

dodis.ch/52928

Austria

Circular¹ by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

DEBATE ON GERMAN REUNIFICATION; INFORMATION AND LANGUAGE REGIME

Vienna, 10 November 1989

Concerning a possible redesigning of the German-German relationship in connection with the current debate on East-West development, the following information and language regime in agreement with Dep. II.3² are being disclosed:

1) Basic documents

The victorious powers had already agreed at the *Yalta Conference* (in early 1945) about the division of Germany (“westward shift” of Poland; breaking up of Germany: “In the exercise of this power, they (the victorious powers) will take such measures ... including the complete disarmament ... and dismemberment of Germany ... as they see necessary ... for keeping the future peace”).

With the resolutions of the *Potsdam Conference* (summer 1945) the victors took over authority in Germany and divided the country into occupation zones. Until further notice, no central German Government was to be installed. The final territorial settlement should be reserved for a peace conference. A formulation from the Yalta conference report was included again (“... take measures which are necessary to assure that Germany can never again ... threaten world peace”).

In the preamble of the Basic Law, the entire German people are called upon to “in free self-determination, bring about the unity and freedom of Germany in a united Europe”.

The “Convention on relations between the Three Powers and the FRG” (1952), by which the occupation regime was ended and the FRG gained full sovereignty, states: “In view of the international situation, which until now has prevented the reunification of Germany and the conclusion of a peace treaty, the Three Powers retain their heretofore exercised or held rights and responsibilities with respect to Berlin and Germany as a whole, including the reunification of Germany and a peace settlement.”

¹ *Circular (translated from German)*: Austrian State Archive ÖStA, AdR, BMAA, II-Pol 1989, GZ. 22.17.01/8-II.1/89. Written and signed by Johann Plattner, dodis.ch/P57520; also published in Wilson Center, doc. [165713](https://dodis.ch/P57513). Sent to the Foreign Minister, the General Secretary, the section heads, the Departments II.3 and II.6 as well as the Austrian diplomatic representations according to the distribution list “East + West.” The head of the department for Eastern and Southeastern Europe in the Political Section of the Austrian Foreign Ministry, Ernst Sucharipa, had demanded major changes in the wording.

² Ernst Sucharipa (1947–2005), dodis.ch/P57511, Head of the Department for Eastern and Southeastern Europe in the Political Section of the Austrian Foreign Ministry 1987–1990.

67 In the “*Treaty on the basis of relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic*” (1972) both countries argue for the development of normal good-neighborly relations on the basis of equality and reaffirm the inviolability of the existing borders. In the preamble, however, the differing views of the FRG and the GDR on fundamental questions, including the national question, are determined.

In “*Letter on German Unity*” (1970³), the FRG affirmed its claim to reunification (“... to work for a state of peace in Europe in which the German nation will regain its unity through free self-determination”).

Retention of the reunification claim is also provided in *Additional Clarifications of the FRG on the Treaty of Rome* (non-recognition of East German citizenship; protocol on intra-German trade; reservation concerning a possible future EC membership of the GDR).

The *Federal Constitutional Court* asserted in its judgments on the Eastern Treaties (1973 and 1975) that the German Reich continues to exist under international law, and the restoration of national unity may not be given up by any constitutional body as a political goal.

The *Constitution of the GDR* (1974) does not contain any intention to reunify.

2) *The Policy of the Bonn Government*

Despite their retention of the claim to reunification, the government in Bonn operates under the current reality of the existence of two German States, respects the inviolability of existing borders and maintains a “Permanent Representation” in (East)-Berlin. This representation is, however, not under the control of the Foreign Office, but by the Federal Chancellery and is headed by a Secretary of State. A GDR citizenship has, however, never been recognized.

The government in Bonn has tried in recent years to work through a policy of small steps to improve the status quo in relations with the GDR (improving the human rights situation, more freedom and democracy in the GDR, more freedom to travel through a “permeable” border).

In his previous statements on German-German relations, Foreign Minister Genscher⁴ has pointed out in light of recent developments that the FRG also sees the framework for the goal formulated in the Letter on German Unity in the European Peace Order. This goal can only be achieved in full with respect to the concluded treaties and only with the consent of all countries in Europe, not against them. In accordance with the thought expressed in the Basic Law (“... in a united Europe ...”), Genscher wants changes in the German-German relationship to be embedded in a pan-European development. With regard to statements made by West German politicians, in which the existing borders of Poland are questioned, Chancellor Kohl⁵ and Foreign Minister Genscher have since clarified that the FRG makes no territorial claims toward Poland.

³ In the original falsely indicated as 1979.

⁴ Hans-Dietrich Genscher (1927–2016), dodis.ch/P15414, Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the FRG 1.10.1982–17.5.1992.

⁵ Helmut Kohl (1930–2017), dodis.ch/P31852, Chancellor of the FRG 1.10.1982–27.10.1998.

3) *The Attitude of the GDR*

The government of the GDR without change emphasizes – not least in the context of citizenship – the existence and international recognition of two German states.

It appears worth noting that the reform groups have not in any way called the independent existence of the GDR into question so far; the right to reunification is not raised in opposition circles.

4) *The Attitude of the European States*

From Gorbachev's⁶ statements (the current European order is not being idealized, but recognition of the post-war reality has so far secured peace on the continent) and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's⁷ statements (rejection of revanchist forces that tried to revise postwar realities in Europe) it is clear that the Moscow leadership still holds on to the "status quo ante" and will not allow any change of this order.

In the relevant parts of the joint statement signed by Gorbachev and Kohl on 13 June 1989, formulations are used which are compatible with the position of the Soviet Union (namely the right to freely choose one's system, but respect for the integrity of each State; and the participation of Berlin (West) in the developing cooperation under the strict observation of the Four Power Agreement of 1971). A rethinking in Moscow of the Berlin question, or even the Germany question, has not yet come about.

Of the Western European countries, only statements by France and Belgium on the German-German question have become known. President Mitterrand⁸ noted that the reunification of the two German states is a legitimate concern of the German people, but that this issue also concerns the four victorious powers and that European stability must be given priority. Foreign Minister Eyskens⁹ declared in the Belgian senate that there is sympathy for the German people's desire for reunification, but that a solution to this problem must be integrated into the pan-European development context.

The overall conclusion is that the Western European countries are reserving judgement on the opportunities apparently presented by German reunification.

The United States is much more positive towards a reunification of the two German states.

What solutions are to be found for the German-German question (the continuation of a second German state but with democratic structures, a federal solution, reunification) are not foreseeable. It is highly probable that the topic of reunification will occupy and influence European policy in the coming years.

Only if the embassy is addressed in this regard, should it state that the right to self-determination, which Austria supports without restriction, must of course

⁶ Mikhail Gorbachev (*1931), dodis.ch/P31707, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union 11.3.1985–24.8.1991, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union 25.5.1989–15.3.1990 and President of the Soviet Union 15.3.1990–25.12.1991.

⁷ Eduard Shevardnadze (1928–2014), dodis.ch/P54603, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union 2.7.1985–26.12.1990.

⁸ François Mitterrand (1916–1996), dodis.ch/P13775, President of France 21.5.1981–17.5.1995.

⁹ Mark Eyskens (*1933), dodis.ch/P57464, Belgian Foreign Minister 19.6.1989–7.3.1992.

- 69 also apply to the population of the GDR. Any change in the German-German relationship, however, should be such that the détente and peace process in Europe is not endangered.