

Soviets on rampage against German unity

by Mark Burdman and Konstantin George

Since the opening of the Berlin Wall on Nov. 9, the Soviet government and Communist Party spokesmen have issued approximately one dozen statements attacking the reunification of Germany. The majority of these were issued in a four-day stretch, Nov. 14-17.

The Soviets have been attacking German reunification as “destabilizing” and “threatening to stability,” even though in fact, it is the insanely provocative response of the Soviet authorities to the dramatic developments in and around Berlin that is destabilizing and threatening. What makes it doubly insane, is that the Soviet Union itself—as distinct from its leadership—needs an economically and politically strong Germany, linked to a prosperous Poland and Eastern Europe. This is necessary, in order to ensure that the conditions of prosperity exist in Europe, in which the necessary levels of aid can be provided to the U.S.S.R., to head off economic catastrophe and the starvation of millions within the U.S.S.R.’s borders.

As the saying goes, “Why bite off the hand that feeds you?” But then again, sanity has never been the Russians’ strong point.

‘Not on the agenda’

Three of the Soviet diatribes were uttered by President Mikhail Gorbachov himself. On Nov. 14, he met visiting French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas and stated that German reunification was “not on the agenda.” He strongly warned that the processes of change in Eastern Europe had to be carried out in a “calm and considered way,” or else the process of change as a whole could be “undermined.” He attacked those who in the West who were “crying victory in the Cold War” and trying to “export capitalism” to the East.

Meeting Soviet students in Moscow the next day, Gorbachov declared that the postwar division of Europe is an “historical reality” resulting from World War II. “This fact has been recognized by the world community, and one should proceed from this reality,” he went on. He said that talking about reunification only “opens a Pandora’s box.”

Then, meeting with a joint Franco-German delegation led by the two countries’ respective parliament speakers Laurent Fabius and Rita Süßmuth Nov. 17, Gorbachov warned that it would be playing with fire to discuss eventual German reunification. “Who would dare to destabilize the very system that has preserved peace and stability in Europe?” On

West German television the night of Nov. 18, Süßmuth confirmed that Gorbachov had told the Franco-German delegation that German reunification is “not on the agenda.”

Provocative language was also used by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze Nov. 15, during a meeting in Moscow with France’s Dumas. According to the Soviet news agency TASS, Shevardnadze warned: “The question of a reunited Germany touches the life-and-death interests of many European countries.” He denounced “circles in West Germany” who are trying to push the theme of “German reunification . . . to the level of the policy of the day,” as “an effort to call into question the existence of a sovereign state, namely the German Democratic Republic, and even of the territorial-political order on the continent as a whole.” Shevardnadze stressed that the “territorial order of Europe” is the “sensitive core component of security on the continent.”

Reportedly, the two foreign ministers clashed on the subject, with Dumas stressing that the German population had the right to freedom and self-determination.

Other diatribes came from: Alexander Yakovlev, head of the International Policy Commission of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, while on a visit to Tokyo in mid-November; at least twice from Nikolai Portugalov, an adviser on Germany to the Central Committee, including at an international conference in Munich over the Nov. 19-21 period; Gennadi Gerasimov, spokesman of the Foreign Ministry; Vitaly Zhurkin, head of the Institute of Europe of the U.S.S.R. and an adviser to the Soviet Foreign Ministry, speaking on a nationally televised interview in the U.S. Nov. 12; and Sergei Karaganov, deputy director of Moscow’s Institute of Europe.

The Soviet media have also been giving favorable coverage to statements made by Polish Communist Party head Mieczyslaw Rakowski and by the Polish Communist Party mouthpiece *Trybuna Ludu* against German reunification and warning about future German-Polish territorial and border conflicts. These Polish Communist comments have been in contrast to Polish Solidarity leader Lech Walesa’s expressed sympathy for German reunification.

The common thread throughout the Soviet officials’ declarations has been: “There must absolutely be *no* change of postwar borders and political structures. Two sovereign German states are the basis of peace and stability in Europe. Discussion of reunification is inopportune, and threatening to the foundations of stability in Europe.”

On Nov. 21, Karaganov gave a speech at London’s Royal Institute of International Affairs, also known as Chatham House, stating his “personal” opposition to German reunification, saying it would be better if the German question were resolved in a “two states-one economy arrangement.” Karaganov located this in the context of new superpower condominium arrangements for Europe. He said that the U.S.S.R. must be treated as a “major European power,” and that NATO and the Warsaw Pact should become instruments

of dialogue to cement a new "super-institution" straddling their common security interests, which would lead to a new all-European security system. If such a "new European security framework" were not created over the next two to three years, Karaganov warned, Europe would be driven by events, lose control and face growing instability and the prospect of "balkanization."

British sources report that Karaganov has been buttonholing London strategists in the days following the opening of the Berlin Wall, and saying: "We don't want German reunification, and you don't want it either. Why don't we work together to stop it?"

Military threats

Further psychological warfare on the German reunification question came in a "round-table" discussion broadcast by Radio Moscow's English-language service on Sunday, Nov. 19. A leading participant was Moscow U.S.A.-Canada Institute head Georgi Arbatov's deputy Radomir Bogdanov, who claimed that the reaction of "informed" people to German reunification was calm, but that "rank and file citizens in our country are panicky. 'Reunification of Germany?' they ask. 'But we have survived a major war with Germany!'"

Later in the program, it became evident that the Soviets are doing their utmost to play an "Anglo-French card" on the German reunification question: Britain and France are both nuclear powers, and are both part of the Four Power postwar arrangements in Germany. Hence, Radio Moscow's round-table moderator exclaimed, "France is opposed to German reunification; Britain is lukewarm." Soon thereafter, a discussion began about how the changes in Eastern Europe were increasingly making nuclear weapons obsolete and irrelevant. Bogdanov ejaculated: "If there is a real possibility of

reunification, and a united German state, the question of nuclear weapons for Britain and France will become different than before. I leave it to *your* understanding what I mean." The moderator broke in with the suggestion that a united Germany could be "neutral." Bogdanov retorted, "If not, we will have a massive arms race that will make what is happening now a kindergarten in comparison." He raised the specter of an "armed and nuclear Germany."

Mitterrand waffles

Certainly, the French have been receiving strongly worded messages from Moscow on the subject of German reunification. This is evident from some notable and curious comments made by French President François Mitterrand. In a front-page interview published Nov. 22, Mitterrand told the *Wall Street Journal-Europe* that, whatever Western countries think of reunification, the Soviets would certainly block it. The future of Germany, he claimed, is dependent on what the Soviets want, and they are absolutely opposed to any change of borders. "The Soviets may not have political power, but they have military power," said the French President, and advised that the Germans wouldn't risk war by opposing Soviet desires to keep the border intact. France and the other Western nations, he said, do not have the same strategic objections to reunification as the Soviets, "because it doesn't threaten our existence."

Given a choice, said Mitterrand, reunification "would probably be the natural wish for the majority of Germans." But he added: "Reunification is not something I'm scared of. . . . Personally, I have no ideological or political opposition to the idea of reunification. I only have some practical arguments, whereas the Russians have some really strategic, geopolitical, and historical interests."



Polish Solidarity leader Lech Walesa, during his trip to Washington, expressed sympathy to the prospect of a united Germany, in contrast to the Soviets and their Western stooges.

Stuart Lewis