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# German Unity: the View from Moscow

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**W**hen Mikhail Gorbachev came to office five years ago this spring, no German question officially existed as far as the Soviet Union was concerned. Any mention of that problem, when it occurred at all (which did not happen all too often), was accompanied in the Soviet press by the ubiquitous modifier “the so-called”, or in a short-hand approach incarcerated inside inverted commas. It was allowed to appear unfettered in public only in textbooks on postwar diplomatic history, and all for a good reason: it was officially considered to have been safely resolved, duly ratified by all parties concerned, and effectively closed.

Soviet foreign policy always enjoyed taking pride in itself for being thoroughly realistic—and the only existing reality in the centre of Europe in the mid-1980s, to be sure, was that of a Germany permanently divided into two—the Democratic Republic, a friend and a staunch ally, and the Federal Republic, another man’s friend and ally. “... And never the twain shall meet”: even though Erich Honecker’s famous phrase that socialism, i.e. the GDR, and capitalism, i.e. West Germany, were as easily united as fire and water was not quoted by the Soviet media nearly as often as by the SED propaganda, the notion was widely accepted as true—primarily, perhaps, because it was perceived to be consonant with the law of social history. The development of the two German states *had* to proceed along ever more widely diverging paths. Any protestation to the contrary was branded as hostile, subversive or plainly revisionist. Like its wartime allies the Soviet leadership was highly sensitive on the issues pertaining to the two Germanys:

The postwar status quo in Europe was the cornerstone of stability in the bipolar international system.

That kind of realism was based on a set of very clear-cut principles which formed albeit a slightly primitive, but thoroughly coherent world view. Central to that world view was the perception of international relations as an extension of class struggle in which Soviet-led “world socialism” was pitted against US-dominated “world capitalism”. The world was not one, but split between those two forces engaged in a terminal battle. Europe—the birthplace and the focal point of the historic confrontation—had lost its proper identity and joined either of the two “camps”.

There was no Central Europe any more. Renamed Eastern, it was assigned the dual role of being both a strategic *glacis* of the USSR and a proof that ultimate victory of “socialism” over “capitalism” was not only attainable but inevitable. It was especially important that East Germany, at least part of Marx’ and Engels’ “own country”, had been won over for socialism. As for the Federal Republic, it remained a well-recognisable foe—both in old national and “new” class terms.

The border running through Germany and the Wall cutting through Berlin assumed tremendous importance: they marked the boundary between two world systems, two economic blocs, two military alliances and two ways of life. By the mid-1980s, it was unthinkable that it should move either way—short of by means of war, which had itself become unthinkable. Phrases like the one by Richard von Weizsäcker, that “the German question shall remain open as long as the Brandenburg Gate is closed”, were disposed of as wishful thinking—if not worse.

“New thinking” about world affairs was the logical outcome of “new thinking” about domestic Soviet issues. Like the latter, it evolved gradually in the course of an on-going learning process. When the Soviet leader visited the GDR in 1985-86, there was nothing new in the official Soviet pronouncement regarding the German situation. This time, however, Moscow’s position did not remain frozen. The concept of a “common European house” advanced by the Soviet Union raised the obvious question of the place to be occupied in that new structure by the Germans. In his book *Perestroika* which appeared in 1987 the Soviet General Secretary first publicly addressed the “German question” (still guarded by the usual quotation marks) at length.<sup>1</sup> It was

enlightening to note Gorbachev's concluding remark on the subject following the description of the long-standing Soviet concerns and complaints. It is up to history to decide the problem of the German nation and the question of what forms German statehood will eventually take, the Soviet leader said. He added that he was taking a very long-term view: one hundred years, he said. What mattered, however, was the principle itself. The "diverging paths theory" was discarded.

"New thinking" on Germany initially had to be mostly internal. Very little of it ever surfaced in the daily press or in scholarly journals. Many things were not yet clear as to the direction that the East-West relations were about to take. It is ironic, however, that no matter how tough the relations with Washington were, how uncertain the links with Bonn had become, it was the Soviet Union's model friend and staunch ally that presented the biggest headache.

It was not just the worsening atmosphere of Soviet-East German relations that made Moscow unhappy; rather, it was the SED leadership's stubborn refusal to recognise the need for far-reaching reform, its loss of touch with the reality at home that raised the worst apprehensions in the Soviet German watchers' community.

Moscow's de facto replacement of the Brezhnev doctrine with a new East European strategy based on the recognition of the peoples' right to choose accelerated the pace of developments in the area. Only those who moved very fast stood any chance. Those who remained passive were swept away. Those resisting the tide the longest perished. It is pointless to speculate how the things might have turned out for the GDR had East Berlin opted for reform in 1986 or in 1987. They did not—and were doomed. Those who thought that changing wall-paper was too much had to bring down the Wall—and found that by then it was already too little.

Thus this fateful fall of 1989 the Soviet Union—like the rest of the world—was confronted with the German question as one of the most pressing problems of its foreign policy. Gorbachev, who had previously been thinking in terms of decades had to admit that history, was now marching at an unexpectedly fast pace.<sup>2</sup> It would be fair to note that neither Soviet scholars nor Moscow's diplomats had any ready-made scenarios that could be of much use in this situation. This, however, was not peculiar to the USSR alone.

The prelude is over, the tragedy that many had feared did not happen, and the drama is now unfolding in front of everyone. The Soviet Union being one of the main actors, its position and the rationale behind it are of interest to both the Germans and the non-Germans.

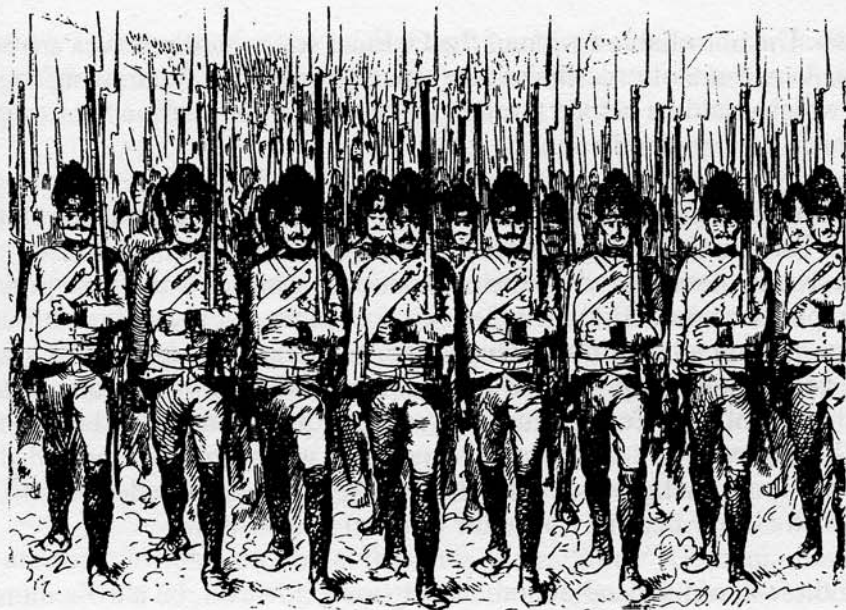
### Westphalia's legacy

What, then, are the basics of the current Soviet approach? First, there now seems to be the understanding that the postwar German question—the one the world is preoccupied with these days—is but the most recent incarnation of the perennial German question that has existed at least since the formation of the modern system of nation-states in Europe, that is to say, approximately since the Treaty of Westphalia put an end to the Thirty Years' War.

Second, since that time there have been two sides to the German question, closely interrelated and interdependent but easily identifiable. One of them may be called the “inner” German question, the other one—the “outer” question. Both were mentioned by Gorbachev in his 1987 passage. The former includes issues bearing on the political, economic and social configuration of the German homeland, or in other words the constitution of the German nation. The latter, on the contrary, is German in name only; it truly belongs to Europe as a whole since it concerns Germany's functioning within a new European order”. At the same time it is both a matter of national and international issues, and Germany is at the centre of both. But with the questions now defined, who is entitled to provide the answers?

The German national question, the Gorbachev administration believes, should be tackled by the Germans themselves. German unity, the time-frame during which it shall be achieved and the modalities to accompany it are entirely up to Germans: this is the message passed by the Soviet leader to the West German Chancellor and the East German premier early in 1990.<sup>3</sup>

This is important. One may recall that in the not so distant past the one sacrosanct problem that seemed to virtually block any chance of bringing about German reunification was unity, but on what socio-political basis? That question had in principle two answers: as far as Moscow was concerned, one unacceptable and the other impossible. With *perestroika* following its own logic it no longer was the case by 1989. Eastern Europe was given freedom to choose; for East Germany the choice was more dramatic than for any other



*Prussian Grenadiers*

Soviet ally, as it included the right to self-determination. The consequences of that decision were very far-reaching: the most difficult barrier on the way to German unity was cleared.

Of course, even placed in the hands of the Germans, the “inner” question did not get off the minds of the Allied Powers, among them the Soviet Union. The pace of developments taking place in German-German relations and above all in the GDR is breathtaking. The USSR has wide-ranging interests in East Germany and is naturally following events there with particular attention.

The impression one gets is that what started last fall as a grass-roots democratic revolution against a corrupt totalitarian regime has long since turned itself into a massive and seemingly irresistible pressure for early fusion with the Federal Republic. Slogans demanding radical political and economic reforms were dropped in favour of an overwhelming demand for unification. A fledgling separate East German identity has proven to be short-lived. The “third way” has lost most of its appeal. As a result, the German-German process increasingly resembles a hasty absorption of the prostrate East by the self-confident, and at times even arrogant West—rather than any orderly unification

of the two. Uncontrollable fusion of the German states hardly serves anybody's interests. A measure of orderliness needs to be injected in the drawing-together process which could be helped through the institution of intermediate stages or phases, each having clearly defined goals.

As for the internal situation in the GDR after the March 18 elections, it looks uncertain. Prior to the voting one was struck by the fact that the "masses in the street" were too often moved by the conventional wisdom that all the problems currently plaguing post-SED East Germany could be quickly solved through its immediate joining to the affluent "big sister" republic. The option of a long, tortuous and tormenting process of internal reforms similar to the one under way in the rest of East Central Europe was consequently discarded in favour of a short (lasting perhaps two-to-three years) spurt westward. That provided a unique emotional background to the first and last free general elections in the GDR, which clearly became a vote for German unity—now.

Reading the will of the people more closely may, however, be a trifle more difficult than that. Several observations can be made here. First of all, no single party managed to win an absolute majority in the new *Volkskammer* which shows that the voters are still uncertain over the exact itinerary of making it "from here to there".

Secondly, the unexpectedly strong showing of the PDS may point to increasingly troublesome realisation by many in the East that the "shorter way" also promises a more intensely painful transition. Those feelings will have to be reckoned with, the more so that the gulf separating real socialism from the *Soziale Marktwirtschaft* may be wider and more difficult to navigate than popularly believed.

Thirdly, the forces that in the romantic "*wir sind das Volk*" days (how many years ago was that?) seemed to be standard-bearers of the emerging GDR identity suffered most heavily. The GDR has already become an extension of the West German political party system.

Thus, whatever achievements and assets the East German state may have it now looks incredible that those will actually become a matter for proper recognition and negotiation. What was once thought of as unification of two sovereign German states is currently presented almost in terms of a prodigal son finally coming home after a 40-year journey through the desert of "real

socialism". This means that the GDR may have lost its chance of winning a better deal from the Federal Republic. It will now have to settle for whatever terms Bonn may offer it.

Resurgence of right-wing German nationalism in the GDR earlier this year, although its impact was not discernible in the March elections, still sent shock waves that reached Moscow and elsewhere in the Soviet Union. Here, one has to take into account two things. One is that the former regime in East Berlin had led the world to believe that such things were safely extirpated in the East. Secondly, for historical reasons both the Soviet government and ordinary citizens are extremely sensitive to any manifestations of German revisionism, nationalism or militarism.

### **From fiction to reality**

These are some insights on Soviet thinking on the "inner" German question. It may be stated that the Soviet government under Gorbachev has so far been as good as its word in refusing to interfere in the internal affairs of the two Germanys. As regards the FDR, it would not be stretching the truth too much to assert that it was precisely this refusal to interfere that made democratic changes in that country possible in the first place. The full weight of this decision which represented the clearest break with past practice can hardly be underestimated.

Moscow not only welcomed the East German wish to live up to the official name of their republic; it made clear its support for the idea of free elections and expressed readiness to work with the new East German government. Most important, it raised no objections to the principle of German unity.

All this seemed pure fiction even a few months ago. Nor did it come lightly or as a matter of course. Events in Eastern Europe have sent shock waves from Kaliningrad to Moscow to Vladivostok. The reaction has so far been mixed. Allegations have already been made that Gorbachev, Shevardnadze and Yakovlev are responsible for selling out socialism in Eastern Europe which also affected the strategic environment of the USSR.

It is in this context that a "German card" is coming into play. One should realise that victory over German fascism in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 is considered to be the greatest national triumph in the history of the

Soviet Union, the war itself being, of course, its largest and most intense tragedy. The removal of the German threat through the country's political division and stationing a large Soviet force in its Eastern portion which itself was turned into a loyal ally of the Soviet Union was thought to be among the most outstanding achievements of Soviet power abroad, and a pillar of stability in Europe. (True, even in the more recent past some Soviet scholars suggested that Germany's division may—in the long term—subtract from stability by breeding nationalism.)

Against such a background, muffled protests and loud warnings were only to be expected. And they came both in newspaper articles and in speeches to the Central Committee. Yegor Ligachev, for one, was characteristically straightforward when he spoke about the "approaching danger". He judged it "unforgivable short-sightedness and a mistake not to see that a Germany with a huge economic, military potential has now loomed on the world horizon". He urged not to allow a repetition of "the pre-war Munich" which in this case would mean "the absorption of the GDR".<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, the Soviet Union has its domestic "little German question" which concerns the future of the almost two million ethnic Germans whose forefathers made it to Russia in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Banished by Stalin to Kazakhstan and Central Asia, they now see that prospects of re-establishing their old autonomous republic on the Volga are fairly dim. Ideas were floated as late as last fall of reconstituting a Soviet-German homeland on the banks of the Pregel. Lithuania's move toward independence from the Soviet Union put the situation of the Kaliningrad region in a new light. It certainly deserved much more attention than it has received so far.

In brief, as for the "inner" German question it is appropriate to stress that while supporting German unity and trusting the Germans themselves with the task of developing the proper modalities to implement it, the Soviet Union is not insensitive to the uncertainties of the situation, primarily in the GDR. Any manifestation of West German arrogance or lack of understanding of other nation's feelings may easily fit in the all too familiar image of the traditional Teuton threat. And that is where foreign policy meets newly discovered Soviet politics. A gradual, step-by-step approach ensuring predictability and balance of interests at all times may require more statesmanship but will yield more lasting results. The Germans have been



waiting for the Wall to come down for a long time. They cannot afford to lose their dream come true by acting irresponsibly.

### **Taming the "outer" question**

Never again shall Germany disturb the peace and stability of Europe and the world at large. Such is the content of the "outer" German question. It involves establishing a stable balance within the European system, which would create confidence in all countries forming this system that their security is in fact guaranteed.

The logical connecting link between the internal and the external aspects of the German question is of course the issue of democracy. Democracies never make wars (although occasionally they have had to fight them). Weimar Germany's tragedy was that it had a democratic constitution with very little support behind it. A stable democratic consensus underpinning a system of separate and balanced powers with sufficient vertical decentralisation is the main line of defence against a rebirth of German militarism and expansionism. Although the 40-year history of West German democracy speaks in favour of the feasibility of maintaining a stable democratic balance in Germany, no one can be absolutely certain about the course future developments might ultimately take. It has to be recognised that a nation's political system is also the one factor most impervious to outside influence.

If the present understanding of history is more or less correct, then Germany—situated where it is and with its particular historical record—should never again be allowed to stand uncertainly alone, vulnerable and menacing at one and the same time. German power must be embedded in a functioning European-wide security, economic and political framework.

Germany's postwar division and tight integration of its two mutually estranged parts in the opposing structures of the West and the East served that overriding purpose under the bipolar system. It may have been (and, in fact it was) tough for the Germans themselves but it inspired a lot of confidence throughout the continent that whatever the two poles might do (and they could not do much, thanks to mutual deterrence), the centre was stable.

Now that the bipolar structure is rapidly becoming a thing of the past and a new distribution of (largely a different kind of) power is emerging, Europe is

returning to its historical continuum—being one and pluralist at the same time. The making and (God forbid) unmaking of the new, stable European system are dependent upon the resolution of the German question.

Most people in the Soviet Union do not subscribe to the view that lessons of history tend to remain unlearned. The fate of the Soviet Union itself and of its people depends on whether their national history has been sufficiently instructive. Looking at the Germans whose tragedy under a totalitarian dictatorship and the horrendous toll of war dead are at least of the same order as that of the USSR, perhaps it could be said that this hard experience was not in vain, and that, consequently, any return to the practices of totalitarian expansionism in Germany is an extremely remote possibility.

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But what about the structures offering sufficient security to both Germans and non-Germans? For the Soviet Union, it is primarily the all-European (Helsinki) process, for the West Europeans, it is the European Community, and for the United States, it is the Atlantic Alliance.

The “outer” German question being essentially European, any solution to it can only be reached in a European context. Ideally, the two processes (the European and the German, that is) should be synchronised. It increasingly appears, however, that at least for the time being, German developments have overtaken almost all other political processes in this part of the world. The best one can do in this situation is to accelerate the European process. If strengthening German unity can help all-European cooperation, it will be beneficial to Germany and Europe. One important quantum leap may be institutionalising the Helsinki process which is an idea ripe for implementation. Another related idea (that of establishing a European Confederation) has been put forward by French president François Mitterrand. Both may prove to be

useful as the Europeans and the North Americans are trying to fit future united Germany into a new international framework.

West European integration has been from the times of Jean Monnet and Robert Schumann Western Europe's own solution to the German question. Having barely escaped the danger of Europe being Germanised, the Europeans set themselves to the task of Germany's Europeanisation. With December 31, 1992, drawing near they had every reason to expect an early end of the era of European nationalism. A new Europe which is being created even now is an antithesis of traditional nationalism. That is why the West Europeans are so worried. For them, the Berlin Wall may have tumbled down some three years too early. With Western Europe at last united, there would have been much less reason to fear Germany's reunification. Faced with this challenge, most EC members urge stepping up their integration. If they succeed, Germany's unification may on balance help solidify the European integration process.

Americans still put much faith in NATO. They cannot overlook the potential significance for the alliance of Germany being at the same time united and neutralised. On the other hand, recent developments in the nations of the Warsaw Pact make it necessary for NATO to redefine its purpose, role and structure. Thus, in the not so distant future there may appear a different kind of alliance, one more resembling a security organisation designed to negotiate than a military coalition designed to fight.

Those "positive" reactions to the German-German events stand out against more traditional ones which basically lead back to a revival of nationalisms to counter the threat of a "German colossus". Retrenchment, although ostensibly "natural", has one substantial drawback: it is so obsessed with the past that it risks to re-creating it in the future.

### Going all-Europe

While welcoming the unification of Germany as part of overcoming Europe's division and ending the Cold War, the Soviet Union cannot afford to close its eyes to various risks involved in any structural shift of such proportions. Nor can it ignore the special apprehensions concerning the German case.

First of all is the border issue. It is the *Untastbarkeit* (as opposed to *Unverletzlichkeit*) of the currently existing borders in Europe that is the actual

bottom line of any realistic settlement of the German question. Skirting that issue is tantamount to opening the Pandora box of territorial disputes once put in deep freeze by the Cold War and all but forgotten. Now, with the advent of warmer climate, everything becomes highly delicate and everyone highly sensitive again. Reopening the borders issue in these circumstances could prove to be a virtual catastrophe for Eastern Europe where comparatively recent border changes dot the map from Pechenga in the far north all the way to Macedonia and Epirus in the south. Economic plight, political instability and a crisis of social values have already produced a highly volatile mixture. Implosion may yet give way to explosion.

Polish borders are of paramount significance. The 104,000 square kilometres of Poland's national territory, exactly one third of the total, were part of Versailles Germany. Schlesien, Pommern and East Prussia may still evoke sentimental feelings among those Germans who were born or raised there; for Poles currently living in Wroclaw, Szczecin or Gdansk a lot more is at stake.



*German sailors attacked by bears*

Another thought to ponder: at the time it was drawn the Oder-Neisse line counterbalanced, if indirectly, the Curzon line.

It is not only Polish borders that should be reaffirmed. The borders of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, as well as the status of Austria should not be left in the dark. The only border change Europe can live with is the disappearance of the inner-German border (including in and around Berlin).

In this situation the Soviet Union—as everyone else—is concerned that the top leaders of the Federal Republic long preferred to dodge the border issue rather than assume a binding political commitment. The internal difficulties and constraints the Bonn government is experiencing are of course well known in Moscow as they are elsewhere. The judgement of the Federal Constitutional Court and the forthcoming Bundestag election both are formidable hurdles to cross. It is precisely there, however, that the source of foreign apprehensions is to be found. The question on many people's minds, if not on their lips, reads "are Germans capable indeed of balancing their interests against those of their neighbours?" Will their leaders always be able to resist internal pressures to put purely German interests above everything else in the world? For the outside world, the West German attitude to the existing borders is *the* indicator of united Germany's goals in Europe.

Another requirement concerning German unity—which is as obvious, in the Soviet view, as the re-affirmation of the borders—is that the new German state should assume the security obligations contained in treaties and agreements concluded by its two immediate predecessors: the Bonn and Paris agreements, the three Soviet-East German treaties, the *Ostverträge* of the FRG, the Poland-GDR treaty, as well as the Non-Proliferation Treaty, to name but the most fundamental ones. (And the obligation never to have nuclear weapons is the most important of them.) Whether formally included into the peace treaty or contained in some other document, the respective obligations must be spelled out clearly, coached in legally binding language, and strictly adhered to. One way to do so could be in the form of a formal Helsinki II document having the status of an international treaty.

The third problem presented by the two Germans becoming one is that of new Germany's future politico-military status. At the moment it raises the most controversy between the USSR and the West on the German issue. Historically, all Soviet offers of German unity were accompanied by Moscow's insistence

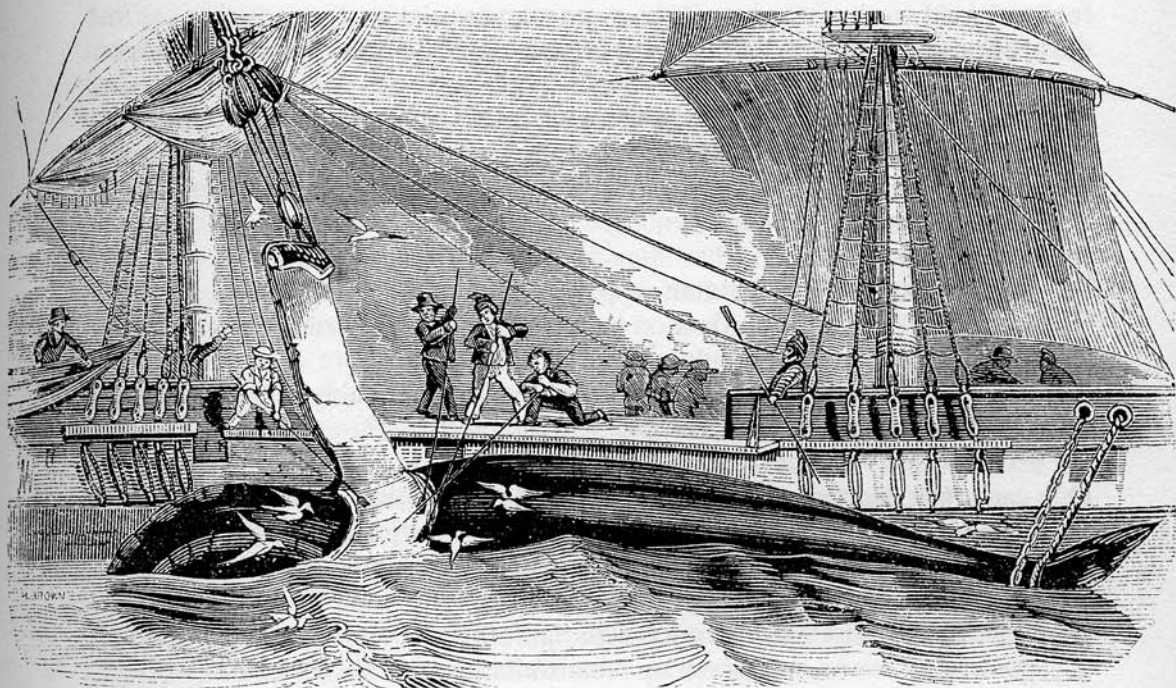
that Germany be neutralised and effectively demilitarised. The current Soviet position formally excludes the possibility of a united Germany being a member of NATO.<sup>5</sup> This opposition does not mean, of course, that Soviet leaders fail to see the value of Germany being firmly integrated into an international security framework. The point is, what kind of framework.

Soviet observers recognise the reasons that compel Bonn's Western partners to insist that the FRG's NATO connections should continue, embracing now the whole of Germany. The trouble is, however, that the Atlantic Alliance is still an exclusively Western club and is likely to stay that way in the foreseeable future. Imagine the reaction of the West to a Soviet proposal that Germany, once united, be incorporated into the Warsaw Pact. In fact, Gorbachev cited precisely this to illustrate his point.<sup>6</sup> Germany's reliable NATO moorings may be a sufficient security policy for Washington and London, Paris and Brussels, but not necessarily for Moscow (or Warsaw). The West must grant that. Any formula which will eventually be agreed upon should meet this key Soviet security concern.

The Warsaw Pact is going through a very difficult phase. If in fact it does disintegrate, NATO's demise may not be long in coming. Thus, it is not safe to assume that the time-honoured North Atlantic structure will always be there to hold Germany within it. Consequently, this makes the case for an all-European system look more enticing.

Policy courses, like political intentions, may change overnight. Confidence can rest only on durable structures. Germany's central position may be ideally suited for either overlapping security structures or for an overarching structure spanning the East and the West. Germany's special status (and even theoretically it cannot be anything but that) can then become the linchpin of a new European-wide security system. Some solution has to be found. One distinct possibility is to maintain both Soviet and US forces in their respective parts of Germany for a period of years after the country's unification.

Historical record is clear on one count: any European settlement is inherently unstable unless it meets with broad German support. Thus, it would be counter-productive if either the Soviet Union or the West or both tried to impose their conditions on the reluctant Germans. The Germans for their part must realise that a new, one Germany can only be built in close cooperation with their neighbours near and far. In a way, everyone is Germany's



*Cutting up the whale*

neighbour. There should never again be a replay of the old Germany “against the rest of the world” theme.

### **A complementary future?**

With German unity dominating the world agenda each nation should start adapting itself to the emerging reality in the very heart of Europe. This process is of special importance to the Soviet Union, if only in view of the long, tortuous and at times blood-stained road of Russo/Soviet-German relations.

The Gorbachev administration appears fully committed to establishing a viable friendly relationship with the united German state. A solid basis for that exists even now. Soviet links with the GDR are as close as any within Comecon. West Germany and the USSR have built up such an extensive network of politico-economic ties that some West Europeans tend to regard Bonn as Moscow’s *interlocuteur privilégié* on the continent. Preserving what is best in both sets of relations will undoubtedly be Soviet diplomacy’s top priority, which in the

future should work towards an even more mature relationship: one that fits into the all-European process and leads to greater stability in the continent's centre.

Both tasks are formidable. A large-scale sustained effort is required to overcome the past and truly join efforts in building the future, which naturally means dropping cozy illusions and familiar suspicions. It is a tall order but it is entirely feasible

But isn't this new Soviet-German rapprochement in itself a menace for Europe? Can Germany's unification be but a first step toward forging a Russo-German alliance aimed at condominium in Europe, the more so as objectively, Germany's and the Soviet Union's economies are remarkably complementary? Such fears have already been voiced.<sup>7</sup> Are they justified?

One can argue that those suspicions are based on historical parallels and reveal traditional patterns of thinking about international relations. With the Yalta reality fast receding after Malta, the spectre of Rapallo is again haunting Europe.

As far as the Soviet Union is concerned, the following answer could perhaps be accepted. Moscow has not given up what some people called its outer empire to engage in another empire-building round. The Soviet idea of a common European house does not include a clause about a joint Soviet-German *Verwaltung* of it. A lot of things must be settled at home in the Soviet Union, and if done successfully, what will emerge from the domestic process will be a commonwealth of nations, not a new version of the empire. Hence in this case there hardly will be the old familiar bogymen in the East ready to strike a deal with the newly born giant of the centre.

As in the previously mentioned instances, the same method could be applied, namely, if one is apprehensive that something may happen behind one's back, one should come out and be a player as well. If one shrinks at the prospect of a reconstitution of German-dominated *Mitteleuropa*, then the Germans must be kept company in this part of the world (and elsewhere). If the potential of Soviet-German cooperation breeds scepticism, one had better not sit still at home. Active involvement, creativity and helping shape things out is much more rewarding than retrenchment.

The Soviet Union does not intend to put all its eggs into the German basket, no matter how big it may become. Soviet national interest make it imperative to



develop durable ties and expand relations with France, Britain and Italy, not to mention the United States. The four-power responsibility and the two-plus-four formula as far as German unification goes are both well respected. Overall, the best prescription for the Soviet Union is a system based not so much on a pattern of power relations as on a pattern of shared values.

The key to the German question lies in Moscow. Such was the conclusion of the international panel of experts who co-authored a book published three years ago.<sup>8</sup> Now Moscow has turned that key—but it did so in the circumstances unpredictable even eighteen months ago.

It would be fair to say that the Soviet Union under Gorbachev has been increasingly forthcoming in helping to find an answer to the German question. Germany was not singled out by Moscow (as some feared and others hoped it would) as a "special case" unfit to be granted the full benefits of self-determination whether in terms of being free to make a national or a socio-political choice. It is clear, then, that guided both by enlightened self-interest and its vision of the future the Soviet government is mostly supportive of German national aspirations. This support appears to be strategic, rather than tactical; it forms part of the overall Soviet concept of the country's re-integration into the outside world.

Thus, the Germans may feel confident as they proceed to meet each other—in Germany. As they make ever new steps toward the consummation of their national goal; however, they should act responsibly. The Soviets, like the Western Powers, like the Poles and others, have their own concerns, not all of which have so far been satisfactorily removed. Borders, security patterns and levels of forces are the most evident ones. Pretending not to see them will serve the best interests of no one—least of all the Germans'.

At this moment in history a premium may be put on innovative thought. The recent Soviet proposal that envisions future Germany's membership in both alliances, although it has received controversial reception so far, may well deserve a second look. The non-traditional solution contained in it could serve as a test model in Europe's transition from its present pattern of rival security pacts to a new system embracing the whole of the continent.

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