
**CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPE
IN UNITED GERMANY'S FOREIGN RELATIONS**

Conferência proferida no IDN, em 4 de Fevereiro de 1993, incluída no Ciclo de Conferências sobre política internacional, por individualidades estrangeiras.

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Following the collapse of communist rule and after the end of Europe's systemic division, for the first time in modern history Germany appeared in a position to develop the full range of neighborly relations with the nations and states in Central Eastern Europe (CEE) i. e. with Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

Earlier, after World War I, when these nations had regained their independence from Imperial Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and from Prussia, many Germans continued, in the spirit of Bismarck, to regard the new states as short-lived «Saisonstaaten». Nazi Germany treated them as objects for the expansion of Germanic «Lebensraum» or, as in the case of Hungary, merely as satellites. Finally, the West Germany Federal Republic, though with a democratic constitution and willing to atone for past crimes, had to construct its relations with CEE within the framework of a common Western strategy against the soviet communist camp. Hence, until 1989 CEE as well as other regions of Eastern Europe were evaluated less by the various nations' individuality, but rather by the chances to weaken the Soviet bloc's cohesion. Obviously, Poland with its recurrent rebellions against communist rule, then also Hungary, where János Kádár introduced the most stable variant of «reform communism», were seen as promising bridgeheads, whereas Czechoslovakia after the suppression of the «Prague Spring», despite the common border with West Germany, sank almost into total oblivion for another two decades (¹). At the same time East Germany's communist rulers, owing their country's statehood exclusively to Stalin and his successors, hardly ever tried to overcome and eradicate distrust and prejudice directed at their neighbors, despite permanent pronouncements of «Freundschaft».

(¹) As a result Germany has hardly any young political scientist specializing in Czechoslovakia, whereas specialists of Poland are numerous.

At New Year's Eve of 1989 it seemed that Germans, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians, together with the rest of Europe, had reason to celebrate and to welcome the end of walls and barbed wires, preventing the people to live with each other in peace and solidarity. Today, almost three years later, it is obvious that those initial hopes and expectations, expressed most prominently in the CSCE's «Charter of Paris» of November 1990, were largely connected with the euphoric mood dominating the crowds and the political leaders alike, when the monuments of tyranny were toppled. The process of post-communist transformation has turned out much more difficult than originally predicted. And the affluent, well-established democracies of the West had to discover that self-assured assumptions and designs for their own future ran into unforeseen obstacles.

And yet, among the former socialist countries the CEE states do have the best chances to complete transformations. If it would fail here, there would be hardly any hope for others. Conversely, demonstrable success in CEE would encourage the rest. That is why the community of the Western states, in particularly Germany are called upon to concentrate their support on CEE.

I. GERMANY'S ADAPTATION TO UNITY AND FULL SOVEREIGNTY

Within less than three weeks after the opening of the Berlin wall West Germany's chancellor Helmut Kohl presented a program of ten points, which amounted to a plan for a confederation between the two German states. ⁽²⁾ Very soon however, it became clear that the German Democratic Republic was no longer able to function as a separate entity under conditions of the open border with the Federal Republic. In order to provide the East Germans with a perspective where they would not have to migrate to West Germany, unification became an urgent immediate task. The government in Bonn quickly succeeded in convincing its allies in the Western world that existing reservations had to be set aside and that the necessary international consent to the incorporation of the

(2) Cf. the text in: Europa-Archiv, 24/1989, pp. D 728-734; seen also the insider's diary of Horst Teltschik. 329 Tage: Innenansichten der Einigung. Berlin 1991, pp. 42ff./54-58.

five eastern provinces («Länder») into the FRG should be worked out not during a peace conference with all former enemies of Germany, but by an exclusive arrangement between the Four Powers and the two German states. Only Poland, due to the fact that its borders with Germany had to be confirmed definitely, participated in the pertinent session of the deliberations among the «Two plus Four». The Soviet Union after some months of hesitation and resistance to Germany's unity and to continued German membership in the Western alliance, eventually was won over by chancellor Kohl during his meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev at the Caucasian resort Mineral'nye Vody (³).

Thus in October 1990 Germany emerged on the international scene not only enlarged in quantitative terms, but above all free from all the previous limitations of her sovereignty, imposed by the special prerogatives and responsibilities of the Four Powers. This achievement was justly praised as a personal triumph of Helmut Kohl's political instinct (⁴). Together with his foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the two architects of German reunification promised to the outside world that Germany would continue to operate within the framework of both the transatlantic alliance and the European integration, so that concerns with the spectre of a «Fourth Reich» had no rational base: Germany would remain reliable, predictable, and safely embedded into larger structures of the Western community of states.

However, as the Germans only subsequently became aware, the termination of Germany's special post-war status under the Four Powers' agreements had its price: Germany can no longer claim a limited responsibility for the preservation of international security, leaving potential tough decisions to resort to armed protection of peace beyond the NATO treaty area to the allies. The constitutional restriction (⁵) to assume an equal burden increasingly contrasts with Germany's unlimited equal

(³) *Teltschik*, l.c., pp. 333-342.

(⁴) For example by Karl Kaiser, *Deutschlands Vereinigung: Die internationalen Aspekte* (mit den wichtigsten Dokumenten, bearbeitet von Klaus Becher), Bergisch-Gladbach 1991, p. 22.—Helmut Schmidt, in his comments in the weekly «Die Zeit», acknowledged his successor's achievements too, but criticized Kohl's failure to prepare the nation for a period of hard work and sacrifices.

(⁵) German jurists disagree to what extent the FRG's constitution restricts the employment of the Bundeswehr «out of area». Cf. Albrecht *Randelzhofer's* extensive interpretation of Article 24, paragraph 2, in: Maunz-Dürig, *Kommentar zum Grundgesetz*, Band II, 6. Auflage, München 1991.

sovereignty, as the discussions during the Gulf War in 1991 and afterwards again with regard to the crisis in former Yugoslavia have shown already.

Concomitantly, Germany has to address another potentially controversial question, thus far comfortably avoided: What are the national interests of Germany? ⁽⁶⁾ Germany's neighbors in CEE understandably observe this process of redefinition already with a keen eye. Because the answers may not always, as in earlier years, turn out to be predetermined by a prestabilized harmony with the interests of the other members of the Western alliance or the European Community. Bonn's policy concerning the simultaneous recognition of Slovenia and Croatia in late 1991 served as a first harbinger of constellations to come.

An additional objective element of unpredictability of Germany's future behavior originates, as attentive observers in CEE have noticed, ⁽⁷⁾ in the unique task to unite in one country under one government two societies with strikingly different experiences. While on surface the communist system in East Germany has been dismantled, its lasting, mostly subconscious effects on the minds of the people, together with the unexpected hardships of transformation under the guidance of the happier part of the nation, do provide for serious psychological imbalances in the united nation. Recent right wing excesses against foreigners, including Polish citizens, started in East German cities, before they spread into West Germany as well.

Moreover, the rebirth of united Germany coincides with a significant natural change: German politics since 1945 had been directed by generations for which concentration camps, gas chambers and war crimes committed in the name of Germany, formed — independent of the degree of actual individual involvement — parts of their own biography and called

⁽⁶⁾ See the contributions to chapter IV of a collective volume: *Sicherheitspolitik Deutschlands: Neue Konstellationen, Risiken, Instrumente* (Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, herausgegeben von der *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*, Ebenhausen, band 32), Baden-Baden 1992; also Dieter *Senghaas*, *Was sind der Deutschen Interessen?*, manuscript for: Siegfried Unseld (ed.), *Projekt Deutschland*, Frankfurt (editon Suhrkamp 1811), forthcoming (April 1993).

⁽⁷⁾ Cf. Anna *Wolff-Poweska*, *Dylematy nowej kultury politycznej*, in: *Raport o jednoczeniu Niemiec*, Poznan (Instytut Zachodni) 1992, pp. 7-24; Jan *Urban*, *Germany between unification and war: Essay on European democracy*, manuscript by this Czech author for a project prepared by the *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik* as a follow-up to the volume quoted in note 6.

for a constant inner discourse. It resulted overwhelmingly in the unequivocal conviction that German politicians are obliged to try to provide compensation or aid for surviving victims and to forestall any repetition. During the coming years, a younger generation will take over for which reflections of this kind are generated, if at all, by school textbooks or by movie impressions. True, that new generation has grown up in a much more internationalized, cosmopolitan world. Hence, future German elites may be more immune against the bacillus of fascism and chauvinism than their fathers. Yet, they probably will show more hard-nosed and business-minded attitudes in their dealings with Germany's neighbors. These neighbors, therefore, will have to adapt themselves to a situation, where linking of requests of Germany with moral appeals will fail to produce results different from comparable demands addressed to other, «normal» partners.

The conclusion thus is warranted ⁽⁸⁾ that reunited Germany currently is undergoing something like a maturity test of its ability to act in the international environment without the safety net of the times, when the «German question» was still open.

II. A NEW START AND REMNANTS OF THE PAST

The communist regimes in Warsaw, Prague and Budapest, in their relations with Germany, of course, always had to pay tribute to the existence of the GDR. During the years of the «Cold War» this fact severely narrowed the room for maneuvers in their dealings with the FRG. Bonn's «Hallstein doctrine» merely reenforced this constellation. Détente between East and West allowed for a considerable change. Especially those governments in CEE which were eager to gain more national legitimacy in their societies by adopting a course of reforms, hoped to find sympathy and support in the FRG. But whereas Hungary, despite constant distrust expressed by the East German leaders, succeeded in establishing stable mutual esteem with the other German state, Poland's communists periodically sought to deflect domestic discontent by admonishing their compatriotes to close ranks against the danger of German «revanchism». There-

(8) Jan Urban, *l.c.*

fore, among the Polish opposition the conviction grew, they had to destroy the myth that Poland's survival depended on the alliance with the Soviet Union and on «socialist internationalism». Rather, they suggested, Poland's sovereignty and territorial integrity should be based on rapprochement with a united democratic Germany (*). Yet, at that time such concepts ran against the philosophy of West Germany's «New Ostpolitik», pursuing evolutionary systemic change, while the conservative opposition in Bonn was not ready to recognize the post-war border at the Oder and Neisse rivers. Moreover, much to the relief of the communist regimes, the return of the Christian Democrats to power in autumn 1982 did not lead to abandoning the FRG's reluctance to encourage oppositional movements in Eastern Europe. Bonn continued to practice «Realpolitik» and to operate under seemingly stable conditions of a tolerable status quo. As a consequence the opposition in CEE felt that they stood to gain more from Ronald Reagan or from Margaret Thatcher, or also from the Western peace movement's attacks against détente between the establishments in East and West, than from the political class in the FRG.

Thus the implosion of the communist system in 1989 and the sudden mutation of former dissidents from outlaws and prison inmates into presidents or foreign ministers necessarily called for a thorough reappraisal on both sides. CEE's new leaders realized very soon that they needed their stronger German neighbor's active support for the enormous tasks ahead. Old grudges just had to be buried. The German government also was aware that in a different reality «Realpolitik» meant to assist the young democracies. In particular with regard to Poland West German spokesmen proclaimed that the time for reconciliation («Versöhnung») had finally arrived and that the German-Polish relationship should follow the example of German-French friendship.

However, parallels of this kind tend to neglect different specific weights of history: Germany never, not even between 1940 and 1944, dared to attempt to dominate France and to regard that country as an object of German expansion. In fact, centuries of French political and

(*) Cf. the recollections of Artur Hajniesz during a discussion, published by the Senate Center for International Studies, in: *Polska w Europie*, Nr. 9 July-September 1992, pp. 85-108. A well documented overview of those earlier discussions is offered by Waldemar Kuwaczka, *Entspannung von unten: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des deutsch-polnischen Dialogs*, Stuttgart-Bonn 1988.

cultural superiority would have rendered any such idea plainly absurd from the outset ⁽¹⁰⁾. In contrast, bitter experience in CEE, above all in Poland, provided fertile ground for renewed fears, nourished partly by remnants of the old regime, partly by emerging nationalist groups, that too close a cooperation might entail the peaceful return of German domination. Although correctly seen by mainstream politicians as an obstacle in attracting much needed German good will and investments, ⁽¹¹⁾ even the liberal democratic elites could not easily free themselves from a certain ambivalence. Hence, caution prevailed when Polish legislation conditioned sales of real estate to foreigners on special governmental consent. ⁽¹²⁾ Notably Tadeusz Mazowiecki's first post-communist government in Poland initially hesitated to follow the example of Czechoslovakia and Hungary in demanding the withdrawal of Soviet troops as early as possible. Their presence somehow was regarded — against Lech Walesa's counsel — as a counterweight to potential German overbearing. ⁽¹³⁾ After all chancellor Kohl's apparent concern with right wing forces in his own party and in the electorate was not gone unnoticed in Warsaw, when he had tried in early 1990 to delay the recognition of Poland's western border.

Maybe even more disquieting were the attempts by Sudeten expellees' organization in late spring 1992 to impose their interests on the new German-Czechoslovakia treaty of «good neighborhood and friendly cooperation» by demanding restitution or recompensation of property confiscated in 1945. The noble gesture of Václav Havel, who only three days after his election to the presidency had met with German president Richard von Weizäcker in Munich to express his disapproval of the cruel expulsion

⁽¹⁰⁾ For a similar critical assessment see the interview with Andrzej Szczypiorski, in: *Rzeczpospolita*, July 8, 1992, p. 6.

⁽¹¹⁾ This aspect was emphasized by Mieczysław Tomala, *Zjednoczenie Niemiec: Aspekty międzynarodowe i polskie*, Warsaw (PISM) 1991, p. 105; *idem*, *Polska i Niemcy przed nowym etapem wzajemnych stosunków*, in: *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*, 1991. Nr. 10, pp. 27-44è/38. The article contains a number of other thoughtful reflections on the future of Polish-German relations.

⁽¹²⁾ The issue is still highly controversial in Poland; cf. Ewa K. Czaczkowska, in *Rzeczpospolita*, June 2, 1992, p. 3.

⁽¹³⁾ A critical analysis of the policy of Poland's «equidistance» between Germany and the Soviet Union, as initially pursued by Mazowiecki's government, is authored by Michael Ludwig, *Polen und die deutsche Frage (Mit einer Dokumentation)*, Bonn 1991.

of Germans from his country, thus was rebuffed exactly by those Havel had hoped to reach. Their attitude not only induced them to leave out the events of 1938/39 from the historical balance sheet and to omit their successful integration into West German society, but failed to support Czechoslovakia's former dissidents in their present struggle for democratic transformation. ⁽¹⁴⁾

These disturbing facts, of course, should not detract attention from the main scene of political developments: The series of treaties and agreements with the three CEE countries were ratified in the federal parliament with strong bipartisan support. Public opinion, as reflected in the mass media, also shows a high degree of awareness of how important for Germany friendship and good neighborhood with CEE are.

III. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROBLEMS IN BILATERAL RELATIONS

The disappearance of the systemic borderline at the Elbe river, originally designed in the days of the «Cold War» as an «iron curtain», has revealed the existence of another line, aptly to be called, following president Walesa, a «silvery curtains». It coincides — because the former GDR, despite similar problems, is a special case — with united Germany's eastern border and separates those European states, where pluralist democracy and market economy have been constructed, from the area which has just received the belated chance to follow suit on the same path. Naturally therefore, prudent self-interest alone suffices to justify German engagement, because failure of the transformation, resulting in social upheaval, armed conflicts, waves of emigrants, and possibly even in replacing democracy by authoritarian regimes, would affect Germany most directly. Yet it goes without saying that engagement caused merely by negative concerns will achieve less compared with a positive motivation based on sympathy and respect for the partners in the East. ⁽¹⁵⁾

⁽¹⁴⁾ Jiri Dienstbier, at that time still foreign minister of the CSFR, reacted accordingly; cf. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, June 13, 1992, p. 2. — The Bavarian government, acting as a protector of the Sudeten's interests, rejected the German-Czechoslovak treaty during the debate in the Bundesrat on the June 26, 1992, see: Das Parlament, July 10-17, p. 9. Thomas Goppel, Bavaria's minister for European affairs, explained his government's position in an interview with: Prager Zeitung, Nr. 45, November 5, 1992, pp. 1/3.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Cf. Christoph Royen, Niemcy i Polacy: Sasiedzi nie musza sie lubic, lecz szanowac, in: Zycie Warszawy, June 15-16, 1991, p. 5.

a. *ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT*

In order to reduce the stark contrast in the socio-economic spheres, post-communist economies — contrary to a widespread opinion — need not just a new variation of «development aid». Aid in the form of direct subsidies may be necessary to soften the impact of the beginning transformation, when old capacities, mechanisms and attitudes have to be destroyed before more efficient ones can replace them. But the CEE countries can boast a high level of education and justly see themselves as artificially excluded from the community of culture and civilization to which they had belonged until fifty years ago, when they were forced to leave the common train. The crux of the matter, though, lies with the fact that fifty years of wrong development under contemporary conditions of rapid technical progress mean immensely more than in earlier centuries. Therefore, what is required more than anything else is participation and integration into the advanced world of business and administration. Hence the Western world must provide something like a training on the job by working and investing in the East.

Available figures ⁽¹⁶⁾ show that among foreign investors Germans rank first in Czechoslovakia and in Poland, whereas, somewhat surprisingly, they come in only second behind American firms in Hungary. Certainly, much more could be used. But Western governments cannot dictate to their private corporations and businessmen where to invest; they can only marginally reduce the risks of failure. Close geographical proximity also has lost much of its earlier significance for investment decisions. Instead investment decisions are based on a broad assessment of opportunities and risks connected with the various countries under consideration. Given these circumstances, the actual level of German engagement indicates that despite a number of adverse conditions like infrastructural deficits, bureaucratic red tape, administrative inexperience, legislative confusion, or potential social unrest, CEE is gaining in attraction.

⁽¹⁶⁾ See the report by Marc Fisher, in: *The Washington Post*, February 16, 1992, p.A1/A46.

b. CULTURAL COOPERATION

Among the representatives of science and culture in Germany respect and admiration for their colleagues' work in the socialist countries was widely spread since the first encounters became possible again at the middle of the 1950s. In a way, one is tempted to conclude that the cultural level of communist societies was inversely proportional to the economic level — maybe because the arts and academies attracted many a bright mind, who in the west would have entered a career in business or government. Another factor may have been the inability or the unwillingness of the apparatchiki to exert full control in fields where they lacked all competence. Moreover, in addition to such rather unintentional contribution of the system to the flourishing of the spiritual sphere, the governments undoubtedly freed not only servile regime artists and scientists from the harsh dictates of market's laws by assigning considerable funds and facilities to the cultural sector.

Today, therefore, it is hardly necessary to introduce the cultural wealth of CEE to German partners. Rather, efforts have to be made to prevent established contacts from disrupting because of radically altered economic conditions on the Eastern side. At the same time, following the vastly increased range of everyday contacts of ordinary people as employees, tourists, or just television watchers, it is vitally important to let them participate in cultural exchange as an instrument to overcome prejudices. The German federal government, due to its limited constitutional powers in cultural affairs, can only, beyond providing some general legal framework, encourage regional and local administrations as well as numerous private organizations to develop initiatives of their own.

In this context a potentially controversial issue may arise from enhanced official promotion of German language instruction. The contention that our neighbors in CEE are ready to return to the pre-World War II situation, when German indeed was the lingua franca there, and that consequently German should be taught on a broad front, appears to miss two simple facts: The average person still is unable to acquire more than one foreign language skill. But our neighbors in CEE want to unite with Europe and the Western world as a whole, where English is the key all sorts of contacts. Alas, propagating German first might do them a disservice.

c. THE ROLE OF ETHNIC MINORITIES AND BORDER REGIONS

The darkest period in Germany's relations with its eastern neighbors was conditioned also by insufficient solutions for the numerous ethnic minorities within the states created after World War I. At present we watch with alarm the failure of international diplomacy to secure workable solutions for the breakup of the Soviet and the Yugoslav multinational states. At the same time however, ugly incidents, when Polish citizens travelling through the opened borders with Germany were attacked by East German youths, served as a warning that nationalism and chauvinism can return to Central Europe too. In CEE only Poland is host country for a sizeable German minority, living predominantly in the former German province of Opole (Oppeln). During the years of the communist regime, its members preferred or were simply intimidated to conceal their national identity. But many continued to wait for a political change and believed in eventual reunion with Germany

Such hopes had to be disappointed when Germany and Poland agreed on the final settlement of the border issue. Bonn and Warsaw included instead into their treaty on «good neighborhood and friendly cooperation» a model regulation which was rightly hailed as an example to be followed by others. The German minority is well represented in the Polish sejm by deputies who enjoy high respect among their colleagues for their competence and for their willingness to develop the German minority into a positive linking factor between both nations, comparable, maybe, to today's role of the Alsace region in French-German relations ⁽¹⁷⁾. Recently, though, news reports point to resurging German nationalism in the Opole region ⁽¹⁸⁾. It seems, that the affinity of this minority for rightwing nationalist propaganda was established, when its members — like the East Germans in the GDR — were prevented from participating in a Europe of open borders and free movement for ideas, where mutual respect and tolerance could develop better than under the communist slogans and banners of «brotherhood» and «friendship».

⁽¹⁷⁾ Alsace as a suitable model has been suggested by Helmut Koschyk, cf. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 26, 1992, p. 5.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Jan Dziadul, in: *Polityka*, Nr. 40, October 3, 1992, p. 1/6; Bogumila Berdychowska, the director of the Bureau on Ethnic Minorities in the Polish ministry of culture and arts, in an interview in: *Rzeczpospolita*, October 24-25, 1992, p. 2.

Considering this lack of experience with voluntary multinational cooperation, probably the most promising remedy is contained in intensified cooperation between the regions adjacent to the borders between Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Both prime ministers of Saxonia and Brandenburg have repeatedly stressed this point in their agendas, and a number of common projects, like the European university at Frankfurt/Oder or the various plans for a natural park on both sides of the Oder river, currently either have been already started, or are in the preparatory stage ⁽¹⁹⁾. A somewhat similar purpose might be served by common initiatives of Bavaria and adjacent Bohemia, involving also the participation of former Sudetens, who are solidly integrated into their second, German «heimat». Of course, different from comparable activities in Western Europe, the initial financial burden for quite some time will have to be carried on German shoulders.

Reviewing the two years since formal completion of German reunification, on balance Germany's effort to establish a network of mutual ties with its neighbors in CEE deserves acknowledgement. And yet it is obvious that many expectations among Germany's partners in CEE have been disappointed. Partly because they were unrealistic. Occasionally they also seemed to originate from a questionable self-complacency, where CEE representatives admonish Western audiences: «We freed you from the threat of communism. Now it's your turn to rebuild our economy».

The main reason, however, is German preoccupation with the former GDR. Sometimes the former allies of the GDR feel distinctly envious, when they compare the enormous amounts West Germany is investing in East Germany with what they receive themselves. But reconstruction of East Germany has become the cardinal problem of domestic stability in united Germany. No government can afford to maintain within one country two parts with radically differing standards of living. The sooner the modernization of East Germany will be completed, the earlier Germany's partners in CEE can expect to share in the take-off dynamics emanating from a rejuvenated economy just across the border.

Another concurrent feeling of neglect points to alleged German fascination with Russia and draws parallels to earlier phases in history,

⁽¹⁹⁾ An extensive report is contained in a series of articles by Wojciech *Wieczorek* under the headline «Wzdłuż Odry i Nysy», beginning in: *Rzeczpospolita*, May 21, 1992, p. 6.

when CEE was the victim of arrangements between the two superior powers. Undoubtedly, West Germans were fascinated by Gorbachev's perestroika, and they felt more grateful to him than did the nations of CEE, which pride themselves for getting rid of their communist regimes. In the meantime, after the breakup of the USSR and Gorbachev's political failure, neither his successor in the Kremlin, Boris Eltsin, nor any other leader in the CIS evokes enthusiasm. Rather Germans are worried, as many others in the world, by the huge potential for chaos and anarchy, if perestroika will end in general «perestrelka» and attempts to stabilize the situation will result in new variants of oppressive dictatorships. But when the German government appeared to act as mediator between Gorbachev or Eltsin and the seven leading industrial states, the «G-7», it was clear to all participants from the outset that no conceivable amount of Western aid could possibly have a decisive impact on the future of the USSR, respectively the CIS.

There is, however, a real difference in perspective: Many Germans are not willing to share the conviction of most Poles that Europe ends at the Bug river. Rather they emphasize Russia's contribution to Europe's common heritage, in particular in the fields of literature and music. They also point to Russia's potential bridge function as a Eurasian state. Viewed from this angle, the recent separation of Russia from the rest of Europe behind the belt of independent republics extending from Estonia to the Black Sea is less welcomed in Germany than in Poland. Nevertheless, all indicators suggest that in the foreseeable future neither will Russia become an attractive, reliable partner for bilateral hegemony; nor will Germany have the irrational desire, and even less the means, to forgo the tangible advantages of Western integration by returning to schemes of a different age of the past.

IV. GERMANY AS A GATE TO EUROPE

In each of the political treaties with the three CEE democracies Germany promised to support its partners' intention to join the European Community eventually as full members. This promise does not only correspond to earlier desires of Germany's partners. It serves German interests

as well. Because contrary to some suspicions in West European capitals, Germany does not wish to monopolize relations with CEE. Instead Germany seeks to engage the other EC members in the giant task to create a really «European» community. Throughout the last two decades, after West Germany's breakthrough treaties of Willy Brandt's «New Ostpolitik», Bonn had reasons to regret that the EC did not develop a European Ostpolitik: On the one hand, the FRG's ostpolitik was a target for periodic doubts among the allies, whether the Germans would continue to adhere to common positions and institutions. On the other hand, Germany had to shoulder too large a burden, where it would have preferred more of a burden sharing. Clearly, this is even more true now that Germany has to assume the financial consequences of reunification.

Recent months, though, have brought unexpected painful insecurity with regard to the original blueprint of Maastricht for intensified integration within the European Community. This may result in the adoption of a less ambitious program or in admitting various degrees of members' participation. While that might cause delays in the opening of the EC to new members, eventually it could even increase the CEE countries' chances to join, especially if they themselves continue to demonstrate within the Visegrád framework their own capacity to cooperate with each other, proving that national narrow-mindedness belongs to the past ⁽²⁰⁾. Unfortunately, the imminent divorce of the Czechs and the Slovaks, coupled with rising tensions between Hungary and Slovakia, generates fresh reason for scepticism.

Apart from their intent to enter the EC, the young democracies of CEE originally entertained hopes to become also members of NATO or to receive at least unequivocal security guarantees by the Western alliance. At that time the Soviet Union still existed. Memories of Soviet armed interventions were vivid among the older and the middle generations, whereas everybody was under the fresh impression of the employment

⁽²⁰⁾ The member-states of the «Visegrád triangle» coordinate their efforts to join the EC; see the report on a joint demarche by the three ambassadors in Brussels, in: *Rzeczpospolita*, October 23, 1992, p. 8—Generally on internal tensions within the «triangle», cf. Andrzej Grajewski, *Kwadratura Trojkąta Wyszehradzkiego*, in: *Polska w Europie*, N.º 9, July-September 1992, pp. 16-22.

of Soviet armed forces against the rebellious republics of Lithuania and Latvia. Hence, the motives for CEE's request addressed at the Western alliance were obvious. Equally obvious, however, was the reluctance of NATO's members to respond positively. At least as long as Gorbachev was attempting to ground perestroika and «new thinking» in Soviet politics, the Western alliance's governments were cautious not to provoke the USSR by extending NATO de facto, or even de jure to the western borders of the Soviet Union. More fundamental considerations hinged on NATO's own uncertainty with its new role after the end of bloc confrontation, for which NATO had been created and developed throughout more than four decades since.

Germany, therefore, together with the United States, ⁽²¹⁾ proposed instead a structure for mutual confidence-building and crisis management, in which both the Soviet Union and her former allies of the defunct Warsaw Treaty Organization would participate: the «North Atlantic Cooperation Council» (NACC). Naturally, finding themselves on equal status with the Southeast European states, and — after the USSR was succeeded by the CIS — even with the republics of Central Asia, did cause some irritation in CEE's capitals. The countries of CEE demanded not to be treated as a «buffer zone» ⁽²²⁾. Janusz Onyszkiewicz, Poland's minister of defense, therefore had to explain to Polish audiences, that a realistic attitude should take into consideration: (1) The danger of a major aggression by Russia (or Ukraine) is very low for the foreseeable future. The CIS states will be preoccupied mainly with domestic problems and mutual conflicts. (2) If Poland, like the other CEE states, seriously intends to become a credible member of NATO, it has to prove its capability to defend its territory at least against minor incidents ⁽²³⁾.

Germany will have specific reasons to delay extending its NATO obligations to CEE, since it can be assumed that German uniforms and arms still could be perceived as provocative, if used in regions attacked half a century ago by Hitler's Wehrmacht as in former Yugoslavia. This

⁽²¹⁾ In a joint statement by two foreign ministers, James Baker and Hans-Dietrich Genscher from October 3, 1991.

⁽²²⁾ Poland's foreign minister, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, repeatedly argued against such a treatment, cf. e.g. his interview «Przeciwko szarej strefie», in: Rzeczpospolita, December 5, 1990, p. 1/7.

⁽²³⁾ In two interviews with Rzeczpospolita, July 28, 1992, p. 1/3, and with Polityka, Nr. 32, August 8, 1992, p. 3.

does not exclude various forms of practical cooperation between the ministers of defence or common training and exchange of data and experience between the armed forces of Germany and the CEE states. Activities of this kind already have been initiated.

Thus, Germany's function as a «gate» or a «bridge» to Europe should not be overemphasized. Ultimately, it serves all sides concerned, if the ties between the established and the young democracies in Europe take a multilateral form. Bilateral allergies can be neutralized. Similarly, the dangers of dependency on one stronger partner will be reduced.

V. CONCLUDING REMARK

The observations and reflections presented above, attempt to give a sober, realistic picture. Germany, CEE, but also a majority of the other members of the European family are going through a difficult period, when confidence is threatened by disappointment, uncertainty, and despair. In the former socialist countries, people begin to wonder whether their present leaders, together with their Western advisors, are able to lead them out of the wilderness, ⁽²⁴⁾ and what they gained from the celebrated dismantling of the old structures ⁽²⁵⁾. In Western Europe societies are disturbed by what they perceive as an increased challenge to automatically assumed steady improvements and to cherished standards of stability.

No grand design for comprehensive schemes will be available to produce a dramatic reversal. Germany and its CEE neighbors, therefore, are called upon to multiply the opportunities for direct human encounters and common enterprises between individual members of their nations in order to make agreed «good neighborhood and friendly cooperation» a

⁽²⁴⁾ The capacities of post-communist neo-conservative forces and concepts to achieve transformation are analyzed in an excellent article by George Schöpflin, in: *Transit — Europäische Revue*, Nr. 4 (1992); for an abridged version see: *Frankfurter Rundschau*, October 27, 1992, p. 16.

⁽²⁵⁾ A recent poll, conducted in the three CEE countries, found sizeable percentages of respondents, in Hungary even more than 60 percent, declaring their life had been under socialism, whereas only 4 percent of the Hungarians, 19 percent of the Poles, and 34 percent of the questioned inhabitants of Czechoslovakia felt that their situation had improved since the end of the communist regimes, cf. *Rzeczpospolita*, October 20, 1992, p. 1.

visible, tangible reality, amending the initiatives of governments and diplomats. Germans, to be true, will face a particular difficulty: Against general, currently prevailing trends to «go west», they will be asked to set their minds in the opposite direction.

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