

German unity drive promises second 'economic miracle'

by Gabriele Liebig

Scarcely a day has passed this month, without some further great stride toward the reunification of Germany. Following the Feb. 10 visit of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in Moscow, and Kohl's subsequent discussions back in Bonn with the Hans Modrow's transitional East German government on an all-German economic and monetary union, came a resolution at a meeting in Ottawa, Canada of NATO and Warsaw Pact foreign ministers, to hold a conference of the "Two-plus-Four"—the two German governments and the Four Powers consisting of the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union. These events have forced even British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to tone down her anti-German ravings somewhat.

Planned for sometime early this summer, is a summit conference of the European Community devoted to German monetary union and economic cooperation with the Eastern European countries. Also, the next meeting of the 35 nations comprising the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)—which includes Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the rest of Eastern Europe—will be moved up to September or November at the latest.

"Never in postwar history have we been so close to German unity as we are today," said Chancellor Kohl in a policy statement Feb. 15. Especially significant is the dramatic change of attitude in Moscow, since the Western allies—on paper, at least—have for a long time declared their aim to establish a "united Germany in freedom." Addressing the West German federal parliament, Kohl underlined the historic significance of the statement issued by the official Soviet news agency TASS of Feb. 11: "There currently exist no differences of opinion between the Soviet Union, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the German Democratic Republic on the fact that the question of the unity of the German nation

must be settled by the Germans, and that they themselves will decide the political form, timetable, speed, and conditions under which they will effect this unity."

Did this indicate a real breakthrough, a major shift of the Soviet position on Germany, or was it just plain old Russian tactics? That question came to a test two days after the Kohl-Gorbachov talks on Feb. 12, when at the Ottawa meeting, the head of the Soviet delegation, Vitali Zhurkin, used a press briefing to reiterate the traditional Moscow position that a "reunified Germany must be neutral, and demilitarized." But the next day, Zhurkin made an about-face, stating that he "apparently was misunderstood. . . . Neutrality is only one of many potential solutions." And with that, the major Soviet diplomatic barrier to German reunification was obliterated.

Why Moscow changed

"Why did Gorbachov give the go-ahead for German unity?" asked the West German daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on Feb. 2. "Kohl and [West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich] Genscher are certain that the Soviet President knows that this development can't be halted; he can rid himself of the expensive burden of the G.D.R. [East Germany], so long as he is assured that West German economic power will take over its ruined economy, so that Moscow won't have to carry the costs, and so long as it is clear that Bonn will see to it, that shipments from what is currently the G.D.R. to the Soviet Union will not be halted. Kohl has assured that West German firms would then, for example, provide trucks, so that the Soviet Union will experience no delays."

The West German weekly *Der Spiegel* has even circulated a report—so far denied by the Bonn government—that

Kohl's agreement with Gorbachov included a West German commitment to formally assume the treaty obligations which specify the amounts of manufactured goods which East Germany must supply to the Soviet Union.

Kohl is saying to Gorbachov, in effect: "If there are production bottlenecks in the Soviet Union, then we are ready to help you." To make this intention concrete, Kohl came to Moscow with a gift of 220 million deutschemarks toward the purchase of 142,000 tons of food, especially meat and milk products, which will be made available at current European Community prices. It was doubtless this initiative which induced Moscow to give the green light for German reunification. It portended Western economic aid and support for solving the deep supply crisis wracking the East bloc, in exchange for political concessions in the reunification process. This is precisely the concept which former U.S. presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche presented to millions of American television viewers in October 1988 in his "Berlin declaration." Although LaRouche didn't win the presidency, but instead was thrown into jail, Chancellor Kohl and his team decided to go with the policy, and have been spectacularly successful at it.

The Soviet leadership has evidently realized that, for the time being at least, German economic and monetary union and a new economic miracle in a unified Germany could be of some use to them. Vyatcheslav Dashchishev, president of the Moscow Institute for World Economics, put it this way to the West German weekly *Bild am Sonntag* on Feb. 11: "Neither the Soviet Union, nor any other East European country, will be able to survive without Western help."

Even before the Kohl visit, Moscow was broadcasting its readiness to accept Kohl's offer. On Feb. 8, the same Dashchishev, who is a close adviser of Gorbachov and an expert in launching delicate "trial balloons," told the West German daily *Frankfurter Rundschau* that "the partition of the German nation is not only immoral and inhuman, but also a threat to the future of Europe. . . . The partition poses great dangers for the stability and security of Europe. . . . It is about time to remove this source of unrest at the center of Europe. This only works by unification, by the merger of the two parts of Germany.

"It is inevitable to have the economy of the G.D.R. orient toward the West. . . . The vacuum that has developed in economic relations between the two German states in the course of the past decades, must be filled. This will naturally lead to economic problems between the U.S.S.R. and the G.D.R., but these will only be of a temporary nature. . . . Once the economic crisis is overcome and the economic situation in the G.D.R. has stabilized, the U.S.S.R. can only profit from the German economy."

Anglo-Americans losing grip on events

In the meantime, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is getting a beating even at home for her grotesque

attitude on the German question, which led her to personally revise a speech by her foreign minister so that it had a more anti-German bias. The London *Independent* commented on Feb. 15, that Thatcher's "unsensible" rejection of reunification is "against the national interest" of Great Britain. Quite true: If Britain decides to decouple itself from developments on continental Europe, it will be living up to the old saying, "If you're too late, you'll miss the boat."

Across the Atlantic, the Bush regime has been weaving a rather devious course on the issue of German unity. On the one hand, National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft stated at a Feb. 2-4 meeting of the International Council of military experts in Munich, that the United States is and will remain a "European power." But all the while, Washington has been preparing its departure from Europe. According to the agreements worked out by the U.S.-Soviet superpower condominium under Bush and Gorbachov, Europe is supposed to become part of the Soviet sphere of influence, while Moscow leaves the United States a free hand to muck about in Central and South America. Thanks to these agreements, the Bush regime has provided next to nothing by way of financial assistance for the reforming Eastern European nations; and if the United States doesn't alter its course soon, it will sink hopelessly into an economic depression, and will become a *former* "European power."

In France, President François Mitterrand has bowed to the course of historical events, and is trying to make the best for France and for Europe as a whole. He believes that it is up to France and Germany to play a joint role as the guarantors of a free, reunified Europe, and he wants to make sure that France's economy gets a piece of a European economic miracle.

"Reunification won't cost us anything," Kohl said on his flight back from Moscow. Referring to West Germany's rapid economic revival in the early 1950s, Kohl said that he is convinced that the East German economy, under comparable conditions, could become competitive within only a few short years. The "economic awakening of the G.D.R.," and its vast expanse of investment opportunities, will benefit all Europe, he said.

West German Finance Minister Theodor Waigl, in his comments to the parliament, dismissed fears that the economic reconstruction would have to be paid for by West German taxpayers. On the contrary, the impulse would come largely from private investment: "Our private corporations stand ready to invest into the G.D.R. And they have adequate means to do this." West Germany certainly made the right decision, when it chose to promise DM5.5 billion in credits for private firms in the G.D.R., instead of complying with the Modrow government's demand for a DM15 billion blank check. "If we set our priorities right," West German Economics Minister Helmut Haussmann told the parliament on Feb. 15, "there is nothing in the way of a second German economic miracle."