening towards the East.

The Outlook

Due to the revolutions in Eastern Europe, 1992 has been transformed from an economic aim into a political beginning, and the fact of responsibility for the destiny of the Europeans lying on the other side of a rusting, porous iron curtain is a novelty. The Council for Mutual Economic Aid (COMECON) has served its day as an instrument of hegemony: it is of no use against the structural *malaise* of the Eastern economies. The substitute? Perhaps the Warsaw Pact can still act as a framework for collective security, providing that the military dominance of the Soviet Union is retracted. It cannot act as an element of economic unity, however. There is thus no Eastern framework for peace and integration, and as a consequence the EEC and also EFTA are inevitably assuming the role of "federators", a role they have not wished for, and for which to date both theory and instruments are lacking. And the time factor is important here. Democracy in the Eastern countries will require decades in order to consolidate itself and assure economic success. However, it has two or three years, at the most. Yet it is in the vital interest of the West that Poland's democratic excursion is successful, and the same applies for Hungary. If these attempts fail, then the price to be paid will be much higher than anything which could have more economically been invested today.

The disintegration of an empire has never been a pleasant spectacle for onlookers. Up to now it has always happened that in the Soviet empire, revolution from above and uprising from below not only have not worsened East-West relations, but have actually improved them. Yet there is no guarantee that this will remain the case. Whatever the West can do, it will have to do—from assuring its own security, to armament control, and from economic cooperation, to common pursuit of the "global requirements" which both Gorbachev and the NATO leadership place at the top of the agenda. And this is not out of altruism, but out of enlightened self-interest.

We are living in an epoch of change. The global, bipolar and nuclear postwar order is disintegrating, and a new, better order is being sketched out, with

recognisable hopes and projects for the future. A similar project, based on the German question, still remains to be defined. And as far as this question is concerned, the following can be said: the German issue will not find an answer at the beginning of this change, but only at the end, and then not in terms of the nineteenth century nation-state, but along the lines which will be taken by international integration during the twenty-first century. Nations will remain, however, and the nation-state will not decline into a residual value. This will be a matter for universal attention. And first and foremost comes a warning already voiced by a statesman who profoundly understood Germany's position at the crossroads of European interests and lines of force—Bismarck: "Under the eloquent discontent with which people, apart from their own business, are searching for a philosopher's stone which might bring about German unity immediately, is generally concealed a superficial, and in any case impotent unfamiliarity with realities and their consequences." This was written in 1869. What followed, in any case, is unrepeatable.

German unification can emerge from the right to self-determination, linked to a large-scale project for Western European cooperation, American presence, and Russian security requirements. It can emerge in the midst of chaos and crisis, though no one would want it to. The Germans and their neighbours, however, will primarily have enough on their plate in dealing with whatever interstate common domestic policy in Eastern and Western Europe possibly and necessarily implies.

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² - Schwarz, Hans-Peter, "Auf dem Weg zum post-kommunistischen Europa", in *Europa-Archiv*, no. 11, 1989, p. 319.

³ - *Die Welt*, 4.9.1989.

⁴ - As recorded by Dr. Kurt Birrenbach.

*A German-language version of this article appears in *Europa-Archiv*, n.24, December 1989.