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# How West Germany's Ostpolitik Contributed to German Unification

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**THESIS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

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1998

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YEAR

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis describes and examines two decades of political relations between East and West Germany and their respective allies, and also presents a thorough analysis of political developments and events that took place from the beginning of West German Ostpolitik in 1969 until unification on October 1990. The term unification is used because Germany was not re-unified within the pre-war borders of 1937.

One of the principal goals of this thesis focuses on the discussion on the influence Ostpolitik alongside with the policy of rapprochement toward the GDR and USSR had on achieving a working relationship between Bonn and East Berlin and to what extent Ostpolitik contributed to the process of peaceful unification of Germany. Ostpolitik, pursued and conducted by the Federal Republic from 1969 to 1990 was instrumental in ending the Cold War and eventually in achieving German unification in October 1990. This study not only focuses on political events of the period, but also on political, economic, ideological, social, and military developments, and political thinking expressed in East-West relations and subsequent détente.

Political analysts and commentators had a strong tendency to neglect or seriously underestimate the likely effects of Ostpolitik on the process of German unification attributing the successful, peaceful German revolution to a superpower agreement. The analysis of the influence of Ostpolitik on the event of unification, as provided in this thesis, gives a new

perspective for a substantial policy aimed at mutual trust and eliminating destructive antagonisms in central Europe.

The analysis of West German policy toward the GDR, the Soviet Union, and the East European countries provides substantial evidence that Ostpolitik contributed to German unification insofar as it improved political and economic relations between East and West Europe. Ostpolitik, congruent with the existing theory of integrational processes and subsystems, led to significant changes on the European arena and finally paved the way for unification by peaceful integration of two systems.

This study discusses also the monetary, economic and social union that alongside Ostpolitik and Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of new thinking may be regarded as the major steps toward German unification. In solving the German Question which so heavily contributed to the East-West conflict, Mikhail Gorbachev reshaped post-war Europe and relieved the world from political tensions. This thesis points out that one of the crucial factors that made Ostpolitik a historical success was the fact that Ostpolitik was to a large extent congruent with the new thinking of Glasnost and Perestroika, Gorbachev's grand design for the new Soviet internal and external policies.

## *DEDICATION*

*This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Regina, whose love and inspiration largely contributed to the completion of this work.*

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# THESIS

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

This thesis, describing and analyzing two decades of political relations between East and West Germany, and their respective allies, discusses political developments and events that took place from the beginning of West German Ostpolitik in 1969 until unification on October 3, 1990. I would like to point out that I use the term unification instead of re-unification because in 1990 Germany was not reunified within the pre-war borders of 1937.

The principal goal of this thesis is to describe the extent to which Ostpolitik and the West German policy of rapprochement toward the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union contributed to a working relationship between Bonn and East Berlin, how it contributed to the perforation of the iron curtain dividing the post-war Germanies, and created a mutually beneficial degree of cooperation between the two German states in various areas. It is also the objective of this thesis to determine the extent to which Ostpolitik contributed to the goal of achieving peaceful unification of Germany.

Ostpolitik, pursued and conducted by the Federal Republic of Germany toward the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) from 1969 to 1990, was instrumental in ending the Cold War and achieving German unification in October 1990. This study is not only focused on political events from 1969 to 1990, but also on political, ideological, economic, social and military developments as well as on

political thinking, expressed in East-West relations and subsequent détente. It analyzes political forces and the regaining of all European identity.

After 1945 the United States, Britain and France as victorious powers helped create the Federal Republic of Germany, commonly known as West Germany. The victorious Soviet Union imposed its political system and communist ideology upon the eastern part of Germany that was under its control. While the division of Europe led to stability and to respect for each of the superpowers' spheres of interest, the so-called status quo in the mid-to late sixties led to the development of a distinctive new European identity. This status quo also led to the beginning of European self-determination, mainly sponsored by French President Charles de Gaulle who expressed an opinion that the unification of Germany would be the normal fate of the German people (Weisenfeld, 1990).

Soviet ideological stubbornness, her claim for world reputation, military rivalry between the United States and the USSR, and the German Question in particular, were widely considered as stumbling blocks on the road to the easing of tensions and arms race limitations. The German Question and the Berlin Problem historically and politically proved to be different problems. With the legacy of two wars in one century and the Holocaust tied to Germany, neither East nor West was anxious to see Germany reunited. The standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union also served as a guarantee for the further existence of two separate German states and a divided Berlin integrated in their respective political orbits.

This thesis is also intended to be an analysis of how especially West Germany, considered to be one of the United States' closest allies, step by step managed to escape the status quo thinking, facing both internal and external opposition. West Germany, to a considerable extent, rid itself of allied patronizing treatment, more and more exercising a policy that reflected the Federal Republic's own interests with regard to East Bloc nations and East Germany.

Former West German Chancellor Willy Brandt claimed that Gorbachev's endorsement of Ostpolitik provided crucial influence on his new thinking. Timothy Garton Ash reports in his book In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent that West German Chancellors, Helmut Schmidt and Helmut Kohl, as well as the former Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher believed that the crucial factor enforcing a revision of Soviet policy was the deployment of the Pershing and cruise missiles in Europe. However, Garton Ash quotes also a Soviet diplomat and former Ambassador to West Germany, Valentin Falin who said that "without Ostpolitik, no Gorbachev," which actually meant that without West German contribution to détente and change by rapprochement, reform-minded Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev couldn't have executed a new Soviet policy towards the West (Garton Ash, 1993).

The current literature dealing with post-war Europe and Germany in particular, provides observations and analyses that examine the Federal Republic's Ostpolitik under Willy Brandt (1969-1974), Helmut Schmidt (1974-1982), Helmut Kohl (1982-present) and

Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher (1982-1992). According to Wolfram Handrieder, Willy Brandt's greatest achievement was "through diplomacy and personal effort, to make a virtue out of the necessity in which the Federal Republic of Germany found itself of having to accept the status quo" (Handrieder, 1981; p. 82). Handrieder also expresses an opinion that Brandt's Ostpolitik was marked by a mood of resignation and that Brandt was more interested in long term objectives than in short term results. In 1986, only a few years shy of the collapse of communism in Eastern and Central Europe and just 4 years prior to German unification, which no-one dared to envision, a new discussion on the Germans and their neighbors arose. The revived debate on the German Question, about obscures and areas of a possible way to unite the two Germanies surfaced, giving proof to the notion that the German Question was, even four decades after the World War II, one of the flash points in the political world.

A political author and observer, Richard Löwenthal, highlights the aspects of both political European dimension and environment in which a possible solution for the still simmering German Question could be found. Richard Löwenthal underlines that under Brandt's administration Bonn began focusing on the relations between West Germany and Eastern European countries. According to Löwenthal, this policy was severely hampered by an unsolved conflict which the Federal Republic had with the Soviet Union and the Soviet Bloc. The conflict was created by the German Question (implied by the ongoing German partition) and Federal Republic's hopes and demands for the ultimate unification (Löwenthal, 1974). The Ostpolitik of the Social Democrats under both Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt

produced a series of treaties and agreements. They covered the renunciation of force and far reaching practical agreements which helped reduce tensions in Europe. Renata Fritsch-Bournatzel claims in her book that “following the Eastern agreements, the Soviet Union and its allies could no longer, as formerly, represent the question of European security, exclusively as a problem of security against Germany, against a German threat to peace in Europe” (Fritsch-Bournatzel, 1992; p. 44). Another political analyst, Wolfram Handrieder, stated in his Fragmente der Macht die Aussenpolitik der Bundesregierung (1981) that Willy Brandt’s greatest service was through diplomacy and personal effort to make a virtue out of the necessity in which the Federal Republic of Germany found itself of having to accept the status quo (Handrieder, 1981). Willy Brandt, like Helmut Schmidt and later Chancellor Helmut Kohl, were to compromise with their Eastern political counterparts, but they were also unwilling to undermine the responsibility of the Four Allied Powers for all of Germany. In addition, they held firm on their conviction that unification of Germany had to be achieved by peaceful means only and that the Oder-Neisse Line in a settlement for unification would have to be the permanent border between Germany and Poland. Brandt, Schmidt and Kohl firmly believed that unification of Germany, as they reiterated many times, could be achieved if only Moscow would be ready to accept a unified Germany in Europe. When Helmut Schmidt succeeded Willy Brandt in 1974, he continued Brandt’s Ostpolitik. In 1975 Schmidt laid solid groundwork for the continuation of Ostpolitik by meeting GDR’s leader Erich Honecker at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Helsinki. Schmidt improved further the relationship with the East German leader in 1981. Their talks led to several agreements between the two German states. Schmidt remained committed to

Ostpolitik even after he resigned from his chancellorship in 1982. His deep concern for the GDR as well as the East European countries manifested itself in the proposal he made together with Countess Marion Dönhoff to the European Council in 1989. Schmidt and Dönhoff envisioned a four-year program for a powerful “pump-priming finance” totaling in 64 billion dollars (Fritsch-Bournazel, 1992).

Probably none of the existing theories of international relations can be fully applied to the case of a reunited country because no such event has happened in modern history. However, certain elements of the theories discussed by Dougherty and Pflatzgraff may partially account for Ostpolitik’s contribution to peacefully joining the German states together. According to Harold and Margaret Sprout, factors like “geography, envired organisms, the psycho-milieu, technology, operational milieu, and beliefs all affect one another.” Thus, “it is increasingly difficult to isolate and classify human political events as merely domestic matters or foreign affairs, or as political, sociological, or economic” (Pflatzgraff & Dougherty, 1990; p.69). As far as German unification is concerned, all the contributing factors previously discussed appeared in favorable circumstances and worked indeed in favor of peaceful international changes for integration. It could have happened only in an international environment providing for historical changes.

From among the theories of international relations, two in particular may be regarded as likely to explain the effects of Ostpolitik on German unification. The first of them is called Regional Subsystems in the International System. According to this theory, linguistic,

cultural, historical, social and ethnic bonds are beneficial to any form of integration. The fact that both the German states created as a result of World War II share the same cultural and historical heritage, to a certain degree, makes this theory applicable to a nation state joining together after four decades of separation as it was in the case of German unification.

Helmut Kohl, who before 1982 acted as the leader of the more conservative political opposition, the Christian Democratic Party (CDU), continued Helmut Schmidt's Ostpolitik. Kohl made a statement that under his leadership all treaties and agreements would be honored. In 1984, in a letter to the Prime Minister of Italy, Craxi, Kohl reiterated his conviction that there was absolutely no legal basis for a continued division of Germany. He also stressed that West German Ostpolitik was instrumental in easing the partition between the two German states. He also stated that the partition was never executed by any entity of international law. In his letter, Kohl also referred to the War and post-War era documents. All these documents referred to Germany as a single entity (40 Jahre Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1989). Kohl's then Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher was another political figure concerned about the tensions between the German states as well as about the fragile coexistence between the East and West Europe. In his speech he gave before the German Parliament on September 16, 1983, he stated that especially in difficult times it was necessary and possible to further the dialog between East and West and to seek compromises and mutual understanding (40 Jahre ... , 1989).

A political analyst and journalist, Jim Hogland, points out how important Kohl's initiative was. According to Hogland, Chancellor Kohl was committed to a peaceful change resulting in unification. In Hogland's opinion, Helmut Kohl presented an excellent alternative of finalizing the process of unification by political and diplomatic means as opposed to leaving the political developments in the hands of the demonstrators on the streets. Kohl outlined his picture of a unified Germany rather to be achieved through diplomacy and agreements between the two German states and the Four Powers (Hogland, 1989).

In his book The diplomacy of German Unification (1992), Stephen F. Szabo expressed that "Ostpolitik and the new Deutschlandpolitik of the Federal Republic probably had little to do with the coming of unification in practice if not in theory. If anything, they may have stabilized the GDR and the image of two German states in West Germany. They certainly discouraged any possible opposition groups in East Germany. The most effective portion of West German policy was not its détente aspects but rather the model of an alternative society it offered to East Germans presented every night West German Television" (Szabo, 1992; p. 14). The assertion of the author is easily contradicted by the swiftness of the changes in east Germany in 1989 and 1990, as well as by the quasi overnight collapse of the east German regime through street demonstrations that forced an end to the German partition. As Szabo points out in his book, "despite the mighty and peaceful revolution on the East German streets, the German public and probably most of the German establishment, gave some major portion of the credit for German unification to Gorbachev



who did not intervene by force” (Szabo, 1992; p. 14).

Timothy Garton Ash voiced scepticism about the effectiveness of West German Ostpolitik in light of the German unification. As he claims Ostpolitik, “initiated by Konrad Adenauer in the 1950's, proclaimed by Willy Brandt in the 1960's and continued by Hans Dietrich Genscher until the 1980's, was a risky idea: it meant to overcome the status quo by recognizing it, and to stabilize East Germany in order to eventually join it to West Germany. If communism could not be overthrown, the argument went, then reform could only come from within the communist elites themselves.” (Garton Ash, 1993; p. 175). One may not thoroughly agree with such an opinion because there was absolutely no indication that the hard core East German communist elites, the so-called nomenclature, would have a desire to reform the East German regime. By doing so, they would have rid themselves of all the benefits associated with wielding power.

Virtually none of the political analysts, scholars and authors who in general acknowledged West Germany's Ostpolitik to be instrumental in achieving peace, détente and a greater degree of mutual trust in Europe, envisioned German unification coming about in the foreseeable future. It can hardly be argued that West German Ostpolitik alone would have led to a unified Germany. However, one may safely conclude that West Germany's persistence in trust-building policy contributed to a rethinking of the political, economic and military priorities on the part of the Soviet Union.

Ostpolitik was a rather complex combination of Germany's geographic and geopolitical location, superpower interests, Soviet redefinition of her political objectives in light of the political, economic and military needs, as well as some twenty years of West German policy that resulted in mutual trust between Moscow and Bonn.

Political restraint, humanitarian approaches, patience, ingrained democratic behavior, the relinquishing of sovereign rights to NATO and the European Community, security needs, newly gained respectability in the world arena, trust-building, reconciliation, economic might and stability, reparations, restitution and inter-German rapprochement are all issues of Ostpolitik, signaling trustworthiness and responsibility. In 1995, five years after the unification, Mikhail Gorbachev stated in an interview for the German magazine *Deutschland* that by mid 1989 the international situation had changed dramatically and the policy of the new thinking began to bear fruit. Moreover, it was a fact that the Germans took the consequences of Nazi Germany's rule. In the same interview, Gorbachev further expressed the Politburo's reasoning that West Germany had become a democratic country. This, essentially, meant that the reemergence of Fascism and the policy of aggression were no longer feasible

There is no doubt that without Ostpolitik, aimed at eventual unity, unification, long opposed in East and West, would not have occurred the way it did. Unification of Germany in 1989 and 1990 was not only an accident of history or of Soviet policy, but also a historical chance seized by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and granted to Germany by Mikhail

Gorbachev and the Soviet leadership, which sensed that the USSR would benefit from a unified Germany politically, and above all, economically. As Reinhard Stuth rightly underlines in his article “Germany’s New Role in a changing Europe,” Russia did receive substantial support in the form of loans, grants and government guarantees. Stuth claims that the massive aid program began in 1989, a year before the unification become a reality. Prior to 1992, the Soviet Union “received a share of over 60 billion” out of the 90 billion marks earmarked for Eastern Europe (Stuth, 1992; p.22).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Survey and Brief History of Post-War Germany from 1945 to 1969**

On May 8, 1945, the German Reich came to an end but German history did not end with the debacle of 1945. A unified Germany had existed for 76 years after being created in 1871 by Otto von Bismarck. Roughly six decades after the beginning of the Reich and fifteen years after the end World War I, Adolf Hitler inherited the collapsed Weimar Republic and imposed on ruins of Germany's first democracy a totalitarian tyranny, the so-called Third Reich.

After five and a half years of World War II, initiated by Adolf Hitler and his Nazi regime on September 1, 1939, leaving 56 million people dead, Germany unconditionally surrendered on May 8, 1945, thus ending the war in Europe. Germany became occupied by the allied powers, the United States of America, the Soviet Union, Britain and France. Moreover, the country appeared morally bankrupt after twelve years of brutal Nazi-rule and its legacy of the Holocaust.

Economically, Germany was maimed with her industry heavily damaged by bombing raids, with a paralyzed transportation system and bomb-devastated cities. The human losses came to a staggering 5.3 million people, military and civilian, and millions of others had suffered disabilities. The country, divided into four occupation zones, had ceased to exist as an independent nation. The country's housing was destroyed or damaged, and hunger and

starvation would soon become one of the country's most pressing problems. According to a 1952 release of then West German Federal Bureau of Statistics in Wiesbaden, a flood of about 12 million Germans expelled from former German territories in the East heightened the problems. Germany was also suffering from an enormous loss, intellectual and cultural, inflicted by the Nazi regime from 1933 until 1945. Worse, the Germans, already stigmatized with military aggression and brutal rule in occupied territories, had to face the magnitude of heinous crimes committed during the Third Reich. In addition to the national disaster the Germans had to carry the heavy burden of shame once Germany learned about the full extent of the felonies committed by Germans throughout Europe.

Not only was the prospect of recovery remote in 1945, no-one would have bet on a speedy political or even moral and military renewal of devastated occupied Germany and her integration into the family of Western democracies.

At first, shortly after the defeat in 1945, Germany was divided into four occupation zones. The Soviet Union was assigned the Eastern part of the country which stretched from the Elbe river in the West to the Oder-Neisse river which would later mark the Western Polish border. The British were assigned the Northwest and the United States the Southwestern part of Germany. The French zone was cut out of areas originally earmarked for Britain and the United States.

Berlin, the nation's former capital, was also occupied by the four victorious powers,

each in a sector of the city. The so-called Allied Control Council was set up in Berlin and was to exercise joint control and authority over Germany. The Council was supposed to reach its decisions on a basis of unanimity. Each of the occupying powers was given the right to veto. German political life began as early as in the spring of 1945 with the Soviet Union permitting the formation of political parties in her zone. The first party to be formed was the communist party, the 'Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands' (KPD) headed by loyal communist functionaries Wilhelm Pieck and Walter Ulbricht. They belonged to the 'Gruppe Walter Ulbricht.' Ulbricht had spent the war years at the Comintern in Moscow, preparing for a takeover on behalf of the Russians in the Eastern part of Germany, immediately after the war ended (Raff, 1988).

Soon thereafter, in the Western zones, the Free Democratic Party (FDP), the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) constituted themselves as parties. Also the Bavarian affiliate of the CDU, the Christian Social Union (CSU) and a number of minor parties were licensed by the Allied Powers in the Western zones. Due to mounting pressure from the Soviet occupation authorities in the Eastern part of Germany, the Social Democrats in the Russian zone were forced into a merger with the KPD in forming the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, (SED).

Only about one year later, the newly formed states (Länder) in the Western zones were headed by Minister Presidents, following the first free elections held on German soil since 1933, thus establishing the federal state structure in 1946.

As several meetings of the Foreign Ministers of the former war-time allies failed to produce results toward a final peace settlement with Germany, on January 1, 1947, British and American authorities formed 'Bizonia,' comprising American and British zones into one economic unit which primarily was to deal with the burden of feeding the hungry. 'Bizonia' soon became a quasi government and to a large extent a model for a new West German republic (Von Spaltung zur Einheit, 1992).

With the cold war proceeding between the USSR and her former Western war allies and causing severe rifts over Germany's unity and future, the division between the Eastern zone and the Western occupying zones grew deeper every day. In 1947, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill openly addressed the huge rifts that occurred between the Soviet Union and the victorious Western Powers. He accused the USSR of dividing Eastern and Western Europe by an 'iron curtain.'

After the Soviets refused to allow communist-dominated regimes they had established in Eastern Europe to participate in the American Marshall Plan that provided war-devastated Europe with 12.9 billion dollars in recovery aid, the London Conference of 1948 called for the formation of a Western German state. Simultaneously, but more or less secretly, the Soviets were preparing for a separate East German state under Soviet dominance. In an attempt to impose their will on their former Western allies the Soviets initiated a blockade on West Berlin. They sealed off all the highways, railways and a canal upon which the Western sectors relied for food and fuel. The United States and Britain

responded with an airlift that lasted from June 24, 1948 until May 12, 1949, when the USSR lifted the blockade that had failed to starve out more than 2 million West Berliners and to force out the Western occupying powers. One year later, on May 24, 1948, a West German state, the Federal Republic of Germany, was born, comprised of the states (Länder) of the American, British, and French occupation zones, with the exception of the French occupied state of Saarland that was to join the Federal Republic in 1957 (Raff, 1988).

The provisional West German constitution, the Basic Law, provided for a free and democratic state. After the first federal election held in the new republic, Konrad Adenauer (CDU), was elected first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, consisting of ten states and West Berlin which, however, did not become a constituent part of West Germany, remaining an occupied territory where allied law prevailed over German law. On October 7, 1949, following the installation of the first Cabinet of the Federal Republic, the East German People's Congress approved the formation of a second German state, the German Democratic Republic (Deutsche Demokratische Republik (GDR). The GDR, violating the Allied Powers agreements on Germany and Berlin, established her first government in East Berlin, claiming the Eastern part of Berlin as her capital, which de jure remained the Soviet sector of the four-power government of Berlin. Four years after World War II ended with the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany, the country was separated into two different states, thus dividing Europe into a communist-dominated Eastern and an American-led Western camp. The division of Europe would last for 44 years when the two Germanies were eventually unified and when most of the former East Bloc countries shook loose



communist rule (Blumenwitz, 1989).

The years from 1950 until 1955 were marked by highly significant and almost revolutionary developments in both the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. The early 50's are also characterized by the integration of the Federal Republic into European and Western alliances and institutions. In 1950, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman proposed the creation of the European Community for Steel and Coal (Montanunion or ESCE) which bound together France, West Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries: Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg. It was signed into effect in 1951. The ESCE, fostering interdependence, was set up in order to avert future wars in Europe through the creation of a common market for coal and steel. In 1951 the Federal Republic became a member of the Council of Europe. Simultaneously and prompted by the outbreak of the Korean War in July 1950, preparations in West Germany began for a new army under allied supervision. In 1952 West Germany gained limited sovereignty from the three Western Allied Powers and became a member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). East Germany, on behalf of the Russians began to close its borders with the Federal Republic to reduce the stream of refugees to the West. In a last-minute effort and in order to prevent West Germany from being integrated into the Western alliance, Soviet leader Josef Stalin proposed German unification under the condition Germany would become a neutral (non-aligned) country. Adenauer as well as the Western powers rejected that idea, concluding that the Soviet offer was not a serious one (Hardach, 1984).

Just one year later on June 17, 1953, the communist East German regime under Walter Ulbricht was faced with uprisings all throughout the GDR, challenging communist rule. Soviet tanks eventually crushed the rebellion against communist coercion. In the same year, Konrad Adenauer won the second West German federal elections, and a friendship treaty was signed between Washington and Bonn.

While the cleavage between the two Germanies grew deeper and tensions between East and West were escalating, the rearmament of the Federal Republic was officially decided upon, in 1954, resulting in West Germany's sovereignty and West Germany becoming NATO's 15th member state in May, 1955 (Blumenwitz, 1989). Also later in 1955 the GDR became a member of the Soviet dominated Warsaw Pact Organization. Konrad Adenauer on behalf of West Germany established diplomatic relations with the USSR despite the so-called Hallstein doctrine, named after Walter Hallstein, one of Adenauer's chief political advisors. The doctrine sought to prevent international recognition of the GDR by refusing diplomatic relations and aid to countries that established relations with East Berlin. The core of the Hallstein doctrine was that only Bonn had "the right and responsibility to speak and act on behalf of all Germans" (Stares, 1992; p.13).

Unification of the two Germanies, now belonging to different adversarial military alliances, seemed to be a remote possibility. The division of Germany appeared to be the price Germany had to pay as a result of her defeat in 1945, along with the loss of territories beyond the Oder-Neisse line to Poland. Poland had been compensated with German land by

the USSR which had previously incorporated an even larger portion of eastern Poland into the Soviet Union. Based on election results, twelve years after the war had ended, in 1957 France returned occupied Saarland to the Federal Republic. A German general became NATO commander for Central Europe, and Adenauer's Christian Democrats recorded a sweeping victory at the polls. These developments and the Rome Treaty of 1957, which brought the European Economic Community (EEC) into being, constructively underlined Adenauer's Westpolitik with emphasis on West European integration and irrevocable alliance with the West. The six Western European states that participated in the Rome Treaty, France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Luxemburg become even further integrated (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 1990). In 1958, French President Charles de Gaulle and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer met in Paris. The meeting led to the officially signed reconciliation between France and Germany in 1962 which formally ended French-German antagonism (Weisenfeld, 1990).

In Moscow on December 27, 1958, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev issued an ultimatum to the Federal Republic, France, Britain and the United States. "In 1958 the Soviet Government formally declared that all four power's rights, including allied rights in Berlin, would become null and void" (Zelikow & Rice, 1995; p.57). Unless the 'Berlin-Problem' was solved within six months the Soviet Union would sign a peace treaty with the East German government and turn over the responsibility for West Berlin which Khrushchev claimed lay within the territory of the GDR. The Western allies rejected Moscow's demand, which was in clear violation of the four power agreements with regard to Berlin. Moscow's

demands eventually turned out to be a shallow threat as the USSR did not take any hostile action against West Berlin or allied rights. In 1959, the Federal Republic was ten years old. A four power conference on Germany was convened in Geneva, Switzerland, but failed to produce any results with respect to German unification. In Bad Godesberg the West German Social Democratic Party (SPD) officially abandoned any ideas of socialism. In 1959 the SPD broke with its past of a worker's party and became, like the CDU, a 'people's party' in order to appeal to a broader spectrum of voters. By doing so, the SPD abandoned all Marxist and socialist ideas (Hancock & Helsh, 1994). Berlin's Governing Mayor Willy Brandt became the Social Democrats' Chairman in 1960. On August 13, 1961, the GDR under the leadership of Walter Ulbricht and with the strong backing of Moscow, erected the Berlin wall, sealing off East Berlin from West Berlin. Therewith the Pankow regime abruptly ended the constant flow of refugees. According to the Federal Bureau of Statistics in Wiesbaden, from 1949 until August 1961 some 2.7 million people choose to leave the "first worker's and peasant's state on German soil" as the GDR quoted itself, through the semi-open borders to West Berlin (Hanhardt, 1979).

The effects of the Berlin wall became evident in the GDR's economic sphere. No longer did the Ulbricht regime have to face the loss of skilled workers to the West. In 1963 Ulbricht announced the implementation of a "new economic system," later called and renamed Economic System of Socialism, but the system never functioned as envisioned. Nevertheless, as Hanhardt claims, the new economic system "worked well enough to create an economic miracle in East Germany" (Hanhardt, 1979; p.137). In terms of the standard

of living, the per capita income and productivity, the GDR surpassed the Soviet Union and the other Eastern European countries under communist rule.

The years 1962 to 1966 in West Germany were characterized by the French-German Friendship Treaty, the resignation of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, his succession by Ludwig Erhard in 1963, and the beginning of the talks between the Social Democrats and the Free Democrats with East German officials about basic relations with the GDR and the establishment of political relations with Eastern Europe. In 1967 the Grand Coalition of CDU/SPD government was formed, following the resignation of Ludwig Erhard as West German Chancellor.

In 1969 the Social Democrats successfully challenged the Christian Democrats' position and claimed power by forming the Social-Liberal Coalition Government headed by Willy Brandt who pledged continued adherence to the Atlantic Alliance and West European integration. Brandt, however, made clear his intention to embark on a new course with respect to the GDR, Eastern Europe, and Poland in particular, which had suffered horrendously under Nazi Germany. His motive was to ease tensions between West Germany, the East Bloc, and the Soviet Union. Soon Moscow and Bonn entered into serious negotiations aimed at improving political and economic relations while the GDR, still dominated by hard line communist Walter Ulbricht, was not yet responsive to overtures from Bonn.

In 1969 Willy Brandt became Chancellor of West Germany, heading the Grand SPD/FDP Coalition. The new government made it apparent that it would embark on a new conciliatory course toward Eastern Europe and the USSR that it wished to conduct an active foreign policy, more independent from the United States and other major allies and that, unlike the conservative CDU/CSU, it was ready to compromise with the Soviet-led orbit in Eastern Europe. In his first government declaration on October 28, 1969, Chancellor Brandt proposed a new policy of détente toward Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (as a tribute to Willy Brandt's efforts later called Ostpolitik). The new government in Bonn agreed to start negotiations between the Federal Republic and the GDR. In March 1970 Willy Brandt met with GDR's Prime Minister Willy Stoph in Erfurt (Garton Ash, 1993). After 25 years of forced separation, of icy relations between the two Germanies, and eight years after the erection of the Berlin wall, the East German regime opened the door a crack. Moscow and East Berlin reluctantly responded to West Germany's ideas of reconciliation and good neighbourliness, which was later to be known as Ostpolitik.

### CHAPTER III

#### West German Ostpolitik and its Likely Effects on German Unification

An early visionary of European Ostpolitik was French President Charles de Gaulle. He envisioned a Europe free of military alliances and in 1964 vaguely talked about a Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, also adding a new term to international politics: “La détente,” the easing of tensions. De Gaulle strongly believed in historical forces and predicted the erosion of Soviet power, a belief which he brought home to the Soviet leadership in 1966 while visiting Moscow (Weisenfeld, 1990; p. 25).

As Weisenfeld points out in his book, the “German Question” de Gaulle discussed with Khrushchev as early as 1960 in Paris was in his belief the key to peace and détente. De Gaulle suggested in his Memoirs of Hope (1969) that Europe have to find a solution for the German Question through détente, entente and cooperation. De Gaulle underscored the necessity for a (united) German formation to be part of a “Europe of peace and progress” (p.29). The end of Yalta in mind, de Gaulle worked toward a “European Europe” (p.32), thus predicting the ultimate withdrawal of American forces from Western Europe. He resented foreign domination of Europe, but agreed the necessity of maintaining US forces in Europe as a counter force to the Soviet military. De Gaulle vowed European identity and European unity but favored a Europe of sovereign states reflecting their different political interests.

De Gaulle was the first politician in Europe who encouraged the Germans to pursue a pragmatic course toward reunification which appeared to him as the normal fate of the German people. Willy Brandt, who from 1969 on would create and conduct West German Ostpolitik, partly based on de Gaulle's ideas, confirms in his Memoirs (1989) that de Gaulle encouraged West Germany to approach the Soviet Union more directly and determinedly (Brandt, 1989). According to Brandt, de Gaulle reminded the Germans that they were more than a zero. De Gaulle repeatedly recommended German unification under two preconditions: Germany should not be allowed to own nuclear weapons and Germany would have to recognize the Oder-Neisse line as its final border with Poland.

According to Weisenfeld (1990), Charles de Gaulle's policies were carefully built on visions which recognized the "German Question" ("La chose Allemande") (Weisenfeld, 1990; p.107). The central European problem, to a large extent served as a model for Willy Brandt, whose fundamental ideas were rapprochement of the two German states, the reconciliation with Moscow and eventually German unification. Brandt, like de Gaulle, ("The German problem is the European problem par excellence") viewed a divided Germany as the main obstacle for a lasting peace in Europe (Weisenfeld, 1990; p.108).

German Ostpolitik based on de Gaulle's broad ideas of détente began shaping up shortly after Willy Brandt took office on October 21, 1969. Ostpolitik was established as an integral part of West German national foreign policy, internally with lukewarm support from the conservative CDU/CSU parties. Externally, Bonn's European partners as well as the



United States, the guarantor of the Federal Republic's external safety since 1945, began suspiciously talking about a German special course ("Sonderweg") and questioned West Germany's commitment to NATO.

The Basic Law (constitution) of the Federal Republic of Germany, approved by the Parliamentary Council in Bonn, May 8, 1949, reads in its preamble: "The entire German people is called upon to achieve, by free self-determination, the unity and freedom of Germany" (p. 11). Henceforth the preamble, being part of the Basic Law, was binding on any elected official of West Germany sworn in to the constitution.

Willy Brandt voiced his belief in future German peace policy and emphasized that striving for peace and mutual understanding should be the fundament of West German foreign policy (Brandt, 1968). When Brandt took office heading the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Liberal Party (FDP) coalition government he spelled out before the Bundestag (Federal Parliament) the goals of his government, and referred to German self-determination as follows: "We are resolved to uphold the security of the Federal Republic of Germany and the coherence of the German nation. The policy of this government will be one of continuity and renewal.." Brandt also added that "the object of our practical political work in the years immediately ahead is to preserve the unity of the nation by easing the tenseness of relations between the two parts of Germany. Twenty years after the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR, we must prevent any further alienation of the two parts of the German nation" (40 Jahre Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1989;

p.217). Brandt viewed a modus vivendi and cooperation between the two German states as “not just a German interest, for it is also important for peace in Europe and for East-West relations” (p.219). These statements as well as the address before the Bundestag on the state of the German nation on January 14, 1970, echoed General de Gaulle’s conviction that the German question was the key to peace in Europe.

The new Brandt government made it clear on several occasions that it wished to pursue an active policy with the German Democratic Republic as well as the Soviet Union and the Eastern European nations. This reflected a distinct shift from previous West German government positions, and détente as outlined by de Gaulle, Brandt and his predecessor Kurt Georg Kissinger (Chancellor from 1966 to 1969). One of the most important issues during the chancellorship of Willy Brandt (1969-1974) was a policy of unilateral concessions, and a pragmatic approach to German realities and peaceful coexistence became evident.

One of the first major steps of the social-liberal coalition toward détente occurred on November 28, 1969 with the Federal Republic’s signing of the non-proliferation treaty (N.P.T.) which prohibits the proliferation of nuclear weapons, although West Germany had already renounced the possession of nuclear weapons on October 23, 1954 at the Brussels conference and by the Brussels treaty preceding West German sovereignty and integration into NATO in May 1955. As part of the treaty then Chancellor Konrad Adenauer declared: “ That the Federal Republic of Germany undertakes not to manufacture in its territory any atomic weapons, chemical weapons or biological weapons” (40 Jahre ...,1989; p. 79).

Insofar as the FRG's signing of the non-proliferation treaty could be considered to be a trust-building measure as well as a commitment to both the West and the East, West Germany felt obligated to détente ("Entspannung"). Furthermore, the signature of the N.P.T. treaty was also intended to counter Soviet accusations that the Federal Republic wanted to acquire nuclear weapons. The Brandt government also hoped that the N.P.T. signed by West Germany would further enhance the country's reputation as a predictable and reliable ally and partner. It took the USA and the USSR until March 5, 1970 to ratify a treaty which would solidify their respective nuclear monopolies.

Despite skepticism in the United States and in various allied capitals, the Brandt government, in November 1969, seized the moment of superpower détente and arms limitation talks between the US and the USSR to send its feelers to the East. As a result, Willy Brandt's closest political advisor, Egon Bahr, began talks in Moscow with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. Also, West German undersecretary Ferdinand Duckwitz began talks in Warsaw with Polish Deputy Foreign Minister. Shortly after, Willy Brandt met with GDR's Prime Minister Willy Stoph in East Germany, only two months later Brandt met with Willy Stoph again, this time in Kassel, West Germany (Garton Ash, 1993). High level exploratory talks with the GDR, Poland and the Soviet Union (despite their invasion of Czechoslovakia on August 21, 1968), were no longer a threat to the free world, and growing demands for more emancipation from the United States created a political atmosphere favoring and promoting détente.

The speed of Ostpolitik accelerated, and it did so to the dismay of the United States government under Richard Nixon, which according to a note delivered to the Bonn government on December 5, 1969, felt excluded from West German preparations for an agreement with the Kremlin on the mutual reduction of forces (Morgan, 1984). The United States, preoccupied with détente and subsequent arms reduction talks, and still deeply involved in Vietnam, burdened with economic problems at home and aware of growing Soviet military power, desired peace in Europe.

West Germany's dependence on the United States as the nuclear protector of the Federal Republic led to alienation between America and her European partners. The FRG was the principal benefactor of emancipating Western Europe, and there were disagreements between the United States and its European NATO allies stemming from SALT talks and a wide-spread feeling that the US and Russia might negotiate behind the back of the Europeans. For the first time since 1945, West Germany felt it had enough independence to conduct her own national policy. Bonn was convinced that the key to German unification lay in improved relations with Moscow and its allies. The Brandt administration believed that Ostpolitik had the potential to become a door opener, but at the same time the West German government had to maintain the delicate balance between the FRG's security needs and the European balance of power provided by the United States. The Nixon administration expressed its concern that after the first German-German summit, both the German states might have gotten "too close together" (Garton Ash, 1993; p.175).

According to the German edition of the January 1970 “NATO Letter,” on December 5, 1969, the ministers of the 15 NATO countries committed themselves to pursue effective policies directed toward a greater relaxation of tensions in their continuing search for a just and durable peace, and in so doing accepted the Bonn position expressed in Ostpolitik. The treaty concerning the establishment of equal relations between the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany, also called Basic Treaty, negotiated in 1969, committed both German states to work to ease tension and safeguard Europe. It expressed the desire for an orderly side-by-side existence of the two German states. It recognized the GDR as a German state, and recognized the inviolability of its frontiers, including the Oder-Neisse frontier between the GDR and Poland. A letter was attached from West German President Gustav Heinemann to East German Chairman Walter Ulbricht stating that protecting the unity of the German people was a matter of mutual interest. This essentially meant that such policy was in conformity with the regulations of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The West German understanding that the unity of the German nation remained a goal was further expressed in Chancellor Brandt’s address before the Bundestag on January 14, 1969. He spoke of “indispensable orientation points,” such as the right of self-determination and the desire for national unity. Brandt, according to the Parliamentary Protocol later published by the Federal Press Office in Bonn, noted that “the unity of Germans was a possibility,” but he also noted the rights of the Four Powers and the interests of West Germany’s European neighbors. According to Brandt the Federal Republic and those who

bear responsibility should not lose this chance for negotiations to everyone's satisfaction (40 Jahre Aussenpolitik..., 1989). Still the new Brandt government in the year 1970 had to face an economically successful and politically orthodox GDR whose party and state leadership to a great extent depended on the support of the Soviet Union.

German political author and former GDR resident Franz Loeser (1984) contended that the fear of the united or at least a confederate state of quasi German unity could not be justified. He pleaded for some kind of inter-German confederation and a peaceful togetherness in order to break the antagonism between Bonn and East Berlin. In 1961 Willy Brandt suggested that the division of Germany faced a GDR that together with the Soviet Union made the path to German unification unthinkable. After 23 years Loeser argued that the final and decisive course for the division of Germany can be found in the seemingly unbridgeable differences in ideology, values and power structure between the former war allies as well as in their different economic systems (Loeser, 1984).

People in Germany considered both the German states ever since the end of the War as subjects of the Four Powers. The German public alongside with the media credited the Grundlagenvertrag (Basic Treaty) between Bonn and East Berlin as a modus vivendi of how to peacefully coexist as neighbors. At the same time there was a widespread belief that the Grundlagenvertrag might serve as a basis for success of the West German Ostpolitik, and possibly as a means of making the inner German border finally more permeable. The Grundlagenvertrag, the Basic Treaty is a significant political document, a reorganization of

intra-German relations. It served as a basis for a working relationship between the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR. The Basic Treaty related to the policy of the Federal government. Even so, the Treaty signed on November 8, 1972, and finally ratified in 1973 by both German states proved to be a very complex document which included practical solutions of the problems concerning the rights of the Four Allied Powers and provisions about the UN membership of both East and West Germany. In addition, it dealt with the integration of West Berlin into the Treaty. It gave the relations between Bonn and East Berlin a new foundation despite difficult negotiations with GDR which insisted on an international agreement “that presupposed the existence of two sovereign mutually independent German states”(Von der Spaltung zur Einheit, 1990; p. 26). Upon the ratification of the Basic Treaty, the Federal Republic began with great effort to implement the Treaty in order to permanently secure the bonds between the two states in one nation, despite resistance from the GDR. Eventually the Basic Treaty secured the first ever working relationship between the Federal Republic and East Germany. The relationship was based on Article I of the Basic Treaty which states: “the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR shall develop good neighborly relations with each other on the basis of equal rights”(Blumenwitz, 1989; p. 114). In Article VII of the Treaty the signatories “state their readiness to regulate practical and humanitarian questions”(Blumenwitz, 1989; p. 115). Article VIII finally dealt with the exchange of “permanent missions in their respective seats of government” (Blumenwitz, 1989; p. 115). The West German administrations, Willy Brandt from 1969 to 1974, Helmut Schmidt from 1974 to 1982, and Helmut Kohl from 1982 till present strictly adhered to the principal pacta sunt servanda - treaties will be kept. All

three created and conducted a policy of reconciliation with the USSR and Eastern European countries and the GDR. It was in fact a step by step policy of rapprochement, conciliatory overtures toward the neighbors in the East. One may call it reality based on trust building measures and agreements such as the 1970 Bonn-Moscow Treaty, and the recognition of realities regarding a second German state. This was a move away from the Hallstein Doctrine of the 1960's (named after a West German under secretary in the Foreign Office who formulated that policy), which would punish every country with which West Germany had relations if it chose to recognize the East German regime.

The new Ostpolitik under Willy Brandt, which was only reluctantly accepted by the more conservative parties in the German Bundestag, was based on Brandt's belief that the East Bloc could not be ignored as virtually non-existent anymore while the world chose to deal with the second German state as a separate and sovereign entity. Helmut Schmidt, who succeeded Willy Brandt, felt the same and from 1974 until September 1982 pursued a policy of reconciliation and balanced relations between the two German states. In 1975 West Germany and the GDR joined 33 nations in Helsinki, including the United States of America and Canada, to sign the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe Final Act, which promoted détente, economic cooperation among European nations, freedom of movement across borders and respect for human rights. The citizens of GDR in particular placed high hopes in the CSCE Final Act. All West German administrations since 1969, when the Social Democrats took over in Bonn, were prepared to compromise and play an active role in a European security framework as the Federal Republic did with respect to the Conference on



Security and Cooperation before and after the Helsinki Final Act (Handrieder, 1981).

In response to Ostpolitik, Moscow signaled a growing interest in cultural and economic exchange and cooperation in science and industry. Bonn responded with favorable trade terms and billions of marks in government secured loans. Moscow was still committed to its supposedly most important and most dependable European ally, the German Democratic Republic, but nonetheless favorably exploited West German eagerness to ease restrictions on strategic items through the American dominated Coordinating Committee for Military Export Controls (Cocom) aimed at lifting the embargo on the export of pipeline equipment to the Soviet Union (Garton Ash, 1993). Even US accusations of self-Finlandization (which implied the Federal Republic's submission to the Soviet Union very much in the same way as Finland did) of the Federal Republic, or alleged aims of neutralism, did not irritate Bonn's coalition governments, which continued to pursue Ostpolitik toward the Soviet Union. This was a policy considered by Bonn as independent and in the German national interest, keeping in mind Bonn's philosophy that unification was a process of many steps, and above all, was to be achieved peacefully.

On September 26, 1978, West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher revealed in his statement before the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, Bonn's intention to accelerate the policy of détente and to broaden cooperation with the GDR. And on November 29, 1978 the Federal Republic and the GDR signed an intergovernmental protocol on the position of the intra-German border. Agreement was also

reached on intra-German traffic, in the field of health cooperation and on postal agreements, and later on practical steps to improve and keep détente between the two Germanies alive. Even so, basic ideological and political differences continued between East and West pertaining to the application of human rights which the GDR frequently violated in clear contrast to what their leadership had pledged in Helsinki. Despite many setbacks in his dealings with the GDR, West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt met Erich Honecker in East Berlin in December 1981 in order to further improve “good neighborly relations” with the East German state, to which Bonn still denied full diplomatic recognition. (Von der Spaltung zur Einheit, 1992; pp.179-183).

Even after the election of Helmut Kohl as West German Chancellor, the policy of détente between the Federal Republic of Germany and her Eastern European neighbors was not tarnished. A series of visits between West and East German politicians and functionaries further polished the picture of two respective German states that seemed to have reached more than just a certain consent of conduct. In 1983, the Federal Republic promoted and signed a loan agreement in the amount of one billion dollars to support the East German economy and to help ease the problem of East Germany’s notorious shortage of hard currency. Only one week later East German strongman Erich Honecker announced that the automatic Shrapnel devices along the intra-German borders would be removed. (Von der..., 1992).

In January of 1984 the GDR transferred the management of the Berlin S-Bahn to the

West Berlin authorities. In July of the same year the East German government eased travel restrictions on their citizens. In August of 1985 another loan of approximately one billion dollars was negotiated between the two German States and made available to the GDR by the Deutsche Bank (Von der..., 1992). That prompted the Soviet official Communist party newspaper *Pravda* on August 2, 1985 to express concern that in this way the West was undermining the foundations of the socialist system. This was widely considered a clear warning from the Kremlin to keep within the pace of Soviet policy of détente. Erich Honecker responded in the official GDR paper *Neues Deutschland* in order to quell fears in the Kremlin, by saying “it is no more possible to unite socialism and capitalism than it is to unite fire and water.” Bowing to West German pressure, and as a result of favorable cooperation on a wide variety of topics, on November 3, 1985, (Von der..., 1992; p.187- 188) the GDR completed the clearing of the minefields on the Eastern side of the intra-German border. Only two years later, in September of 1987, Erich Honecker visited the Federal Republic of Germany. Still, West Germany denied him recognition of a GDR citizenship since West Germany considered all Germans to be of the same citizenship and openly pursued policy aimed at unification in freedom and peace (Von der..., 1992; pp.187-191).

The official position of the GDR hardened, however, when the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Intermediate Nuclear Force Agreement (INF) in December of 1987, according to which all US and Soviet missiles with a range of 500 to 5000 kilometers deployed in Europe must be withdrawn and destroyed within three years, Erich Honecker demanded that greater efforts be made “to strengthen the Warsaw Pact. (Von der..., 1992;

pp.191-195).

Despite such rhetoric, Germany was on its way to unification, but not through official negotiations, and nobody envisioned what would happen only two years later when the people in the GDR as well as Mikhail Gorbachev created a windfall for the German nation culminating in a peaceful revolution and the collapse of the East German power structure.

## CHAPTER IV

### Willy Brandt's Application of Ostpolitik

The efforts of the West German Government in Bonn to improve relations with East Germany, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union further accelerated with preparations in both East Berlin and Bonn for negotiations between the two German states. On January 22, 1970, Chancellor Brandt proposed to East German Minister President Willy Stoph negotiations on an exchange of renunciations of force. In response, Willy Stoph invited Chancellor Brandt to meet in East Berlin for negotiations of mutual interest. (Von der Spaltung zur Einheit, 1992; pp.168-9).

Only nine days later, on February 27, 1970, the US State Department announced that the United States, Britain and France, after consultations with the government of the Federal Republic of Germany, were willing to open quadripartite discussions on Berlin with the Soviet Union as the fourth victorious power responsible for Berlin.

Rüdiger Thomas (1984) reports that, upon his visit with Minister President Willy Stoph in Erfurt, East Germany, on March 19, 1970, Chancellor Willy Brandt talked about the need to recognize the existence of one German nation. He talked about the equality of the two German states, but also stressed the existing rights and responsibilities of the Four Powers in regard to Germany as a whole and to Berlin. Almost simultaneously, the Federal Republic opened negotiations with the Soviet Union and Poland, aimed at easing tensions

and improving relations between West Germany and the East. The bilateral talks with Poland would center on the Oder-Neisse line as a final border with Poland, and on negotiations with the Soviet Union, and would address overall improved relations and a non-aggression treaty between the two nations (Thomas, 1984).

West German Chancellor Willy Brandt “undertook a historic mission when, in 1970, he attempted to resolve the quarter-century old boundary dispute between his nation and Poland” (La Feber, 1972; p.288). Negotiations with Poland lasted six lengthy sessions from February 5 to November 12, 1970, eventually resulting in the West German-Polish Treaty of Friendship on December 7, 1970. The emphasis centered on the preamble which set out the necessity and the future of lasting peaceful relations and noted that more than 25 years had passed since the end of World War II, in which Poland had become the first victim of German aggression. “Aware of the inviolability of frontiers and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the states in Europe within their present borders,” and anxious “to strengthen peace and security in Europe,” as the preamble reads, the two nations agreed on normal mutual relations (Die Ostverträge, 1989).

Poland had insisted on recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line as laid down in Chapter IX of the decisions of the Potsdam Conference on August 2, 1945. Bonn, with regard for the Four Power responsibility for Germany as a whole, stopped short of explicit recognition of the Oder-Neisse border, but pledged to respect the Oder-Neisse as a boundary. Bonn also offered a non-use-of-force provision to guarantee Poland’s western border. In Article I of

the Polish-West German Treaty of December 1970 (Die Ostverträge, 1989), both Poland and West Germany reaffirmed the inviolability of the existing borders and pledged to respect each other's territorial integrity without any restriction. The contracting partners also declared that they have no territorial claims whatsoever, and that they will not assert such claims in the future (Die Ostverträge, 1989; 11).

With the conclusion of the German-Polish Treaty, the Federal Republic bound itself to respect Oder-Neisse as Poland's western border and to not seek under any circumstances a revision of existing boundaries. This treaty indirectly also recognized the borders between the two German states, referring to the inviolability of existing frontiers in Europe pursuant to Articles I and II of the Charter of the United Nations. Accordingly, the treaty for peaceful settlements of disputes refrained from any threat or use of force in matters affecting European and international security (Die Ostverträge, 1989).

The Polish government, as a concession to West Germany, withdrew its demands that German guilt for initiating WW II be mentioned. On West German demand, the Poles promised to adopt a positive attitude towards the emigration of tens of thousands of Germans or persons of German origin to rejoin their families in either of the two German states.

The West-German-Polish Treaty for normalizing mutual relations, signed and later, in 1972, ratified by the respective legislative bodies in Warsaw and Bonn, was a most controversial political matter between the major political parties in West Germany. The

Federal Republic of Germany had some 12 million post-war expellees from former German territories in Poland lost as a result of World War II, and found it difficult to adjust to political, economic and emotional realities. The former German land beyond the Oder-Neisse meant a great deal to them, especially to older Germans who had lived there and whose families had settled in the German East for centuries. Moreover the social-liberal coalition government under Willy Brandt that negotiated the treaty was accused by the conservative opposition parties, the Christian Democrats and its Bavarian affiliate, the CSU under the leadership of Franz-Josef Strauss, of giving away a vital bargaining chip for possible negotiations on German unification should the opportunity ever occur. Many conservatives of the CDU/CSU also charged that the Brandt government had undermined the Four Powers' responsibility for all of Germany, notwithstanding the fact that the world (Bonn's allies included) had long been considering the Oder-Neisse as Poland's western border.

Brandt's Ostpolitik took yet another decisive step forward when, after months-long extensive negotiations, on August 12, 1970, the treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Soviet Union was signed in Moscow, supported by about 79 percent of the West German population. The treaty contained five articles in which Bonn and Moscow "affirmed their goals to maintain international peace and achieve détente." They also agreed to "further normalization of the situation in Europe" (Die Ostverträge, 1989; p. 6).

As Article II of the Treaty reads, the contracting parties agreed in addition that they



“be guided by the purposes and principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.” In Article III the parties pledged “to respect without restriction the territorial integrity of all states in Europe within their present frontiers.” Bonn and Moscow also proclaimed that they “have no territorial claims against anybody nor will assert such claims in the future.” This provision undoubtedly included the postwar borders with Eastern Germany and Poland. The two states were specifically and explicitly mentioned in the treaty (Die Ostverträge, 1989; p.6).

A separate letter (letter of German unity) from the Federal Republic to the Soviet Union in connection with the signing of the treaty stated that “this treaty does not conflict with the political objective of the Federal Republic of Germany to work for a state of peace in Europe in which the German nation will recover its unity in free self-determination” (Die Ostverträge, 1989; p. 4).

In connection with the signing of the German-Soviet Treaty on August 12, 1970, West German Foreign Minister Walter Scheel sent a diplomatic letter on German unity (Brief zur deutschen Einheit) to the three Western allies, the United States, France and Britain, and the Soviet Union. On behalf of the West German government, the rights and responsibilities of the four victorious powers regarding Germany as a whole and Berlin were to remain untouched since no decision had been reached with respect to a peace treaty (Die Ostverträge, 1989; p. 4).

The Soviet communiqué issued at the conclusion of the Moscow talks between Chancellor Brandt, Soviet Secretary General Leonid I. Brezhnev, Ministerial Council Chairman Alexei N. Kosygin and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko on August 13, 1970, only briefly referred to the treaty concluded. In the communiqué, the Soviet side made the mention of the potential prospects of peaceful cooperation between the USSR and the Federal Republic of Germany (Garton Ash, 1993).

Officially, the treaty was well received by the three Western allies and victorious powers. Under the surface, however, lay suspicions about German intentions, possible ulterior motives and a touch of fear of a new “Rapallo,” referring to the 1922 cooperation treaty between Germany and the Soviet Union. There were also misgivings about Soviet motives with respect to the status of Berlin and possible attempts to alienate and undermine West Germany’s commitment with regard to NATO.

During the negotiations with the Soviet Union and after the signing of the German-Soviet Treaty which clearly marked a turning point in relations between the two countries, the Federal Republic was repeatedly reassured of US support for Ostpolitik. With regard to Ostpolitik, the American Ambassador to West Germany, Kenneth Rush, on October 20, 1970, stated in a speech given in Munich that as the problem of Germany remained the key to East-West problems in Europe, the movement toward a normalization of relations between the Federal Republic and its neighbors to the East had been welcomed.

Support from the United States, though sometimes rather half hearted, was of great importance to West Germany, which undertook a political balancing act between newly regained political discretion and national aspirations aimed at unification on the one hand and Bonn's commitment to the Western alliance and close adherence to the United States on the other. Since it was the United States that committed approximately 230,000 troops primarily to West Germany's and West Berlin's defense from Soviet attack, the Brandt government could not afford to annoy Washington. Sensing that Ostpolitik would only be possible with Washington's consent and within the broader framework of superpower détente, Brandt seized the moment and planned for the long haul and political circumstances that would hopefully bring about the unification of Germany.

A giant step at reducing tension in Central Europe was undertaken by the Four Power Treaty among the United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union on Berlin and signed into effect on September 3, 1971. The Federal Republic fully participated in the preparations for negotiating content and final conditions, following a series of Soviet concessions to both the United States and West Germany. The Soviets compromised in the concurrent SALT negotiations. They also removed East Germany's Cold War strongman Walter Ulbricht, replacing him with Erich Honecker as head of the GDR, and the Soviet Union announced her willingness to discuss further reductions at the European Security Conference(Herausgegeben vom Presse-und Informationsamt des Landes Berlin, 1988).

As Article IV of Part I of the Treaty reads, the Four Powers in the context with Berlin

and acting on the basis of their quadripartite rights and responsibilities, agreed that “irrespective of the differences in legal views, the situation which has developed in the areas and as it is defined in this agreement, shall not be changed unilaterally” (Die Berlin-Regelung, 1989; p. 3).

The three Western signatories acknowledged that West Berlin was “not a (constituent) part of the Federal Republic of Germany” (Part II, B). Annex IV B states that the USSR acknowledged that the Federal Republic may represent the interests of the three Western sectors of Berlin in international organizations and conferences and provide consular services for the inhabitants of West Berlin (Die Berlin ..., 1989; pp. 5-6).

While the status quo in Berlin remained unchanged, the Soviet Union abandoned previous attempts to assert that West Berlin lay on East German soil and was therefore part of the German Democratic Republic. Striving “to promote the elimination of tensions and the prevention of complications” (General Provisions, part I, article I), the USSR dismissed the claim that East Germany controlled the access to West Berlin. The agreement certainly weakened the GDR’s position regarding Berlin, while the Western signatories as part of the agreement declared that the ties between West Berlin and the Federal Republic of Germany “will be maintained and developed” (Die Berlin ..., 1989; p. 3).

However, interpretations of Annex II of the Quadripartite Agreement on West Berlin held that “meeting of the Federal Council will not take place in the Western sector of Berlin”

(Interpretation of Annex II, B ; p. 4). The Federal Council was a body composed of the members of the West German parliament and of the legislative bodies of the German states (Bundesländer). The western allies agreed not to allow the Federal council to elect the West German Federal President because West Berlin was not a constituent part of the Federal Republic.

The Four Power Agreement was an early example reflecting a give-and-take policy on both sides, and the adoption of political position aimed at eliminating friction and tensions impeding further progress toward an all European security agreement. Both East and West began to give up overdue post-war ballast taking into account the existing situation in divided Germany and Berlin. Still, the partial agreement, as US Ambassador to West Germany Kenneth Rush noted in a public address on September 27, 1971 before the Berlin Chamber of Commerce and Industry, was to provide above all practical improvements for the people of Berlin.

Though the threat of an East-West conflict had not been removed, the Four Power Agreement cleared the way for further détente between the East and West. As a result of this agreement inter-German Ostpolitik succeeded with a variety of agreements between Bonn and East Berlin. The Federal Republic and the GDR signed protocols on negotiation on September 30 and December 17, 1971 concerning posts and telecommunications, improved telephone, telex and telegram services between Bonn and East Berlin and transit traffic of civilian persons and goods. The aim was to render a contribution to détente in Europe and

further good neighborly relations. It was a treaty of further collaboration of the two signatories and to a large degree a positive result of the Quadripartite Agreement on West Berlin as well as a practical application of intra-German Ostpolitik (Der Verkehrsvertrag, 1989).

On December 20, 1971, in accordance with the arrangements of the agreement of September 3, the Senate Government of West Berlin and the GDR agreed to facilitate and improve the travel and visitor traffic of West Berliners into East Berlin and East Germany. Another follow-up agreement signed on December 20, 1971 between the Senate of West Berlin and the GDR concerning the exchange of territory added by a protocol relating to the regulation and exchange of enclaves, completed the series of treaties between the two Germanies. Only one year later, Ostpolitik scored another Inter-German agreement called Treaty on Traffic Questions regulating questions of border crossing traffic, signed on May 26, 1972 (Der Verkehrsvertrag, 1989; p. 3).

Brandt's election victory of November, 1972 secured the continuation of Ostpolitik resulting in the Basic Treaty between the two Germanies. Formal negotiations on a mutual treaty began on June 15, 1972 which was finally concluded and signed on December 21, 1972 ( Von der Spaltung zur Einheit, 1992; p. 172). Chancellor Brandt viewed the treaty as "a significant event which will mark the beginning of the normalization of relations between the two German states" (Documents on Germany, 1986; p. 1207). The signatories declared themselves anxious to contribute to détente and security in Europe, and to respect each

other's territorial integrity and refrain from the threat or use of force (Die Grundlagenvertrag, 1973; p.3 ). Article IV established that neither of the two states could speak for Germany as a whole, as West Germany had previously done, following the Hallstein Doctrine that made the claim to sole representation an integral part of West German foreign policy. Article VIII of the Basic Treaty called for the exchange of permanent missions to be established at the respective seats of government. The permanent missions were diplomatic representations headed by envoys, but not ambassadors, thus avoiding full diplomatic recognition of the GDR as a foreign country with its own GDR citizenship. Subsequent to the treaty, supplemented by protocols, statements and letters elaborating on the treaty's various provisions, both the Federal Republic and the GDR agreed to initiate the necessary steps for full UN membership (Documents on Germany, 1986; p.1212). The two German states entered the United Nations in September, 1973. The Basic Treaty stopped short of the two states extending full diplomatic recognition to each another. But the Federal Republic had finally accepted de facto and de jure the existence of the two German states. Only five years previously grand coalition Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger had referred to the GDR as a phenomenon that should be ignored. Still, a letter to the East German government, Bonn, on December 21, 1972, made it clear this treaty did not conflict with the political aim of the Federal Republic of Germany to work for a state of peace in Europe on which the German nation would regain its unity through free self-determination (40 Jahre Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1989). Egon Bahr, Brandt's negotiator and chief architect of Ostpolitik, in 1973 interpreted Ostpolitik in a widely circulated off-the-record interview which appeared in the quarterly *ORBIS*. According to Bahr the ultimate goal of Ostpolitik

was the creation of a European security system in which the two German states would come close together. NATO and the Warsaw pact would be dissolved. Officially, Bonn distanced itself from Bahr's remarks explaining that such reflections were mere speculation by a foreign policy planner in order to appease the United States in particular.

The GDR viewed the Basic Treaty as a victory and as another giant step reaffirming her policy of the existence of the two German states with different societies. Bonn trusted that the GDR competing with the Federal Republic internationally would have to adapt to internationally recognized norms as set forth by the United Nations. The government also predicted that West Germany, thanks to its superior strength, would not have to fear the GDR's desperate desire for legitimacy through recognition. A statement on December 21, 1972 echoed the West German government's position by saying that the Basic Treaty of relations would not be worthy of this name if it did not open up the way along which both states can seek common interests in spite of their different fundamental views (40 Jahre Aussenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1989).

West Germany viewed these treaties and agreements as a success for Ostpolitik, an improvement of conditions for the people of Germany and as the first and groping steps of a more independent policy. The GDR valued the agreements as a step toward international recognition. The GDR reasoned that recognition would bolster and legitimize socialist East Germany, and strengthen her position toward Moscow.



Brandt's Ostpolitik, backed by a majority of West Germans, accepted the fact that unification with East Germany would have to be made on Soviet terms as long as Moscow was not willing to change the stalemate of the status quo. The treaty ratification in Bonn was rejected in the Bundesrat (Upper House). Brandt, the promoter of Ostpolitik, was forced to obtain an absolute majority in the German Federal Parliament (Bundestag) to overrule the Bundesrat. In November, 1972 Brandt's Social Democratic Party (SPD) for the first time since 1949 won a majority of Bundestag seats thus providing the SPD-FDP coalition with a 48 seat majority, and thus, further strengthening the course of Ostpolitik.

## CHAPTER V

### German Unification

The unification of Germany, despite Ostpolitik and growing mutual trust between Moscow and Bonn, would not have occurred had it not been for Mikhail Gorbachev, who came to the conclusion that both Central Eastern Europe free of Soviet domination and a unified Germany would serve future Soviet interests. The USSR apparently did not need East Germany as a military glacis and springboard for a possible invasion of Western Europe, i.e. NATO territory, anymore. Mikhail Gorbachev reversed Soviet foreign policies toward the United States, the West and the two Germanies after it became obvious that the USSR was unable to successfully compete with the Western world economically, technologically and even militarily. Also the forces of change and the urge for freedom in the GDR and East Central Europe were overwhelming. Ever since Lech Walesa and his Solidarność provoked the Polish leadership and the Kremlin in 1981, Soviet control of Eastern Europe had been challenged by the ideas of freedom and liberty as well as through uproar and upheaval against the communist grip.

In 1989 hundreds and thousands of East Germans dared to demonstrate for more personal and political freedom and the right to travel freely, finally confronting their rulers with the powerful demand that Germans were one people, and the East German regime crumbled within months. The regime and its ruling party, the SED, could not rely on Soviet tanks to crush any protest and to bring the people back in line with socialist regulations and

the demands of their rulers, as they had during the worker's uprising in 1953. Gorbachev, who was in full control of the Soviet Politburo and the military establishment, refused to lend the muscle of tanks and guns to an estranged and stubborn regime in East Berlin, and Gorbachev let Honecker know that "Whoever arrives late, life punishes." Gorbachev avoided bloodshed in the streets of Dresden, Leipzig and East Berlin, and thus contributed to the eventual downfall of Erich Honecker. More than that, Gorbachev also allowed the Berlin wall, erected on August 13, 1961, to be torn down on November 9, 1989. He finally lifted objections against a unified Germany and negotiated with West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl the path to German unity. The unity of the divided country was hammered out in the two plus four negotiations, which included both East and West Germany, the United States of America, the Soviet Union, France and the United Kingdom. The final obstacle on the path to German unity was overcome when Chancellor Helmut Kohl visited the Soviet Union on July 16, 1990. At a meeting with the Soviet President, Kohl obtained Gorbachev's assurance that Russia would recognize "Germany's full sovereignty and free choice of alliance" (Von der Spaltung zur Einheit, 1992; p. 208). On October 3, 1990 after more than four decades of cold-war-confrontation, Germany was a unified nation again.

In his 1989 book Perestroika, the Second Russian Revolution, Gorbachev elaborated on the problem of two German states, and stated that the revitalization of German unity would be incompatible with so-called Realpolitik. Gorbachev said that stable relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the USSR would be of historic importance, but noted that the two German states had entirely different socio-political systems and that

what was formed under the historical process would be under the scrutiny of history (Gorbachev, 1989).

Only two years later, events were virtually taken out of the hands of the rulers of the Soviet Union and the GDR. The East German people acted out of fear of a possible new Soviet repression such as the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion in Czechoslovakia, based on the Brezhnev doctrine that socialist countries within the European Soviet power orbit enjoy only limited sovereignty. The so-called Brezhnev Doctrine was a self proclaimed doctrine by the former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. The doctrine in essence meant that no socialist member nation of the Warsaw Pact may choose to leave the communist orbit and alliance on its own and without the consent of the USSR. Thus, according to Brezhnev, a Warsaw Pact member state had only limited sovereignty. The Brezhnev doctrine was applied to Czechoslovakia on the occasion of the invasion of the country by Russian forces on August 21, 1968, in order to keep Czechoslovakia in line, i.e. within the Soviet dominated Warsaw Pact, the military counterpart of NATO.

According to American veteran diplomat Vernon Walters, who served as US Ambassador to Bonn in 1989, the abandonment of the Brezhnev Doctrine by Mikhail Gorbachev would lead inevitably to the opening of the Berlin wall (Szabo, 1992). But this time the Soviet leadership reacted differently and punished neither East German demonstrators nor the courageous Hungarian regime which opened the iron curtain on the Hungarian-Austrian border in June, 1989.

Nobody seemed to envision German unity happening very soon, and even Gorbachev may have been surprised by the powerful development that would make history. Just about this time, Dieter Raff, a German author and political analyst, came to the conclusion that the German question and the problem of unification would likely remain unsolved for many years to come, for the fragile peace in Europe depended on recognition of the status quo in Germany (Raff, 1988).

When Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev was on a state visit to West Germany in June of 1989, he was well received both by the general public and the media, and of course by the German politicians. Gorbachev was viewed as the Soviet leader who might favorably respond to the West German demand to bring down the Berlin wall. He was also regarded as the first Russian leader possibly willing to discuss an all-German Federation or even unification, but most German politicians as well as the public could not imagine a Soviet turnabout in favour of German national unity. Both Kohl and Gorbachev agreed on a joint declaration that it should be the foremost task of their respective policies to “contribute to overcome the partition of Europe” (Garton Ash, 1993; p. 2). At the same time “Gorbymania” loaded with hopes for better relations between the two countries “swept” West Germany (Hancock & Welsh, 1994; p. 77).

The achievement of German unity was widely considered as goal that, under lucky circumstances, might eventually happen in the distant future. On the occasion of East German leader Erich Honecker’s visiting the Federal Republic in September of 1987, West

German host and Chancellor Helmut Kohl reiterated his belief: “We respect the existing borders, but we aim to overcome our division by peaceful means in a process of mutual understanding” (Von der Spaltung zur Einheit, 1992; p. 191).

On April 28, 1989, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, reacting to a call from East German demonstrators for freedom and unity, stated “that the crushing of decade-old and rigid structures in Europe creates new hope for the unity of our fatherland...” And “Our aim is a free and united Germany in a free and united Europe”(Von der..., 1992; p. 194).

On May 2, 1989 the then Hungarian leadership acted in an unusual way to tear down the borders that separated East and West. They began removing the barbed-wired fences along the Hungarian-Austrian border (Von der..., 1992; p.195). On October 23, 1989, 30,000 people demonstrated in the city of Leipzig, and Egon Krenz, member of the East German Politburo, succeeded Erich Honecker as Chairman of the Council of State in East Germany. On November 9, 1989, the GDR government decided to open the Berlin wall and the border with the Federal Republic.

On December 2 and 3, 1989, U.S. President George Bush and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev met off the coast of Malta. At this meeting Gorbachev said that the cold war was finally over and remained the thing of the past, but warned that any attempt to force German unification would hamper the process of change. On a visit to the Soviet capital Moscow on February 10 and 11, 1990, Chancellor Helmut Kohl and West German Foreign

Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher obtained assurance from Gorbachev and the Soviet leadership that the Germans would be allowed to settle the Question of unity themselves. On October, 3, 1990, the GDR became part of the Federal Republic of Germany and thus came under the jurisdiction of the West German Basic Law. The GDR ceased to exist. On the same day the President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, (*Von der Spaltung zur Einheit*, 1992; p. 211) sent congratulations to the German Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker and the whole German nation, a whole German nation that Gorbachev made possible after 45 years of post-war division.

One of the major steps toward German unification was the monetary, economic and social union between the Federal Republic and the GDR which became effective on July 1, 1990. It was not only one of the major steps toward unification but also a crucial undertaking to harmonize two economies that had been marked for decades by a command economy structure in the East and a free market economy in the West Germany. Hancock and Welsh attribute the “economic unification” to the continuous “waves of East Germans leaving for the West” (Hancock & Welsh, 1994; p.85). Even though it was a heavy burden on the part of the West German government and the tax payers, the political benefits were obvious. The people of the GDR entered the West German market economy leaving behind more than 40 years of socialist command economy structure. GDR’s economic system was always characterized by commodities in short supply. At the same time West Germany began exchanging the East German currency at the exchange rate of two to one. Only two months later, after 58 years of both Nazi and communist dictatorial rule, the 16 million residents of

East Germany participated in the first all German elections to the Bundestag.

Between July and October 1990, several major political actions and decisions paved the way to ultimate unification. Among the most important ones was the Unification Treaty signed by the People's Chamber on September 1990, and by the Bundestag on September 20. Prior to the German unification, the document suspending Four Powers' rights was signed in New York on October 1-2, 1990. Upon unification, on October 3, 1990, five new states were formed on the former GDR's territory.

The Soviet President signaled the end of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe, and gave in to the demand for German unification. The Soviet Union's economic and political problems, notably in Afghanistan, combined with ethnic unrest at home, contributed to the new policy. Gorbachev and the Soviet political elite may have hoped that Russian-German economic cooperation would infuse huge loans and economic assistance into the crumbling Soviet command economy system. Gorbachev and the Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze also realized that the expensive military showdown of the superpowers in Europe had become financially unbearable. Gorbachev also adhered to Glasnost and Perestroika, the principles he initiated for a new inner freedom of the Soviet Union. "We wish that in the upcoming 21st century peace shall prevail throughout the world," he said in his book , and he often reiterated this during his leadership (Gorbachev, 1987; p. 335). In solving the German Question which so heavily contributed to the East-West conflict, Mikhail Gorbachev reshaped post-war Europe and relieved the world from political tensions and a



superpower military conflict that at times brought the globe close to a nuclear Armageddon. He also wrote history as he came to respect the wishes of some 100 million people in Eastern Europe and Germany. He gave in to the powerful idea of freedom and liberty and the humanitarian beliefs of justice and equality as inscribed in the American Declaration of Independence, the French Revolution and the British Constitution.

## CHAPTER VI

### Conclusion

In analyzing West German policy toward the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and the GDR since 1969, it is apparent that Ostpolitik contributed to German unification on October 3, 1990, insofar as it improved political and economic relations with the Soviet Union. The Federal Republic's policy of rapprochement was essentially influential in achieving a working relationship between the West German government and the leadership of the GDR. Unquestionably, Ostpolitik and its practical application that led to significant changes on the European political arena seems to be congruent with existing theory of integrational processes, and subsystems in particular. As Dougherty and Pflatzgraff explain, "unification increases or strengthens the bonds among the units that form the system" (Dougherty & Pflatzgraff, 1990; p. 433). In the case of German unification the preconditions for a united system were already in place, despite four decades of partition. The efforts of Ostpolitik, continual commitment to peaceful coexistence and the fact that West Germany strictly adhered to the principle of nonviolence paved the way for unification by integrating two systems. Once again I would like to emphasize that political analysts and commentators tend to neglect or at least underestimate the likely effects of Ostpolitik on the process of German unification. They usually attribute the success of the peaceful German revolution resulting in national unity primarily as a superpower agreement. The analysis of the influence of Ostpolitik on the event of unification, as provided in this thesis, gives a new perspective for a substantial policy aimed at mutual trust and eliminating destructive antagonisms in central

Europe.

Ostpolitik, to a large extent, changed the post-war political atmosphere of fear and distrust. During the period between 1945 and 1989 West German continual commitment to seeking trust-building measures created an atmosphere for easing the policy of brinkmanship, and consequently resulted in dramatic changes on the arena of European politics. Since the end of World War II, Berlin has constantly been a source of tensions. The erection of the Berlin wall on August 13, 1961 became another political flashpoint between the superpowers. Even though Ostpolitik cannot be considered as the only vital development on the way to German unification, it was critical in helping to solve the German question.

However, it is important to note that Bonn's Ostpolitik was only one of the significant factors which led to the end of Cold War in Europe. Without the gradual rapprochement between the United States and the Soviet Union, West German Ostpolitik and unification would not have been possible. There is no doubt that the summit meeting that took place on the ocean liner Maxim Gorky, off the coast of Malta on December 2-3, 1989 finally marked the end of the Cold War with President Gorbachev saying "the Cold War remains the thing of the past" (Von der Spaltung zur Einheit, 1992; p.189). The Malta summit produced an avalanche of dramatic developments, both in Eastern Europe and Germany. The following ten months brought about the collapse of communism in the east and Central Europe, as well as peaceful unification of Germany.

Ostpolitik was both an overdue addition to successful post-war Westpolitik and a new direction of policy and conviction aimed at the East. The new course, designed by the Brandt government, was primarily marked by its objective to reach a modus vivendi and preserve co-existence between the Federal Republic and her Eastern European counterparts, including the Soviet Union. This policy called for cooperation and partnership and for a turning away from Cold War antagonism, improving mutual trust between Moscow and Bonn, despite the unsolved Berlin problem and the Soviet Union denying unification of Germany. But in fact the Soviet Union did not turn away from a controversial attitude. This might have been the factor that slowed down the process of mutual trust and good neighborly relations.

The Federal Republic's new policy fostering change through closer relations was supportive of the ultimate goal of self-determination that eventually could result in a unified Germany. Another key to unification of the two German states was the 1989 Kremlin decision to free East Europe from Soviet hegemony. In addition, West Germany and NATO followed a dual strategy of détente bolstered by maintaining adequate defensive military strength in the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO). West Germany added her own policy of compromise, reconciliation and peace. There are numerous reasons which made Ostpolitik a historical success. One of the most crucial factors that made it so was the fact that Ostpolitik was, to a large degree congruent with the new thinking of Glasnost and Perestroika, Gorbachev's grand design for new Soviet internal and external policies. With their approval of German unification under conditions that a united Germany reduce her military strength, and legally recognize the Oder-Niesse line as Poland's final Western

border, Gorbachev and the Soviet leadership honored some twenty years of Ostpolitik. They insisted however, on Germany not becoming a nuclear power and on huge economic concessions. The Soviets, in 1989, must have considered a unified Germany to be more in their interest than a divided nation and the indefinite continuation of East-West tensions and a huge military apparatus that was crippling Soviet economic progress. Mikhail Gorbachev based his “new political thinking” on practical steps to improve the international atmosphere. At the same time he pledged for a new kind of Russian foreign policy since he believed that neither the Soviet Union nor the United States were able to enforce their will upon others. Gorbachev’s ideas of “the new political thinking” were very well received in West Germany (Gorbachev, 1987).

The redirection of West German eastern policies toward policy based on treaty agreements resulted in the basic treaty with the GDR, the renunciation of the Hallstein Doctrine, the Berlin agreement, the Polish-German treaty, the Bonn-Moscow treaty and the Federal Republic’s contribution to the Helsinki Agreements. All were received very well in Moscow.

Years before the unification took place, the goal was partially achieved by East Germany’s peaceful revolution. West Germany had emerged as a credible and economically indispensable partner of the Soviet Union. Simultaneously, the Soviets had toned down their propaganda offensive against a “West German warrior state,” and began to abandon the distorted picture of a militaristic West German state subservient to the United States.

The Federal Republic's trust building overtures toward Moscow and its Warsaw Pact allies, and its political restraint in renunciation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, created an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect between Soviet rulers and the administrations in Bonn. The Kremlin, despite fundamental ideological differences, came to the conclusion that West Germany had undergone such significant changes that it was no longer to be perceived as a threat to the existing borders in Europe. The Soviets clearly became reliable partners in bilateral relations and world affairs. They determined that the Federal Republic was a peaceful country that did not pose a threat to anyone interested in disarmament and settlement of differences and was committed to peacefully achieving national unity at last. This new state of affairs was continued by the German-Polish treaty of December 1970, as well as the German-Soviet treaty of August 12, 1970. Furthermore the Basic Treaty between the Federal Republic and the GDR of December 21, 1972 marked the next step toward normalization between East and West Europe. Alongside the political agreements between the West Germany and eastern European countries cultural cooperation started. These agreements, both political and cultural, further improved the relations between West Germany and the USSR. Another cornerstone of West Germany's policy of détente was a treaty between the Federal Republic and Czechoslovakia signed on December 19, 1973.

While the Soviet Union could hardly forget her death toll of at least 22 million soldiers and civilians in the war with Nazi-Germany, they realized that the young West

German Republic was neither able nor willing to forcibly reshape the European map. They viewed the Federal Republic as a stable and proven democracy, even though Soviet propaganda occasionally deemed otherwise, with only marginal signs of political radicalism and nationalism, a republic which had recognized post-war political and territorial reapportionment resulting in the beginning of Ostpolitik.

Some allies had suspicions about the Federal Republic's true objectives and policy toward Soviet Russia. It was noted that Soviet leaders had more frequently visited Bonn than allied and West German politicians had gone to the Soviet capital both during periods of frosty relations and during periods of détente between East and West. But fears and speculations of new "Rapallo" proved unfounded.

Though earlier opposed to the social and liberal coalition's Ostpolitik as forfeiture of rights, Willy Brandt's successors, Helmut Schmidt and Helmut Kohl, reiterated the significance of the principle that treaties have to be honored. Kohl and Hans Dietrich Genscher, Foreign Minister under Helmut Schmidt and Helmut Kohl, personally committed West German foreign policy to détente and Ostpolitik, rejecting any notion of an expansionist nature of Soviet foreign policy toward the West. West Germany, denying Bonn's special role in connection with the Soviet Union and reiterating its uncompromised commitment to NATO, successfully avoided entanglement in Ronald Reagan's crusade. Occasionally, Bonn viewed its interests to be different from those of the United States, and from the standpoint of a divided country, Germany was vulnerable to a potential Soviet

attack on West Berlin for which West Germany felt responsible, even though West Berlin had never been a constituent part of the Federal Republic.

Kohl's conservative government adhered to Brandt's philosophy that friendship with the West and understanding with the East are inseparable and complimentary. Both Kohl and Gensher pushed for the elimination of NATO's cruise missiles and Pershing 2 intermediate range missiles after rejecting the development of cruise missiles on West German soil.

West Germany expanded Ostpolitik to further the goal of détente and cooperation in the early and mid - 80's. In his first official address delivered to the members of the German Parliament on October 13, 1982, Chancellor Kohl reiterated that the Federal Republic would always remain committed to a policy of freedom in Europe and worldwide, a policy of European unity and the self-determination of the German people. On March 30, 1983, the West German government wholeheartedly supported the limitation and elimination of medium range missiles deployed on both sides of the iron curtain. The use of both conventional and nuclear weapons would have made East and West Germany alike the primary European war theater zone and target, with devastating effects. Bonn now felt it would have sufficient political discretion to call attention to this. West Germany's government began



West German Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher, the executor of Ostpolitik, at times defined German goals in accord with East Germany's Erich Honecker, who echoed Genscher's pledge that never again should a dictatorship originate on German soil. Genscher stressed the idea of a new European security structure which should include the Soviet Union. He embarked on a national foreign policy triggered by redefined German interests.

In 1986, backed by a survey of the West German public, which revealed a preference for NATO over neutralism by 64 percent to 35 percent, Genscher managed to pursue a twofold policy. He set in motion a special relationship with Gorbachev, who was receptive to West German proposals for a closer affinity between the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union. Genscher wanted Gorbachev's "European House" free of any foreign domination and possibly of violent conflict. In terms of national goal and stripped of euphemisms used to appease West Germany's Western allies, Kohl and Genscher envisioned a Germany free of nuclear weapons, vacated by foreign troops and unified as one nation.

The Kremlin decided to get rid of a heavy political and economic burden, serving German political objectives that to a certain extent coincided with Moscow's new political and economic priorities to keep together the Soviet Union as a nation, in the face of ethnic turmoil, national unrest and the collapse of the Soviet command economy.

The patience and perseverance of Ostpolitik paid off. Germany unexpectedly achieved unification almost overnight from a conjunction of historically unique

circumstances which all played together. East Germany, much to the surprise of the world, simply ceased to exist without the backing of the USSR. Unification had become possible thanks to a new definition of Soviet interests. East Germany's peaceful revolution was triggered by Soviet willingness to grant Eastern Europe self-determination. Five years after unification took place, former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev, in an interview for the German magazine *Deutschland*, evaluated his and Chancellor Kohl's decisions to make the two German states a unified country: "in relation to the question of German unity, I am convinced that we, with Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl, acted in accordance with the spirit of the times and the demands of the concrete historical moment" (*Deutschland*, August 1995; p. 6). This also was a result of 20 years of Ostpolitik which made Germany an equally entitled partner in the eyes of Soviet leadership, especially Gorbachev who stressed that the Russian Government wanted cooperation on the basis of equality, reciprocity and mutual understanding (Gorbachev, 1987). Kohl and Genscher seized a historical opportunity and determined "not to miss the unification train which may not come another time" (Kohl), and eventually harvested the fruit of Ostpolitik, that evolved from an idea to Realpolitik. It should also be mentioned that finally, after four and a half decades Germany evolved as a unified and entirely sovereign country that took her place as an equal partner on the global arena.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Chronology of Events That Led to German Unity**

**1989**

**July:**

Refugees from the GDR take asylum in the West German mission in East Berlin and in the FRG's embassies in Budapest and Prague.

**Early September:**

50,000 inhabitants of the GDR flee to the Federal Republic via Hungary which opened the "Iron Curtain" to Austria.

**September 30:**

About 600 GDR refugees at the Embassy of the Federal Republic in Prague are allowed to leave for West Germany.

**Early October:**

Some 1500 GDR refugees at the Embassy Grounds of the Federal Republic in Warsaw leave for the West.

**October 7:**

Official celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the GDR in East Berlin. Thousands demonstrate against the dictatorship of the Socialist Unity Party (SED).

**October 9:**

“Monday Demonstration” in Leipzig. Over 100,000 chant: “we are the people.” Further large-scale demonstrations follow in other East German cities.

**October 18:**

After holding reins of power for 18 years, SED General Secretary, Erich Honecker is removed from the office. Egon Krenz succeeds him.

**November 4:**

In East Berlin, the largest ever demonstration in the GDR’s history draws roughly 1,000,000 people.

**November 7:**

The GDR government resigns.

**November 9:**

The Berlin wall is opened. After 28 years, additional crossing points to the Federal Republic of Germany are established.

**November 13:**

Hans Modrow (SED) becomes the Prime Minister of the GDR council of ministers.

**November 18:**

Chancellor Helmut Kohl delivers a policy statement in the West German Bundestag on overcoming the division of Germany (and Europe). He also presents a ten-point program.

**December 1:**

The Peoples Chamber (East German Parliament) strikes the SED's power monopoly from the constitution of the GDR.

**December 4:**

At a NATO summit in Brussels (Belgium), US President Bush reports on his recent meeting with Soviet President Gorbachev at which the "German question" was the central topic.

**December 3-4:**

SED General Secretary, Egon Krenz resigns from all party and government offices.

**December 7:**

The "round table" talks between East German governing parties and the opposition begin.  
Free elections are announced.

**December 8-9:**

European Council in Strasbourg (France): the heads of the state and government declare that the unification of Germany must be achieved in harmony with the Helsinki final act of 1975 and imbedded in European integration.

**December 19-20:**

West German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl holds talks in Dresden with Prime Minister Hans Modrow on the prospects for developing relations between the two German states.

**December 22:**

The Brandenburg Gate in Berlin is opened.

**December 22:**

The visa and minimum daily exchange requirements are abolished for visitors entering the GDR from West Germany and West Berlin.

**1990****January:**

Monday demonstrations in East Germany continued. The crowds chant: “we are one people.”

**February 10:**

Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher meet in Moscow with General Secretary, Michael Gorbachev, who assures the Germans that they may live together in one state.

**February 13-14:**

East German Prime Minister, Modrow visits Bonn. Chancellor Kohl suggests negotiations on an economic and monetary union.

**February 14:**

The foreign ministers of the United States, Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union, including the two German states agree to begin formal talks on German unity ("the 2 plus 4" talks).

**February 24-25:**

Chancellor Kohl meets with US President Bush at Camp David to discuss the security alliance between Europe and North America, united Germany and its final border with Poland.

**March 18:**

The first free elections are held in the GDR.

**March 19:**

At the CSCE Economic Conference in Bonn, Chancellor Kohl emphasizes that the unification of Germany must be achieved in agreement with its neighbors in West and East.

**April 5:**

Constitute meeting of the first freely elected People's Chambers of the GDR takes place.

**April 12:**

For the first time in its history, the People's Chamber of the GDR elects a democratic government. Lothar de Maizere (CDU) is elected Prime Minister.

**April 19:**

De Maizere declares a commitment to German unity.

**April 28:**

The European Community (EC) heads of state and government welcome German unification at a special session in Dublin (Ireland) and prepare the way for integrating East Germany into the Community.

**May 5:**

Initial round table talks on external aspects of German unity take place in Bonn ("2 plus 4 meeting").



**May 6:**

Local elections held in the GDR. CDU continues to be the strongest party.

**May 16-17:**

In Washington, Chancellor Kohl consults with President Bush further steps toward German unity, particularly with regard to the achievement of unrestricted sovereignty.

**May 18:**

The treaty establishing the monetary, economic and social union between West Germany and GDR is signed in Bonn.

**June 8:**

Chancellor Kohl and President Bush emphasize that full membership of united Germany in the NATO is indispensable.

**June 10:**

The three western powers give up their reservations on the representation of Berlin in the Bundestag and the Bundesrat (Upper Chamber).

**June 17:**

First ever joint session of the Bundestag and the GDR's People's Chamber commemorates the June 17, 1953 uprising in the GDR.

**June 21:**

The Bundestag and the People's Chamber approve identically worded resolutions on the border between united Germany and Poland. They announce their intention to reaffirm the definite nature of the border (Oder-Neisse line) on the basis of an international treaty.

**June 17:**

The governments of the Federal Republic and the GDR approve a reciprocal agreement on the elimination of border checks along the Inter-German border.

**July 1:**

The monetary, economic and social union between the Federal Republic and the GDR enters into force

**July 5-6:**

NATO governments declare that the unified Germany will be an indispensable stability factor in the Atlantic Alliance.

**July 9-11:**

The heads of state and government taking part in the G7 economic summit in Houston, Texas, welcome the unification of Germany as a visible expression of the right to self-determination and as a contribution towards stability in Europe.

**July 14-16:**

Chancellor Kohl and Foreign Minister Genscher visit the USSR and reach an agreement with President Gorbachev that the united Germany shall have full sovereignty, be able to decide freely on its alliance membership in the future, and will reduce the strength of Germany's armed forces to 370,000 troops. The Soviet Union agrees to withdraw her forces from the Eastern German soil by 1994.

**July 17:**

The six foreign ministers in the context of the "2 plus 4" talks and the foreign minister of Poland agree in Paris on principles for establishing the definite borders of the United Germany with Poland. The ministers agree that, instead of a peace treaty, a document on Germany regulating all questions concerning full sovereignty will be signed by participants and submitted for approval at the CSCE conference.

**July 22:**

The People's Chamber pass a law establishing five states (Länder) in the GDR.

**August 2:**

An election treaty is signed between the Federal Republic and the GDR establishing the modalities for all German elections to take place on December 2, 1990.

**August 23:**

The People's Chamber of the GDR resolves to accede to the Federal Republic of Germany on October 3, 1990.

**August 31:**

The unification treaty between the Federal Republic and the GDR is signed.

**September 12:**

Talks between the foreign ministers ("2 plus 4") are concluded. The treaty on the final settlement with respect to Germany is signed.

**September 19:**

The GDR's People's Chamber ratifies the unification treaty.

**September 20:**

The German Bundestag ratifies the unification treaty.

**October 1-2:**

The document suspending Four-Power rights in Germany and Berlin is signed in New York.

**October 3:**

The GDR accedes to the territory of application of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of

Germany in accordance with Article 23 of the Basic Law. Five new states (Länder) formed in the territory of the former GDR: Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia. Article 23 of the Basic Law (Constitution) of the Federal Republic of Germany reads: “For the time being, this Basic Law applies in the territory of the Länder Baden, Bavaria, Greater Berlin, Hamburg, Hesse, Lower Saxony, North-Rhine Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatina, Schleswig-Holstein, Württemberg-Baden, and Württemberg-Hohenzollern. It is to be put into force in other parts of Germany on their accession.”

**October 4:**

The first session of the Bundestag is held in the old Reichstag Building in Berlin.

**October 14:**

Elections to the state parliaments are held in the new five states (Länder) in former East Germany.

**November 9:**

The Soviet Union and Germany sign a treaty on good neighbourliness in Bonn, with the intention to finally end the era of confrontation.

**November 14:**

Germany and Poland sign the German-Polish border treaty confirming the finality of the

Oder-Neisse river border between the two nations.

**December 2:**

The first all German Election in 58 years is held. Kohl's CDU-FDP coalition government wins with 46.7 % of the vote showed a solid mandate.

**1991**

**June 20:**

In a close vote the German Bundestag voted for Berlin as the future seat of the united German government.

**Germany by the numbers:**

Following the October 3, 1990 unification, the Federal Republic of Germany became the second largest populated country in Europe besides Russia. The 16.4 million inhabitants of the 109,000 square kilometers former GDR extended the Federal Republic's territory of 248,000 square kilometers to 357,000 square kilometers with total population of 78.7 million. The United Germany is about the size of the state of Montana. The country now consists of 16 states. Reunited Berlin, the nation's capital and future seat of the federal government, has 3.4 million residents. Germany is a full member of the United Nations, NATO and the European Union.

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