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Federal Republic of Germany

*Memo¹ for the Foreign Minister of the FRG, Hans-Dietrich Genscher²*SOVIET POSITION ON THE GERMAN QUESTION. LATEST COMMENTS
BY GORBACHEV AND SHEVARDNADZE

Bonn, 31 January 1990

Purpose of the memo: for information

I.

With his manifest and unreserved support for German unification, Gorbachev³ has put himself – as so often in the past – in the vanguard of a development that has been recognised as unstoppable. He is acting from the conviction that he will only be able to influence further developments between East and West Germany if Moscow no longer seeks to slow down the course of events. However, Gorbachev's support is surprisingly clear. While not unexpected, it is more the logical conclusion of his view that the German Question remains open and is thus the culmination so far of a development apparent in his comments since November 1989, as well as in Shevardnadze's⁴ speech in Brussels on 19 December 1989⁵ and article in "Izvestia" on 18 January 1990.

II.

Gorbachev is acting now because – like Shevardnadze in his article in "Izvestia" – he wants to largely steer and tangibly influence the discussion on and organi-

1 *Memo (copy, translated from German):* Political Archive of the German Federal Foreign Office PA/AA B 38, Bd. 14707, file reference 213-321.00 SOW. Written by Klaus Neubert, dodis.ch/P57432, Dietmar Stüdemann, dodis.ch/P57433 and Helmut Wolfgang Brett, dodis.ch/P57434 and signed by Klaus Neubert. Forwarded to Hans-Dietrich Genscher via Wilhelm Höynck, dodis.ch/P57435, Dieter Kastrup, dodis.ch/P57383 and Jürgen Sudhoff, dodis.ch/P57384. Handwritten note by Frank Lambach, dodis.ch/P57395, to Ulrich Brandenburg, dodis.ch/P57436, from 31 January 1990: In my opinion, the "castling queenside" involves constantly adapting to a development that is getting out of control [for] Moscow. Also published in: Die Einheit. Das Auswärtige Amt, das DDR-Außenministerium und der Zwei-plus-Vier-Prozess, ed. by Horst Möller et. al. on behalf of the Institute for Contemporary History Munich–Berlin, Göttingen, 2015, doc. 44.

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

3 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.

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

5 In this speech before the Political Committee of the European Parliament Eduard Shevardnadze explained the Soviet position on European integration and on a possible German unification.

125 sation of a CSCE Summit. He is making use of the short period before Ottawa⁶ to lend impetus to the discussion in the West. At the same time, he is addressing the Soviet public with the aim of gaining support for a historically inevitable and increasingly urgently needed solution to the German Question. This latter aspect is very important for Soviet domestic policy as regards underpinning foreign policy. The clear show of support for Modrow⁷ and the fact that the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) has now recognised German unification as necessary make Gorbachev's comments helpful for this affiliated party's election campaign. His critical subtext denouncing destabilisation attempts should be understood in this context. In protecting Modrow, he is simultaneously avoiding any connection with the future fate of the PDS. Gorbachev is explicitly addressing Germans in both East and West, thus reflecting Shevardnadze's positive conclusion in the "Izvestia" article and trusting the Federal Government to live up to its historic responsibility for peace and stability in Europe. Moscow is already developing positions for its dialogue with both German states after 18 March.⁸

III.

1. In view of German unification, which Moscow regards as inevitable, this process must be guided. That is why Moscow cannot afford to abandon the classic instruments (Four Power responsibility; enemy state clause⁹) now. In the future, we should continue to expect Soviet warnings against unilateral and destabilising measures aimed at the GDR and in relation to our European neighbours (no automatic incorporation of the GDR, no interference in internal affairs and a clear stance on the border issue).

In view of these signals from Moscow, we should take the following into account:

- The Four Power rights are important for the position of the three protecting powers *in Berlin* even if developments between East and West Germany are likely to improve the city's situation independently of these rights. However, their original purpose of safeguarding *peace* in and around Germany has now been *superseded by other instruments*.

- Shevardnadze's reference to the enemy state clause as a *peacekeeping instrument* is equally obsolete. As regards *peacekeeping*, the Four Power rights and the enemy state clause only make sense if there is a *threat of war*. As neither German state poses such a threat, these two instruments are not applicable.

- Shevardnadze's linking of the Four Power rights, the Charter of the United Nations and the CSCE process is something *we* can turn around and use for our-

⁶ *The Open Skies conference convened on 12 February 1990 in Ottawa, Canada. It was the first large scale international conference after the fall of the Berlin Wall.*

⁷ Hans Modrow (*1928), dodis.ch/P54796, Chairman of the GDR Council of Ministers 13.11.1989–12.4.1990.

⁸ *On 18 March 1990 the first free and democratic election to the People's Chamber of the GDR took place.*

⁹ *The term enemy state clause refers to Article 53, Article 107 and a half-sentence in Article 77 of the Charter of the United Nations of 26 June 1945 by which the signatory States can take enforcement action directed against renewal of aggressive policy on the part of an enemy state (including military intervention) without special authorisation of the UN Security Council. Enemy states are defined as any state which during the Second World War has been an enemy of any signatory of the present Charter (that is, primarily Germany and Japan).*

selves in the following way. If the Four Power rights and the UN are not current issues because there is *no threat to peace*, then they are at best a type of insurance policy for purely hypothetical cases, thus leaving the CSCE as the only truly relevant instrument for *shaping policy* rather than preventing war.

2. The Soviets will therefore attempt to steer further developments in German politics at the CSCE Summit. This is the only framework that enables Moscow to make use of developments in Germany for its primary interest in pan-European unification.

We, too, should determine the course of the CSCE Summit in light of German policy aspects. In giving us the right to self-determination and the possibility of peaceful change, the HFA¹⁰ provides us with enough prerequisites for German unification. It would be in our interest to state in a Summit document that Germany's development must be embedded in Europe's. This would simultaneously commit all Europeans to German unification. However, we should not tie this to a strict schedule so that the strong momentum in German development can continue speeding up European integration to the same extent as before (locomotive function).

In order to create a politically meaningful connection that is also *flexible* as regards the concrete development of relations between East and West Germany (synchronisation), it seems sensible to expand the CSCE process, including a certain amount of institutionalisation.

IV.

1. The German Question is one of Moscow's most important instruments for *influencing* European development in view of the changes in the Warsaw Pact partner countries, the unstoppable withdrawal of Soviet troops from Central Europe and recognition of the dramatic economic emergency in the Soviet Union. With regard to the CSCE Summit, Moscow will thus try to make greater use of *us* as an *engine* for *pan-European security structures*.

– Moves towards closer relations between East and West Germany and German unification will be fostered by progress in West-East relations/arms control and economic and political cooperation. Germany's interest in the first of these points is thus useful with a view to the Soviet interests in the latter.

In this regard, German interests are a possible "catalyst" for developments that could be of benefit to the Soviet Union. We should develop this element in our own interests and highlight it. This would also be a logical continuation of previous constellations in which both German states played a part in arms-control achievements via their alliances. We still have this constellation. It will remain as a positive factor for West and East *in the process and after* unification of the two German states.

– At the same time, the Soviet Union will endeavour to find common interests with other European countries that could form a counterbalance to developments between East and West Germany. (It is likely to continue trying to avoid unilateral dependencies when it comes to safeguarding its interests). In this way, Moscow

¹⁰ Helsinki Final Act of 1 August 1975.

127 can use the German Question as a lever with our western partners in order to achieve a “soft landing” in terms of time in the changed relations between East and West Germany.

2. As regards protecting our own interests, this means putting German unification at the heart of plans for the future Europe. As the “heart of European security” (Shevardnadze’s article in “Izvestia” on 18 January), Germany fosters the transformation of the alliances in a cooperative security structure. Our aim of political integration between all Europeans is thus coming closer to being achieved. We should therefore encourage Moscow in its firm belief that only a united Germany will be a key factor for stability and the pacemaker for Central and Eastern Europe’s economic and social development.

Gorbachev’s “big move” shows that in light of developments in the GDR (and other Warsaw Pact countries), he has decided between Shevardnadze’s two views of changes between East and West Germany, that is, a “catalyst” or a “destructive factor”. Only a course that uses the momentum of German developments for peace and stability in Europe, rather than opposing them, will foster the Soviet Union’s security interests and role in shaping events. At the same time, this move creates new “coordinates” for our policies. We will need to integrate the effects of Gorbachev’s decision on the direction to take carefully in our policies on Germany and the *West*.