Witness Seminar

Berlin in the Cold War, 1948-1990
German Unification, 1989-1990

Lancaster House
Friday 16 October 2009
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PART I

THE EVENT
WELCOME

FCO Historians have a tradition of arranging events to mark the appearance of volumes in the series *Documents on British Policy Overseas* (DBPO) and other publications, but it is more than a decade since our last witness seminar. On that occasion, early in 1998, Lord Callaghan, Lord Healey and many other leading politicians and diplomats met in the Locarno Room to discuss the negotiations that led up to the Helsinki Conference in 1975. Today we have an equally eminent cast in a different venue, Lancaster House. We also have something quite new: an event planned in partnership with our friends at the German Embassy to which we welcome distinguished participants from Germany and France as well as the United Kingdom.

We are celebrating the publication of the two latest volumes in Series III of DBPO. Volume VI, *Berlin in the Cold War, 1948-1990*, covers Britain’s involvement with Berlin over a period of more than 40 years, focusing on three separate episodes: the Airlift in 1948-49, the Berlin crisis and the erection of the Wall in 1958-61 and the fall of the Wall in 1988-90. It highlights Berlin’s symbolic role during the Cold War and the continuity of British policy over that period. The volume contains 509 original documents reproduced in digital form on DVD. Volume VII, *German Unification, 1989-1990*, contains 244 documents, all in hard copy, covering the period from April 1989 to November 1990. Drawn from the archives of the FCO, the Cabinet and the papers of the Prime Minister held in the Cabinet Office, they document official British reactions to the collapse of East Germany and the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the evolution of British policy during the ‘Two plus Four’ negotiations that provided the international framework for the merger of the two German states.

These volumes reflect the spirit of openness that has characterised DBPO, particularly since the launch of Series III in the early 1990s, with its commitment to publishing material from the ‘closed’ period (i.e. less than 30 years old). It seems all the more appropriate, in the light of the Government’s recent decision in favour of a ‘20-year rule’, that we should now be publishing documents that are barely 20 years old.

But the documents, obviously, cannot tell the whole story. Today’s witness seminar brings together panellists and members of the audience who lived through and helped to shape the dramatic events that brought an end to the division of Germany and ultimately to the Cold War. Their testimony will be recorded and transcribed before being published on the worldwide web, where it will be preserved as a permanent contribution to the oral history of the period.
FCO Historians are grateful to Chris Bryant MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, for hosting the seminar. We would also like to thank the German Embassy and our other partners who have helped to make today’s event possible: the German Historical Institute in London, the Churchill Archives Centre in Cambridge, the Margaret Thatcher Foundation, the Centre for Contemporary British History and our publishers, Routledge. Within the FCO, the Press Office, the Events Team and Andrea Campbell, Grant Hibberd and Elaine Alahendra in the Historians team have provided essential support.

Patrick Salmon
Chief Historian
PROGRAMME

10.30-11.00  Arrival; coffee and tea

11.00-11.15  Welcome: Chris Bryant MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

                  Patrick Salmon, FCO Chief Historian

11.15-12.45  Session 1: The East German revolution and the fall of the Wall

                  Chair: Professor Timothy Garton Ash

                       Participants: Markus Meckel, Lord Waldegrave, Peter Hartmann,
                                      Colin Munro

12.45-13.45  Buffet lunch

13.45-15.45  Session 2: Bilateral relations and the question of German unity

                  Chair: Lord Watson of Richmond

                       Participants: Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Lord Hurd, Lord Powell , Sir
                                      Christopher Mallaby, Sir Nigel Broomfield, Hermann Freiherr von
                                      Richthofen

15.45-16.15  Tea, coffee break

16.15-17.45  Session 3: The Two Plus Four Negotiations

                  Chair: Sir Stephen Wall

                       Participants: Dieter Kastrup, Sir Hilary Synnott , Bertrand Dufourcq,
                                      Sir Michael Wood

17.45-18.00  Closing remarks: HE Georg Boomgaarden, Ambassador of the Federal
              Republic of Germany

18.00-19.30  Drinks reception
PARTICIPANTS

Chairs of panels

Professor Timothy Garton Ash CMG

Lord Watson of Richmond CBE

Sir Stephen Wall GCMG, LVO

Witnesses (with their positions in 1989-90)

Sir Nigel Broomfield KCMG, Ambassador to the German Democratic Republic

Bertrand Dufourcq, Political Director, Quai d’Orsay

Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Chancellor, Federal Republic of Germany

Dr Peter Hartmann KBE, Section Head, Federal German Chancellery

Lord Hurd of Westwell CB, PC, OBE, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

Dr Dieter Kastrup, Political Director, Federal German Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Sir Christopher Mallaby GCMG, GCVO, Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany

Markus Meckel MdB, Co-founder of the SDP (later SPD) of the GDR, October 1989; Foreign Minister of the German Democratic Republic (April-August 1990)

Colin Munro CMG, Counsellor, British Embassy, East Berlin

Lord Powell of Bayswater KCMG, Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister

Dr Hermann Freiherr von Richthofen, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United Kingdom

Sir Hilary Synnott KCMG, Head of Western European Department, FCO

Lord Waldegrave of North Hill PC, Minister of State for Europe, FCO

Sir Michael Wood KCMG, Legal Counsellor, FCO
CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1945
5 June Berlin Declaration of supreme authority in Germany by US, UK and USSR

1948
17 March Signature of Brussels Treaty establishing Western European Union (WEU)
18-24 June Soviets impose blockade of Western sectors of Berlin

1949
4 April Signature of North Atlantic Treaty
8 May Establishment of Federal Republic of Germany (FRG); adoption of Basic Law
12 May End of Berlin Blockade
7 October Establishment of German Democratic Republic (GDR)

1951
April Foundation of European Coal & Steel Community (ECSC)

1952
10 March USSR proposes rearmed, neutral Germany
26 May Signature of Bonn Conventions

1953
17 June Workers’ uprising in GDR

1954
22 August European Defence Community rejected by French National Assembly
3 October Signature of Bonn/Paris Conventions (Relations Convention)

1955
5 May Ratification of Bonn/Paris Conventions: FRG acquires full sovereignty
9 May FRG joins WEU and NATO
14 May Formation of Warsaw Pact

1956
24 November Soviet troops move in to crush Hungarian uprising

1957
25 March Treaty of Rome establishes European Economic Communities

1958
27 November USSR demands removal of Western forces from Berlin
1959
11 May – 5 Aug  Geneva conference of Foreign Ministers to discuss Berlin and a German peace treaty

1961
13 August  Erection of Berlin Wall

1968
21 August  Warsaw Pact troops move into Czechoslovakia

1969
21 October  Willy Brandt becomes Chancellor of FRG

1970
12 August  Treaty between Soviet Union and FRG

1971
3 September  Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin

1972
21 December  Signature of Basic Treaty between FRG and GDR

1973
18 September  Recognition of GDR and admission of both German states to UN

1975
1 August  Helsinki Final Act

1979
12 December  NATO twin-track decision on missile deployment

1982
4 October  Helmut Kohl becomes Chancellor of FRG

1984
3 May  UK commitment to German self-determination reaffirmed at meeting between Thatcher and Kohl

1985
11 March  Gorbachev elected General Secretary of CPSU

1987
11 June  Margaret Thatcher becomes Prime Minister for a third term
12 June  President Reagan visits West Berlin; challenges Gorbachev to pull down the Wall
7 September  Honecker’s state visit to FRG
10 December  INF Treaty between USA and USSR
1989

6 February  Polish Government and Solidarity begin talks on economic and political reform

12 February  Multi-party system introduced in Hungary

20-21 February  British-German summit

9 March  CFE negotiations begin in Vienna

28 April  Kohl announces new security policy for FRG

2 May  Removal of barbed wire from Hungarian-Austrian border

29-30 May  NATO 40th anniversary meeting

3-5 June  Chinese Army suppresses demonstrations in Tiananmen Square

5 June  Solidarity wins landslide victory in Poland

12-15 June  Gorbachev visits FRG

26-27 June  European Council meeting, Madrid

7 July  Warsaw Pact states, meeting in Bucharest, revoke Brezhnev Doctrine

24 July  John Major succeeds Geoffrey Howe as Foreign Secretary

Fri  1 September  Thatcher/Mitterrand meeting at Chequers

Sun  10 September  Hungary allows East Germans to cross into Austria

Mon  11 September  Foundation of New Forum opposition group in East Berlin

Wed  20 September  Speech by Major in Bonn reiterates UK commitment to German self-determination

Sat  23 September  Thatcher/Gorbachev meeting in Moscow

Sat  30 September  East German migrants occupying FRG embassy in Prague allowed to travel to the West

Tue  3 - Wed 4 October  Riots in Dresden

Fri  6 – Sat 7 October  Gorbachev visits GDR for 40th Anniversary celebrations; major demonstrations in GDR

Mon  9 October  First 'Monday demonstration' in Leipzig

Wed  18 October  Honecker stands down as chief of SED, succeeded by Krenz

Wed  18 – Tue 24 October  CHOGM meeting in Kuala Lumpur

Thu  26 October  Douglas Hurd succeeds John Major as Foreign Secretary

Thu  2 November  Egon Krenz visits Moscow

Tue  7 – Wed 8 November  Resignation of Cabinet and Politburo in GDR

Thu  9 November  New regulations in GDR permit private travel abroad. Mass crossings from East to West Berlin across the Wall.

Fri  10 November  Todor Zhivkov replaced as General Secretary of
### 1989

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mon 13 Nov</td>
<td>Mansion House speech by Mrs Thatcher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 15-16</td>
<td>Douglas Hurd visits Bonn and Berlin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 18 Nov</td>
<td>EC Heads of Government meeting, Paris</td>
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<td>Fri 24 Nov</td>
<td>Thatcher/Bush meeting at Camp David</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 28 Nov</td>
<td>Chancellor Kohl announces Ten-Point programme in response to fall of Berlin Wall</td>
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<td>Wed 29 Nov</td>
<td>Baker announces four principles for German reunification at White House press conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 2-3 Dec</td>
<td>Bush/Gorbachev meeting in Valletta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun 3 Dec</td>
<td>Politburo and Central Committee of SED resign in GDR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 4 Dec</td>
<td>NATO Heads of Government meeting in Brussels</td>
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<td>Tue 5 Dec</td>
<td>Seiter/Modrow agreement makes two German states a single travel area</td>
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<td>Tue 5 Dec</td>
<td>Unsuccessful leadership challenge to Mrs Thatcher by Sir Anthony Meyer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 6 Dec</td>
<td>Resignation of Egon Krenz as head of GDR; Gorbachev/Mitterrand meeting in Kiev</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 8 Dec</td>
<td>Communiqué of European Council meeting in Strasbourg reaffirms commitment to German self-determination within context of East-West cooperation and European integration</td>
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<td>Mon 11 Dec</td>
<td>Four-Power meeting in Kommandatura in Berlin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 12 Dec</td>
<td>US Secretary of State Baker visits FRG and makes speech at Berlin Press Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 14-15 Dec</td>
<td>North Atlantic Council confirms Strasbourg Declaration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 18 Dec</td>
<td>Shevardnadze meets EC Foreign Ministers in Brussels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 19 Dec</td>
<td>Kohl visits Dresden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 20-22 Dec</td>
<td>Mitterrand visits GDR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 22-25 Dec</td>
<td>Revolution in Romania; execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu</td>
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<td>Fri 29 Dec</td>
<td>Václav Havel elected President of Czechoslovakia</td>
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### 1990

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 4 Jan</td>
<td>Mitterrand/Kohl meeting at Latche</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 9-10 Jan</td>
<td>Kissinger talks in London with Hurd and Thatcher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 20 Jan</td>
<td>Thatcher/Mitterrand meeting in Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>22-24 Jan</td>
<td>Hurd visits GDR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 27 Jan</td>
<td>Chequers seminar on defence and international security</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun 28 Jan</td>
<td>Modrow announces GDR election for 18 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 29-30 Jan</td>
<td>Hurd holds talks in Washington</td>
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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 31 Jan</td>
<td>Gorbachev publicly acknowledges German reunification will take place; Genscher’s speech at Tutzing Academy on how to reconcile a united Germany with NATO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 2 Feb</td>
<td>Genscher visits Washington</td>
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<td>Fri 2 Feb</td>
<td>President de Klerk of South Africa announces unbanning of ANC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 6 Feb</td>
<td>Hurd visits Bonn; speech to Konrad Adenauer Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 7 Feb</td>
<td>CPSU votes to end Party monopoly on power in USSR</td>
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<td>Sat 10-11 Feb</td>
<td>Kohl/Gorbachev talks in Moscow</td>
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<td>Sun 11 Feb</td>
<td>Nelson Mandela released from prison</td>
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<td>Sun 11-13 Feb</td>
<td>‘Two Plus Four’ framework agreed in margins of Open Skies conference in Ottawa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 14 Feb</td>
<td>Thatcher/Genscher meeting in London</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun 25 Feb</td>
<td>Bush/Kohl meeting at Camp David: they agree a united Germany should remain a full member of NATO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 2 Mar</td>
<td>Bundestag declares there are no German claims on Polish territory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun 11 Mar</td>
<td>Lithuania declares independence from USSR</td>
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<td>Mon 12 Mar</td>
<td>Hurd/Genscher meeting in Bonn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 14 Mar</td>
<td>Two plus Four Political Directors meet in Paris</td>
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<td>Thu 15 Mar</td>
<td>Gorbachev elected President of USSR</td>
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<td>Sun 18 Mar</td>
<td>GDR elections: victory for CDU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 24 Mar</td>
<td>Chequers Seminar with British and American historians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 29-31 Mar</td>
<td>Königswinter Conference and British-German summit, Cambridge</td>
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<td>Sat 31 Mar</td>
<td>‘Poll tax’ riot, Trafalgar Square</td>
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<td>Thu 5 Apr</td>
<td>In GDR freely-elected Volkskammer meets for first time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 12 Apr</td>
<td>Soviet admission of responsibility for Katyn massacre in 1940</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 4 May</td>
<td>President Bush outlines plans for review of NATO strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 5 May</td>
<td>First Ministerial meeting of Two plus Four, Bonn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 15 May</td>
<td>Hurd meets Genscher and Kohl in Bonn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 16-19 May</td>
<td>US Secretary of State leads team in Moscow discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 18 May</td>
<td>FRG-GDR treaty on monetary, economic and social union</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 22 May</td>
<td>Meeting of Western Political Directors, Bonn</td>
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### 1990

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<tr>
<td>Wed 30 May – Sun 3 June</td>
<td>Gorbachev/Bush meeting in Washington</td>
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<td>Thu 7 June</td>
<td>Warsaw Pact summit, Moscow</td>
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<td>Thu 7 – Fri 8 June</td>
<td>Meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers, Turnberry</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 8 June</td>
<td>Thatcher/Gorbachev meeting in Moscow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 9 June</td>
<td>Meeting of Two plus Four Political Directors, East Berlin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 20 June</td>
<td>Meeting of Two plus Four Political Directors, East Berlin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 22 June</td>
<td>Second Ministerial Meeting of Two plus Four, East Berlin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun 1 July</td>
<td>German monetary, economic and social union</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 2 July</td>
<td>Gorbachev urges CPSU to pursue Perestroika or face ‘dark times’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 5 – Fri 6 July</td>
<td>NATO summit, London</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 14 July</td>
<td>Nicholas Ridley resigns as Trade &amp; Industry Secretary after anti-German remarks in the Spectator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun 15 – Mon 16 July</td>
<td>Kohl’s visit to the Soviet Union; Gorbachev’s acceptance of German membership of NATO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 17 July</td>
<td>Third Ministerial Meeting of Two plus Four, Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 2 August</td>
<td>Iraq invades Kuwait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon 20 August</td>
<td>Collapse of de Maizière’s coalition in GDR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu 23 August</td>
<td>GDR Volkskammer votes for German unity on 3 October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 31 August</td>
<td>Unification Treaty between FRG and GDR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 12 September</td>
<td>Fourth Ministerial Meeting of Two plus Four: Final Settlement on Germany signed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon 24 September</td>
<td>GDR withdraws formally from Warsaw Pact</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 26 September</td>
<td>US announces plans to withdraw 40,000 troops from Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed 3 October</td>
<td>GDR joins FRG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon 15 October</td>
<td>Gorbachev awarded Nobel Peace Prize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri 9 November</td>
<td>German-Soviet treaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed 14 November</td>
<td>Treaty on German-Polish border</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 19 – Wed 21 November</td>
<td>CSCE summit, Paris</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon 19 November</td>
<td>Signature of CFE Treaty</td>
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<td>Sun 2 December</td>
<td>Bundestag elections: victory for Kohl-Genscher coalition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun 9 December</td>
<td>Solidarity leader Lech Walesa wins landslide victory in Polish Presidential election</td>
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### 1991

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 15 March</td>
<td>Final Settlement comes into force</td>
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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Session 1: The East German revolution and the fall of the Wall

INITIAL QUESTIONS

Herr Meckel
- What did people in East Germany want: unity with the FRG or a reformed GDR?
- When did you personally realise that a reformed GDR would not work and that the FRG would press forward with unity in some form or other?

Herr Hartmann
- To what extent did the West German Government realise that once Gorbachev had abandoned the Brezhnev doctrine – evident in developments in Poland and Hungary – the GDR had no future?

Mr Munro
- What did you make of Herr Teltschik’s view that the GDR was ‘potentially the most explosive country’ in the Soviet bloc (Doc. No. 4, note 3)?
- What was the British Embassy’s assessment of the situation in the GDR in the summer of 1989?

Lord Waldegrave
- How did the British Government/FCO view the potential for change in Eastern Europe in general and the GDR in particular?

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

- Did the British Government feel that its allies (US/France/FRG) were as strongly, or more strongly, committed to the process of change in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe?
- What was the impact of Tiananmen Square? What other factors were at work in undermining the authority of the GDR Government (e.g. Honecker’s health)?
- To what extent was the British Embassy in East Berlin in touch with opposition/dissident elements? Were its contacts with them better/worse than or much the same as those of other Western governments?
- What other contacts did the Embassy have, e.g. with Warsaw Pact embassies, West German opinion, think tanks etc.?
- In September and October 1989 the UK was seen as one of the FRG’s most supportive allies over the East German refugee question and German self-determination. When and why did this perception change?
Session 2: Bilateral relations and the question of German unity

INITIAL QUESTIONS

Herr Genscher, Sir Christopher Mallaby, Herr von Richthofen

- During the 1980s various efforts were made to encourage closer relations between the UK and the FRG (e.g. Herr Kohl’s visit to Oxford in 1984, followed by the appointment of Sir Norman Statham and Dr Walter Gellhoff as Special Representatives for Anglo-German Contacts and Cooperation). How much effect had these had by 1989?
- How do you judge the state of relations between the Federal Republic and the UK on the eve of the East German revolution?

Lord Hurd

- What issues, in addition to Germany, were competing for your attention when you became Foreign Secretary?
- Do you think the UK could or should have responded more positively to events in the GDR and early calls for German unification?
- To what extent did problems in the Conservative Party affect the Prime Minister’s thinking?
- How far did the Prime Minister’s views on European integration hamper Britain’s freedom of manoeuvre?

Lord Powell

- Were you worried by the freedom with which the Prime Minister expressed her views on the German question in the autumn of 1989?
- Why did you not try to change the Prime Minister’s mind, in view of the advice she was receiving from Sir Percy Cradock and others to support unification at least in public?
- Was Mrs Thatcher concerned only about the timing and impact of rapid unification, or was she opposed to German unity in principle?

Sir Nigel Broomfield

- Do you feel that your assessments of the situation in the GDR in the autumn of 1989 were being taken seriously enough in London?
- What was the state of British-German relations when you arrived back in Bonn in 1993 in charge of relations between the UK and a united Germany?

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

- In view of the British/German friction over NATO earlier in 1989, did the British Government think the Germans were preparing to trade unification for neutrality?
- The documents point to quite a sharp difference of opinion in January 1990 between the Bonn Embassy and the FCO on the one hand and No. 10 on the other. Is this how it seemed at the time?
- To what extent was the FRG government aware of Mrs Thatcher’s private statements on German unity? What influence, if any, did such knowledge have?
- How important was the Gorbachev factor in Mrs Thatcher’s thinking?
• How seriously should one take Mrs Thatcher’s idea of joining up with Russia to counterbalance the power of a united Germany?
• How seriously did Mrs Thatcher pursue the idea of a Franco-British alignment to block or slow down the process of German unification?
• Did Mrs Thatcher’s attitude paralyse the formulation of British policy on the German question?
• How important was the Chequers meeting on 27 January for the evolution of Mrs Thatcher’s thinking?
• What was the atmosphere like at the Königswinter Conference and UK-FRG summit at the end of March 1990?
• Is the preface right to suggest that ‘After the end of February the Prime Minister exerted no noticeable influence over the formulation or execution of Britain’s German policy.’?

Session 3: The Two Plus Four Negotiations

INITIAL QUESTIONS

Herr Kastrup
• Was the FRG really intending to press ahead without involving the Four Powers, as its allies seem to have feared in early February 1990?
• British officials sometimes felt that their US counterparts in the Two plus Four were more German than the Germans. Were they right?

Sir Hilary Synnott
• Did Two plus Four come as a surprise, or did it correspond closely to FCO thinking?
• How well prepared was the FCO for the Two plus Four negotiations?

M. Dufourcq
• French diplomacy must have been concentrated heavily on European integration as well as Two plus Four. Does this explain why the British viewed the French as relatively passive participants in the Two plus Four process?
• Did the French share the view of their British colleagues that US and German legal thinking was sometimes not sufficiently developed?

Sir Michael Wood
• What were the most important contributions made by British officials to the success of the Two plus Four process?

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS
• Who deserves the most credit for coming up with the Two plus Four solution?
• How well informed was the FCO on US and German moves towards German unity?
• Two plus Four seems such an obvious idea: why didn’t anyone think of it sooner?
• What role did questions relating to Berlin play in the Two plus Four process?
• Did the British come close to wrecking the Two plus Four agreement in September 1990?
• Did any important issues remain unresolved at the end of the Two plus Four process?

Final reflections

• Do the records published in the *German Unification* volume convey an accurate/adequate picture of British policy making on the question of German unification?
• Did the controversy over German unification do significant damage to British-German relations?
• Do the participants consider with the benefit of hindsight that they did a good job at the Paris summit in November 1990 in closing down the Cold War and the Second World War?
SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

[Extracts from Berlin in the Cold War, 1989-1990 are indicated by an asterisk*. All other extracts are taken from German Unification, 1989-1990.]

1. Before the fall of the Wall, April – November 1989

The views from Bonn and East Berlin

It would be hard to find any responsible observer in the Federal Republic, German or foreign, who sees any prospect of the Federal Republic leaving the Alliance or of an early move to achieve reunification. But there is debate about how far there is a danger that the lure of detente or a prospect of reunification could one day weaken Federal German alignment in the West.

_Sir Christopher Mallaby, Bonn, 10 April 1989_

Perhaps I see the Brandenburg Gate, the Reichstag and Unter den Linden from too romantic a point of view. Maybe Berlin has become a provincial bore and an expense to the average West German. But to me it is the only city which has the feel of a world capital in either part of Germany and if the Wall were one day to disappear or become freely permeable then the urge to reunite the city and with it Germany might once again flow strongly.

_Nigel Broomfield, East Berlin, 20 April 1989_

Signs of change in the GDR

The P[U][ermanent][U][nder][S][ecretary] [Sir Patrick Wright] thinks that it would be interesting to see an assessment of the impact of events in China on the Communist world generally – there have been a number of press stories on this theme over the weekend. But he thinks that we should focus in particular on the situation in East Germany, described by Teltschik to HM Embassy in Bonn . . . on 9 June as ‘potentially explosive’.

_Minute from Geoffrey Adams to Hilary Synnott, FCO, 12 June 1989_

German unification on the agenda?

Sir Christopher Mallaby considered the reunification issue in his despatch of 10 April on ‘How Reliable an Ally?’, noting that while reunification remained an aspiration for many, young people in particular thought it too distant a prospect to be worth thinking about. May I ask you to bear in mind, in considering whether or not there is reason to update that assessment, that we have a hearty appetite for signs of developments in popular mood and in official thinking on inner-German relations and the reunification question.

_Hilary Synnott, FCO, to Pauline Neville-Jones, Bonn, 5 September 1989_

Reunification suddenly seems much less theoretical and hypothetical.

_Pauline Neville-Jones, Bonn, 6 October 1989_
How should the UK respond?

The UK’s best approach, therefore, is not to seek to discourage reunification, but rather to exert influence over the speed and timing of any moves in that direction.

_Draft FCO paper, 11 October 1989_

A watershed in the GDR

On 7 October the GDR leadership treated itself to an extravagant old-style Communist birthday party. Intended to mark the climax of a life’s work by General Secretary Honecker and his like-minded septuagenarians and octogenarians in the Politburo, it in fact turned out to be a profoundly depressing occasion. The events leading up to the anniversary and the anti-regime demonstrations on the day itself in East Berlin and elsewhere in the GDR were intensely embarrassing for the leadership and in my view mark a watershed in the development of this country.

_Nigel Broomfield, East Berlin, 12 October 1989_

‘The dominant issue in Europe’

The German Question will be, from now on, the dominant issue in Europe. … For many in the UK it would be more reassuring to try to keep things as they are, than move into uncharted waters. Memories of the Second World War are still fresh; and the prospect of changing the 1945 dividing lines and accepting some form of unity for the 80 million Germans is for many people a very alarming one. But whether we like it or not, events are on the move and I do not think it is in our power to stop them, even if we could bring ourselves to oppose greater freedom and democracy for the countries of Eastern Europe. If we tried to stand against this tide, we should enter into fundamental political conflict with the FRG and with many of our allies, including the United States.

_Sir John Fretwell, FCO, 20 October 1989_

The Germans appreciate British support

Ackermann [a senior adviser to Herr Kohl] began by conveying to me formally, on Kohl’s instructions, the Federal Government’s thanks for the public position taken recently by HMG on developments in Eastern Europe and on the German Question. Ackermann particularly mentioned the Prime Minister’s speech at the Conservative Party Conference, where she had demonstrated ‘in exemplary fashion’ the importance of the movement towards freedom in parts of Eastern Europe and had pressed for change in East Germany. Ackermann said that we were right to stress self-determination, more than reunification as such, in our comments on the German Question, as the Secretary of State had done here on 20 September.

_Sir Christopher Mallaby, Bonn, 23 October 1989_

Mrs Thatcher opposes German unification …

At the risk of over-simplifying, she saw a tendency for official thinking to spend too much time speculating on Germany’s geopolitical position and how it might develop. Of course this was important. But it was clear that—whatever their formal position—Britain, France and the Soviet Union were fundamentally opposed to German reunification.

_Margaret Thatcher, in conversation with Sir Christopher Mallaby, 1 November 1989_
... But the Soviets may not

It became clear (to me at least) that the Russians now think reunification is possible although not at all desirable. If it occurs they will not (or at least Gorbachev will not) physically seek to prevent it.

*Colin Munro, reporting a conversation with a member of the Soviet Embassy in East Berlin, 2 November 1989*

No public statement from the UK

The absence of any statement by a senior member of HMG on the German question comparable to those made recently by Mitterrand and by Bush and Baker has been commented on here. … I recommend you make a public statement on the German question in connection with your visit here on 15 November … In our own interests, it should not be thought to fall short in two respects: willingness to accept reunification, if that is the way things go, and confidence in the Federal Government to conduct FRG policy in ways which are consonant with Western interests.

*Sir Christopher Mallaby, Bonn, to Douglas Hurd, 9 November 1989*

2. After the fall of the Wall, November 1989 – February 1990

The opening of the Berlin Wall

Fantastic scenes took place last night at the crossing points between East and West Berlin. Although travel was supposed to take place on the basis of visas huge crowds gathered on the eastern side of all crossing points late in the night, the GDR border guards were forced to give way and thousands drove, walked and ran over the border, some still in their night clothes, hardly believing their eyes, to be reunited with friends or relatives, but mostly just to see what the West was like. Hundreds of West Berliners came through to East Berlin also without any formalities.

*Nigel Broomfield, East Berlin, 10 November 1989*

The Prime Minister said that she had been watching the scenes in Berlin on television both last night and this morning. They were some of the most historic which she had ever seen. She was anxious to hear Chancellor Kohl’s impressions. It seemed to her that the most important task now was to establish a genuine democratic government in East Germany.

*Conversation between Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Kohl, 10 November 1989*

Gorbachev’s problem is now to control the forces he has unleashed. I do not think the Russians know how to do this. Hence their public silence. Hence their increasingly unrealistic attempts to avoid addressing the question of Germany’s future, and to try to persuade others that this question should not be addressed for the time being.

*Sir Rodric Braithwaite, Moscow, 11 November 1989*

At various points along the Wall, the light tapping of hammers could be heard as individuals tried to chip bits off. The Minister encountered a member of the Press Department of the Senat Chancellery who showed him the contents of a plastic bag she was
carrying: two hammers. And at night, solitary individuals could be seen chipping away by
the light of a candle.

*Major-General Robert Corbett, British Military Government Berlin, 13 November 1989*

What should we do now?

A Four Power process on Germany will have to include the two German states as full
players. … This time, however, the running may be made very largely by the Germans
themselves with the Four Powers meeting formally only near the end to give their final
blessing to the settlement worked out.

*Michael Burton, British Military Government Berlin, 14 November 1989*

I am convinced that if we were to adopt a policy of opposing German re-unification either
publicly or privately, we should soon find we were standing alone, with grievous damage to
our relations with the FRG and serious harm to our relations with the US. When the tide of
history is bringing a chance of freedom and democracy in Eastern Europe, with the prospect
of reducing or even eliminating the Soviet presence, the Americans would have no
sympathy with a policy which put all that at risk in order to maintain the division of
Germany. The French would not stand against that tide either, whatever they may say in
private. It will soon become apparent, if it is not already, if our tone is markedly colder than
that of other Western governments. We can work constructively to help manage change,
taking account of existing alliance structures and of a possibly greatly expanded European
Community role in relation to Eastern Europe. Our role in Berlin will give us an important
handle on events. But we cannot try to maintain the artificial division of Germany as an end
in itself.

*Sir John Fretwell, FCO, 14 November 1989*

I judge there to be at least a possibility of delaying ‘reunification’ for some time (even
though in my despatches I have stated my belief that in the longer term it is likely
principally because of the role of Berlin). And if the question can be prevented from
becoming actual for the next two/three years then that would at least allow the main Soviet
concerns to diminish as a result of success in the conventional arms negotiations in Vienna.
We would have got the German question and arms control back in the right order.

*Nigel Broomfield, East Berlin, 14 November 1989*

*The Prime Minister, summing up the discussion, said that it was of cardinal importance for
Western governments that all these complex questions should be handled carefully and
prudently. Allied governments should remain in close touch, especially Britain, France and
the United States who had Four Power rights and obligations. Although Western
governments had taken a formal position since 1955 in favour of East German self-
determination, German reunification should not be treated as an immediate issue.
Governments should take due account of the implications of the present turn of events for
President Gorbachev’s position.*

*Margaret Thatcher in Cabinet, 15 November 1989*

Asked about the possibility of German reunification particularly since he was in the
Reichstag the Secretary of State said that the principle was clear in the Federal German
constitution and in statements by the Allies. But the question was not currently on the
agenda. It had to be discussed at the appropriate time. Many parties had an interest.

*Major-General Robert Corbett, reporting Douglas Hurd’s visit to Berlin, 16 November 1989*
Whatever West German politicians say everyone I talked to in Berlin had already decided that the answer to the German question was one (one state, one people, one capital). The only questions remaining were how to get there and how long the transition would take. The general view seemed to be that it could happen very fast.

*Jonathan Powell, FCO, 22 November 1989*

**Helmut Kohl’s Ten-Point Programme**

The key point is that the pressures have reached a level where Kohl has felt obliged to make a high profile statement of a policy expressly intended to lead in time to German unity. And he has done so on his own authority, not on behalf of the whole coalition, and without prior consultation with the Allies having responsibility for the German question. It shows how fast the German question is moving.

*Sir Christopher Mallaby, Bonn, 28 November 1989, on Helmut Kohl’s Ten-Point Programme*

Christopher Mallaby seems to welcome reunification.

*Margaret Thatcher, commenting on a telegram of 29 November 1989 on Kohl’s Ten-Point Programme*

**How should Britain respond?**

The impression we create on this arises from the nuances rather than from the basic statement of our position. It is all right to insist on the need for prudence in handling the present dramatic developments in Europe, but we need to convey to the Germans that we too have a positive vision of what should emerge at the end of the day and what we are prepared to work for. Now that Kohl has put a programme on the table, we need to be able to say that we too are looking for progress towards a Europe in which the division imposed by Stalinist tyranny will fade into history and in which the German people will have freely exercised their right to come together if that is their choice. If we do not start conveying this impression to the Germans soon, starting with Genscher today, they will conclude that we are fundamentally hostile to that sort of vision. They will be tempted increasingly to move ahead without us on these fundamental issues of European policy. We could ultimately impose a block, based on our position as one of the four Powers responsible for Germany and Berlin. But we should not count on carrying anyone else with us.

*Sir John Fretwell, FCO, 29 November 1989*

Compared with the statements by Baker and Dumas … our reticence so far in response to Kohl’s ten point plan is conspicuous here. I recommend that you make an early statement, designed to emphasise the need for stability in Europe and the undesirability of speed, to overlap with what allies are saying and not to alienate the FRG unnecessarily.

*Sir Christopher Mallaby, Bonn, to Douglas Hurd, 30 November 1989*

A useful contribution to thinking about the future. At least we’ve got him off reunification!

*Minute from Charles Powell to Margaret Thatcher on a letter from Sir C. Mallaby of 5 December 1989*
I have, myself, no doubt that the two German States will one day be politically united. From 1 January East and West Germany, including Berlin will become a single travel free area. Berlin, about whose political and symbolic importance to Germans in both countries I have commented before, is leading the way. Mr Bush has proposed that the 2004 Olympics should be held in Berlin as evidence of a Europe ‘whole and free’. I am sure that the city will be whole and free before that. The question is how will German unity be achieved and when.

*Nigel Broomfield’s valedictory despatch from East Berlin, 6 December 1989*

Our line can hold at present. But we need to prepare to cope with faster movement on the German question in case we are faced with it.

*Sir Christopher Mallaby, Bonn, 7 December 1989*

**Mrs Thatcher warns against moving too fast**

The Prime Minister’s view is that the immediate need is to try to assert a greater degree of Allied influence over the actions of the West German government and to reassure the Russians that we are doing so. The risk is, of course, such meetings would provoke a sense of crisis. But the Prime Minister feels that at the moment we are constantly lagging behind developments and there is no sense of direction in the West. We do not want to wake up one morning and find that events have moved entirely beyond our control and that German reunification is to all intents and purposes on us.

*Charles Powell, No. 10, 8 December 1989*

**Why were we taken by surprise?**

Looking back, Mr Broomfield notes that every observer, including himself, seriously underestimated the speed of change in the GDR. This is true: while conventional wisdom had long been that change would occur quickly once started, very few observers were not surprised by its pace in the event … Despite the general surprise, it must be recognised that the FRG were less wrong about their predictions than we were. Teltschik and Ehmke were right when they told Mr Waldegrave in June that the situation in the GDR was potentially explosive (although the Auswärtiges Amt were more sanguine). Our own Assessment at that time does not look too good with hindsight. We should recognise that the resources available to the FRG to make truly informed judgements are of a different order of magnitude to our own: it is all too easy to dismiss the Germans as being emotionally involved and hence unsound. Our own infiltration of the GDR, at present and historically, is tiny in comparison.

*Hilary Synnott, FCO, commenting on Nigel Broomfield’s valedictory despatch, 14 December 1989*

**We need to make a public statement of support … but Mrs Thatcher disagrees**

Despite our supportive line on the German wish to achieve unity through self-determination, the UK is perceived here as perhaps the least positive of the three Western Allies, and the least important. Need to present our policy in the most positive light we can. Your visit to East Berlin and the GDR an opportunity.

*Sir Christopher Mallaby, Bonn, Tel. No. 12 to Douglas Hurd, 5 January 1990*
The Prime Minister has seen Bonn telegram number 12 [of 5 January] commenting on our public line on the German question. She thought it showed a lack of understanding of our policy which she finds alarming. She would like to see any reply before it is sent.  
*Charles Powell, No. 10, 9 January 1990*

**Trying to persuade Mrs Thatcher**

You told me this morning that you were concerned that the papers going to No. 10 should not leave any doubt that German unification is likely to take place sooner rather than later, whatever our own private preferences might be; and that events are also likely to force a major change of strategy upon NATO in the near future.  
*John Weston, FCO, to Douglas Hurd, 8 January 1990*

I am very impressed by the quality of the papers submitted under the PUS’s minute of 20 December … The analysis seems to me clear, and the realities to be recognised. I am not so happy with the clearly tactical considerations which have converted this analysis into the draft minute to the PM submitted under cover of your minute of 2nd January. I am not against sensible tactics in relation to No 10, but if ever there was a time when the Office should present the stark truth about what is likely to happen, and should avoid feeding illusions, that time is surely now. In my view the draft minute has made too many concessions to the views we expect to be held in No 10.  
*William Waldegrave to John Weston, FCO, 8 January 1990*

**A transitional period as a possible way forward**

My feeling is that confederation remains unlikely to be the final answer to the German Question. There might possibly be a chance that it would stick, if espoused by the Three or Four Powers, as a transitional stage lasting a number of years. … But we must allow for the possibility that confederation will not run even as a transitional stage. So we need another idea in our quiver. One possibility might be an agreed transition period from the moment when German unity becomes certain until the completion of its implementation. Such a period might last 5 years, perhaps a bit longer. … The purpose of establishing a transition period before German unity was completed would be to provide a stable framework not least for the negotiation of all the other complex matters that would need to be settled; and to fend off pressures for rapid, unstable movement towards unity.  
*Sir Christopher Mallaby, Bonn, 9 January 1990*

**The Foreign Office gives Mrs Thatcher blunt advice**

[The Prime Minister said that] We needed to think through much more carefully the implications of reunification and the conditions which would have to be fulfilled if it were to proceed with the full support of Germany’s allies. … The Foreign Secretary said that work was already being done on these points. He would let the Prime Minister have the results before her meeting with President Mitterrand, together with some specific proposals which she could make at that meeting. What we could not produce was a blue print for stopping German reunification. The Prime Minister accepted this, while stressing that equally we should not approach work on the German question in the spirit that reunification was inevitable and all we had to do was adjust to it.  
*Charles Powell, No. 10, 10 January 1990*
If the people of the FRG and the GDR decide freely and democratically in favour of unity, there is no way of stopping that, short of military action. Residual rights and responsibilities of the Four Powers provide a *locus standi* in the process. ... If the process leading to unification gets under way the question therefore becomes how best to influence the process of achieving it so as to maximise the British and Western interest and to minimise adverse repercussions elsewhere, particularly in the Soviet Union.

*Minute from Douglas Hurd to Margaret Thatcher, 16 January 1990*

The UK is in the curious position that our relations with the declining power have never been better while those with the rising power are mixed. We need not only to anchor Germany in the West (probably not that difficult) but also to anchor ourselves firmly to Germany. ...Our number one foreign policy priority should be better and closer relations with Germany.

*Robert Cooper, FCO Policy Planning Staff, 18 January 1990*

**Mitterrand and Thatcher: the parting of the ways**

The President said that he drew the conclusion that it would be stupid to say no to reunification. In reality there was no force in Europe which could stop it happening. None of us were going to declare war on Germany. Nor judging by his statements was Mr. Gorbachev. There were the Four Power agreements and they served a useful purpose. But at the end of the day they could not prevent reunification. In short he agreed with the Prime Minister’s analysis and shared her wish to talk all these issues through very carefully. Indeed she was the only person to whom he could talk frankly about them. But he was honestly at a loss what we could do.

*President Mitterrand, in conversation with Margaret Thatcher, 20 January 1990*

**A breakthrough with Mrs Thatcher?**

Bleary and hard pressed to Chequers. Upstairs meeting on Germany and NATO. Tom King, William Waldegrave (late but good), Archie Hamilton, Alan Clark, P Cradock, Weston etc. Starts gradually but we make progress. Usual diatribe against German selfishness but the hankering to stop unification now comes less often and we are into ‘transition’ and reducing BAOR.

*Douglas Hurd, private diary, 27 January 1990*

**The origins of Two plus Four: who deserves the credit?**

You will however notice [in a *New York Times* article of 16 February] that the Americans unsurprisingly come out of it rather better than the rest of us, with Baker portrayed as having arrived at, and advocated, the idea of adding ‘the 2’ to ‘the 4’ earlier than anyone else, when the truth of the matter was that several people were coming round to a similar approach at about the same time.

I doubt whether this is much more than the familiar psychological process of believing oneself to have been even wiser after the event than was the case at the time. We would not accuse the Administration’s briefers of seeking deliberately to mislead. But it is perhaps unfortunate that in presenting the chronology of events in this way they will have reinforced the old impression that America’s policy towards Europe is one of ‘Germany first’ and that Britain is a reluctant party in the unification process.
We have put the record straight with the journalists concerned, to the effect that the idea of ‘2 + 4’ crystallised on a more collegiate basis, and a bit later, than is suggested in the article. But the article as it stands will remain the definitive account here.

Kevin Tebbit (Washington) to Hilary Synnott, FCO, 20 February 1990

A constructive role for the UK

Within the Alliance, the United Kingdom was well placed to set the broad policy framework for the months ahead. The United Kingdom had supported the principle of self-determination for Germany for many years. The key issue now was to ensure that any changes took place in a context of stability and peace. The principal issue for the future would be the role of any united Germany within the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Community (EC). It was clear that East Germany could not simply become a member of the EC while it remained a command economy. The United Kingdom was alone among all the Allies in being a member of all the four major international fora where these issues would need to be discussed: the EC, NATO, the Four Powers and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. Bilateral discussions were already under way with the United States, France and Germany in parallel with existing contacts with the Soviet Union at all levels.

Douglas Hurd in Cabinet, 1 February 1990

Getting alongside our Allies

I believe that our policy should be to work hard with the USA and France to influence the manner and speed of movement towards German unity and above all to get right the repercussions for security in Europe and for the Community. If we are seen as opponents of German unity, we shall have much less influence, because the Federal Government and public opinion will be disinclined to listen to us and Kohl would face domestic political costs if he was seen to do so. Your speech here on 6 February is the major opportunity for projecting an image which can help restore our influence. If you can make some new suggestions, it will be clear that the British are looking forward positively.

Sir Christopher Mallaby, Bonn, to Douglas Hurd, 1 February 1990

Two clear messages came over [during Mr Hurd’s visit to Washington] on 29 January — that the Americans believe events will move even faster than we have so far expected, and towards German unification: and, secondly, that we need to get a grip now if we are to exert an influence.

Sir Antony Acland, Washington, 2 February 1990

They are now playing back to us some of our views about Germany. The problems will not be overcome by strengthening the E.C. Germany’s ambitions would then become the dominant and active factor.

Margaret Thatcher, commenting on a Paris telegram of 2 February 1990 reporting French thinking on the German question
Full speed towards German unification

Kastrup says that the situation in the GDR is now so near collapse that the Federal Government is embarking immediately on economic and monetary union without waiting for GDR elections. After 18 March, outline of a unification treaty will be drawn up with the GDR government with aim of presenting this to the CSCE summit. Kastrup claims that Baker is on board for this. Describes Genscher’s other ideas for the CSCE summit. Takes strong and negative line on exercise of 4 power rights.

Conversation between John Weston, FCO, and Dieter Kastrup, AA, in Bonn, 5 February 1990

The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary had a further talk this evening about German reunification. The Prime Minister stressed the very great importance which she attached to organising collective discussion of the implications of reunification. She thought the most practicable form was probably the Berlin Four plus the two Germanies. She knew that the West German Government were not keen on this. But we should try to secure American and French acquiescence and then press them hard. The ideal would be to have some sort of initial meeting in the margins of the Open Skies Conference in Ottawa. . . . The Prime Minister said that we must find a way of avoiding the unification becoming a fait accompli, before we had worked out the implications.

Charles Powell, No. 10, 8 February 1990

There is a heady atmosphere in Bonn. Great events are in the air, and for the first time in 45 years Germany is out in front. For the Germans, this is the breakthrough. After decades of sober and cautious diplomacy, and adjusting themselves to fit in with decisions taken by others, they are in the driving seat and Toad is at the wheel. The exhilaration is unmistakeable. This time they are going to take the decisions and others can tag along. The Allies must of course be involved but not allowed to call the tune. The Germans’ moment has come: they are going to settle their destiny.

Charles Powell, No. 10, to Margaret Thatcher, 9 February 1990

3. The Two plus Four negotiations and after, February – November 1990

Ottawa, 13 February: agreement on Two plus Four

Genscher will talk to you at length about the emotions of the Germans at coming together after so long a division, about their irreversible commitment to democracy and to Europe, and their rejection of neutrality. He will stress that the swift pace of events has been dictated by the collapse of the GDR, which is certainly occurring though not as fast as he says. He is too clever to share the indignation shown by Kohl and the German press about our recent public statements. Indeed he continually thanks me for our understanding. But our influence in the new Four plus Two process will certainly in part depend on our willingness to sound welcoming and constructive, while continuing to restate in public and private what we believe to be the essentials of European security.

Douglas Hurd (in Ottawa) to Margaret Thatcher, 13 February 1990

The Secretary of State said we could all make the effort of imagination to understand Genscher’s feelings. We would all do our best to be friendly and constructive as his vision
became a reality. Dumas (whose father was shot by the Germans) said rather ruefully that Genscher would appreciate what was in everyone’s minds with all the history that lay behind them. All this was a matter of past relationships as well as of the future. We were turning a new corner and needed strong links in the future.

*Stephen Wall, FCO, reporting the successful outcome of the Ottawa discussions, 14 February 1990*

The Prime Minister said that she was glad that she and Herr Genscher could talk frankly without causing any resentment. She hoped that she had made clear to him why she felt strongly about the way in which unification was being handled. It was this to which she objected, not to unification itself.

*Charles Powell, No. 10, 14 February 1990*

In discussion, it was pointed out that while the United Kingdom could justifiably take credit for its contribution towards establishing the present policy framework for handling German unification, the West German media were determined to portray the British attitude as negative, even though in many instances Ministers were describing the problems and implications in similar terms to those used by Chancellor Kohl and Herr Genscher.

*Cabinet meeting, 22 February 1990*

**The UK’s negative image**

Britain’s public standing in Germany is at its lowest for years.

*Sir Christopher Mallaby, 22 February 1990*

As I have said on several occasions before, the Americans would rather work with Britain than with anyone else in charting the way ahead at this crucial juncture. But they will feel able to do so only so long as we are seen to be central to the European debate and regarded by our European partners as having a powerful influence on the way forward.

*Sir Antony Acland, Washington, 23 February 1990*

The Foreign Secretary said we must not appear to be a brake on everything. Rather we should come forward with some positive ideas of our own. We had been successful in securing a proper forum for discussion of the consequences of unification. But we needed to look beyond that.

*Douglas Hurd, in conversation with Margaret Thatcher, 23 February 1990*

**Tommy Cooper and European integration**

The Prime Minister has noted press reports that Herr Genscher has challenged a comment attributed to her, namely that the former GDR could not automatically become a member of the European Community following unification of Germany. I think this is a matter of semantics. The Prime Minister’s point was that there would have to be detailed negotiations, covering such matters as derogations and transitional periods, and that GDR membership could not take place (as Tommy Cooper used to say) ‘just like that’. You might like to make sure that Herr Genscher understands this.

*Charles Powell, No. 10, to Stephen Wall, FCO, 27 February 1990*
Helmut Kohl on history

Kohl said that the newly united Germany would have a very different power axis from the Germany of 1983. The capital of a united Germany had not been decided but the real centre would, as with the FRG now, be in the south or south-west. Modern power lay not in coal but in the computer. Prussia would not be the centre of power that it had been. The situation would be no different from now when German prosperity lay in the provinces like Hesse, Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria and Rheinland-Palatinate. Fears about the developments of a united Germany ran unfounded. Whoever believed Poincaré was a good adviser was wrong. Poincaré was dead.

Helmut Kohl, in conversation with Douglas Hurd, 12 March 1990

Mrs Thatcher on history

We must widen the discussion to include the future of the USSR (? or of Russia) and whether we pursue spheres of influence or alliances of democracy or geographical alliances. We cannot completely disregard history for the various empires and maritime states have girdled the globe. We must therefore consider some of the old balance of power. But it seems to me that, while in the past, history was determined largely by the personalities and ambitions of the rulers of the people, in future it will be decided much more by the character of the people. However, the lesson of the past two years is that neither character nor pride has been stifled by oppression.

Margaret Thatcher, on the agenda for her meeting with historians of Germany at Chequers, 18 March 1990

A marked improvement in British-German relations …

I called on Teltschik today, and began by saying that I thought that there had been a marked improvement in British-German understanding in recent weeks and in the public perception of it in the FRG. Teltschik agreed warmly. He said that the Prime Minister’s messages to Kohl about the Oder/Neisse frontier and then the GDR election result had been brilliantly effective in improving relations.

Sir Christopher Mallaby, Bonn, 23 March 1990

… But not for long

Teltschik expresses officially Kohl’s shock and astonishment at Prime Minister’s reply to Der Spiegel on Oder Neisse frontier. Federal spokesman describes quotation attributed to Kohl by the Prime Minister as inaccurate. Recommendation on best way of drawing a line under this episode.

Sir Christopher Mallaby, Bonn, 26 March 1990

The Americans see things through the German prism

. . . I came away from this meeting [of the four Western Political Directors] with a strong sense of very close US/FRG bilateral coordination and a wish on their part to keep One plus Three discussion within closely defined parameters rather than to use it for a full and frank exchange of views. The Americans, as Sir A. Acland has pointed out, are seeing things through the German prism. And the Germans are moving to the beat of their own drum.
Indeed having created the Two plus Four mechanism with something of a political splash, we may all now be drifting toward a minimalist interpretation of its actual role.

John Weston, FCO, 11 April 1990

Plain speaking from Mrs Thatcher ...

The Prime Minister said she would like to be more specific on the subject of Germany and NATO. She recalled her discussion with Gorbachev last September. She had always been rather apprehensive about a unified Germany. So was President Mitterrand. The difference was that she expressed it publicly and Mitterrand did not. She had been aware of Gorbachev’s view that there should be a long transitional period before unification to enable all the details to be worked out. She had supported that view publicly and taken a lot of criticism for it. She had not received much support, even from Gorbachev . . . Now that unification was almost upon us, ordinary people were beginning to express more doubts about it, particularly in the Soviet Union. We could not now stop or even slow down unification. The task was to find some way to make sure that it did not threaten anyone’s security.

Conversation between Margaret Thatcher and Mikhail Gorbachev, 8 June 1990

... And from the FCO’s Political Director

I said that HMG had over the past months sometimes risked getting itself a bad name by trying to insist that some of these security related questions should be addressed in One plus Three with the Germans before they were allowed to come to the boil in Two plus Four or with the Russians. We had not got very much support in this from others around the table who had sometimes conveyed the impression that no possible complication was worth addressing in good time beforehand, if it seemed to cast doubt on the over-riding strategic priority of returning sovereignty with unity to the Germans at the earliest possible moment. But that was now water under the bridge. Seitz said he thought this was fair comment.

Telephone conversation between John Weston, FCO, and Raymond Seitz, State Dept, 23 July 1990

The eve of German unification in East Berlin

In what mood do the people of the GDR come to unity? As I draft seemingly endless crowds have been moving past, filling the whole of Unter den Linden, going towards the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag for the ceremony at midnight. There must be several hundred thousand of them, mostly East Berliners. One or two people banter with the police guarding the Embassy, but there is very little noise from the crowd, or open celebration. My impression is one of deep emotion, of contentment mixed with certain trepidation in the face of the uncertainties ahead. But none of them is looking back.

Patrick Eyers (East Berlin), 2 October 1990

The end of the British presence in West Berlin

The Berlin endgame ended on a high note for the Allies. We ended one of the longest ‘occupations’ in modern history gracefully, and a million and more Germans celebrated their unification peacefully at midnight in the centre of Berlin.

Michael Burton, British Embassy Berlin Office, 5 October 1990*
The Germans thank the British for their positive contribution

I should report briefly that Dieter Kastrup took me out to lunch on 11 October, in order to say thank you for the British role in 2+4 and the approach to German unification. . . . I said that I was glad that he recognised that the British role in 2+4 had been creative. One example was the idea of suspending QRRs, pending entry into force of the final settlement; that suggestion had started in this Embassy. Kastrup said that he knew this and had made sure that Genscher knew it too.

*Sir Christopher Mallaby, Bonn, to John Weston (FCO), 12 October 1990*

What should the UK do now?

Germany will play a bigger role in the coming years, across Europe, and more widely. Its importance for us has grown in 1990 and will grow further. We have many common interests with the Germans, and should build on these in order to influence German policies more effectively. The aftermath of German unification is an opportunity to make a greater impact. We should seize it.

*Sir Christopher Mallaby, Bonn, 30 November 1990*
THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

Sir Michael Burton, the UK’s Minister and Deputy Commandant in West Berlin 1985-90 and Minister and Head of the British Embassy Berlin Office 1990-92, is unfortunately unable to be present today. We are therefore grateful for the opportunity to print an account of the events of 1989-90 as seen from his vantage point in West Berlin.

For the Allies in West Berlin it was business as usual at the start of 1989. Their role continued to be governed by the Quadripartite Agreement of 1971. The essence of that hard-fought deal with the Soviet Union, as far as West Berlin was concerned, was that the security situation was stabilised on the basis that the rights and responsibilities of the Allies would continue unchanged and that West Berlin was ‘not part of the Federal Republic and not governed by it’.

The most important of the Allied responsibilities was for the protection and security of the city. This was primarily the task of the three Allied garrisons. The British garrison was roughly mid-way in size between those of the Americans and the French. It consisted of three infantry battalions, an armoured squadron and support units. The RAF, equipped with only one spotter plane (which was, I found out afterwards, somewhat to my surprise, actually a significant security asset!), was stationed at RAF Gatow. Internally the West Berlin Police, who came under Allied control, were responsible for order in the city.

Another vitally important responsibility was for the city’s air links with the West. Only one airline of each of the three Allies was authorised to serve the city using the three air corridors. Every single flight was controlled in the (Berlin Air Safety Centre (BASC) with Soviet representatives. The rules had not changed since the end of the war and included the tedious restriction that the maximum height an aircraft could fly was 10,000 feet since that was an acceptable height at the time. But it hardly suited modern aircraft! Furthermore the Soviet doctrine was that flights could only legally be undertaken to and from the Allied Occupation zones, i.e. the Federal Republic. So a flight from London, for example, would have stamped on its authorisation slip by the Soviet representative in the (BASC), ‘Safety of flight not guaranteed’. Fortunately passengers were not aware of this!

Where the Allies came into most contact with the West Berlin Senat was over authorising the taking over of Federal Laws by the Berlin House of Representatives after they had first been checked to ensure that none of the provisions of the status of Berlin, including the rights of the Allies, were infringed.

Presiding over all this was the Allied Kommandatura (AK). This consisted of the three Allied Commandants and the Ministers/Deputy Commandants who were the senior diplomatic officers and who were of equal rank. The AK met monthly to conduct its business under the chairmanship of the Commandant of the Ally which held the rotating chairmanship of all the allied Committees that particular month. AK members also met the Governing Mayor over tea once a month, and the Ministers separately had lunch with the Head of the Senat Chancery. Each Ally had a Senat Liaison Officer who dealt with the Senat bureaucracy on a daily basis.
Getting back to the start of 1989 Berlin seemed unaffected by President Gorbachev’s Glasnost and Perestroika and the stirrings in neighbouring countries. Life for the Allies followed its seemingly immemorial routine. To cite a few examples from the British calendar:

- Every year a full-dress Parade took place on the Maifeld to celebrate the Queen’s Birthday. Usually the salute was taken by a member of the Royal Family; in 1987 it had been Her Majesty herself.
- Every two years the Garrison mounted a spectacular British Berlin Tatoo in the Deutschlandhalle, modelled on the Royal Tournament.
- On a smaller scale the battalions held Volksfeste in the four British Bezirke for the Berliners to enjoy all the fun of the fair.
- On a more sombre note wreaths were laid every year at the Lüftbrücke Memorial at Tempelhof Airport to commemorate the significant British losses in the Airlift.
- The Young Königswinter conference, bringing together about 30 young Germans with the same number of young British people to discuss a general theme of interest – and acquaint them with Berlin – was held under the chairmanship of that great figure in British/German relations, Sir Frank Roberts.

But at the start of 1989 in Berlin the outlook did not look particularly rosy. There had been 40 escapes to West Berlin the previous year. The last escape attempt, when shots were fired, was on 8 April 1989. In his regular lunch meetings in Berlin with the Ambassadors of the Allies the Soviet Ambassador Kochemassev was as intractable as ever. The Soviets had shown no interest in taking up the Allied proposal to discuss the obsolete Berlin Air regime. This initiative had arisen out of President Reagan’s speech in front of the Brandenburg Gate in 1987 in which he had memorably called on President Gorbachev to open the Gate and tear down the Wall.

It is worth noting that the West German and West Berlin response to that speech had been decidedly muted. The German orthodoxy of the time was that provocative statements should be avoided and efforts concentrated on making the Wall more porous. Furthermore, according to the senior German politicians who took part, the German Question was little discussed in Germany at the time except at the Berlin branch of the Aspen Institute under the avuncular chairmanship of Ehrenbürger Shepard Stone, an American.

It is also worth noting that President Reagan was not the only Allied head of state to make a significant speech in Berlin in 1987, the year the city celebrated its 750th anniversary. In a speech to an invited audience The Queen said ‘The hope of all of us must be that the cruel division of this city will one day be overcome in the spirit of its long tradition of tolerance. May the same Berlin which is now the symbol of the division of Europe become on that day the symbol of its unity.’

It has to be said that for some years before 1989 the Berliners had been showing some restlessness over what they considered the disadvantages of the Allied presence. Without going too far into the murky waters of Berlinologie these ranged from the fact that Berliners could not elect their Bundestag and European Parliament members by direct ballot, the disturbance to traffic created by the annual Allied Forces Day Parade, and training by the Allied garrisons in recreation areas such as the Grünewald to the fact that the Allied
commandants entertained the Governing Mayor by rotation to the monthly tea meeting but he himself never acted as host. The fact that the Allied role was a package resting on the unchallengeable right of conquest, which, in the Berliners’ own interest, it would be risky to unpick, was understood by few people, particularly the young. It was also not wholly accepted by some German and even Berlin politicians.

As the year progressed a revealing incident which took place was the attempted escape of three young East Berliners by swimming across the River Spree just by the Reichstag while a GDR patrol boat was looking the other way. Two of them, including a pregnant woman, managed to scramble on to the bank on the western side. But the third one, named Martin Notev, failed to get up on to the bank before being spotted by the patrol boat which thereupon crossed over and hauled him aboard. A passing British tourist happened to photograph the moment, which provided the evidence for the three Allied foreign ministers to protest to Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze that the GDR had in effect kidnapped Notev from the British Sector and to demand his return.

Berlin officials told us that by this forceful response we had probably condemned Notev to seven years hard labour. But to our relief he turned up at the West Berlin reception centre some weeks later. I went down with Alan Charlton from my staff to welcome him with a glass of Sekt. Clearly something was changing in the chemistry between the Soviet and GDR authorities.

This incident had a sequel. The Senat agreed with our suggestion to place ladders along the river bank where the incident had occurred to enable any one falling into the water to climb to safety. Honecker was outraged and badgered Moscow to do something about this provocative action. When my Soviet opposite number came to make a serious protest on the subject I decided he was only acting pro forma and we could safely leave the ladders in place. But I was glad that the opening of the Wall a few months later meant that my judgement was not put to the test!

Coming to the night the Wall opened we in West Berlin were, of course, fascinated observers of the events leading up to the night of 9 November which took everybody by surprise. It so happened that on that fateful evening I was the only member of the AK who was at home watching events unfold on TV. Once I had reported to Bonn and London I then made it my task to co-ordinate a statement by the AK to be carried by the following day’s Berlin press welcoming the opening of the Wall. It would not have done for the Allies not to have commented in real time on such a momentous event.

The Governing Mayor, Walter Momper, then rang me in the small hours to tell me that he was on the other side of the Wall at the Bornholmerstrasse crossing point and was being asked for instructions by the WPB, the RMP and the East German Vopos. How should he deal with this unprecedented situation? I suggested he tell them to do their best to keep order.

The next day the British garrison, specifically the Royal Welch Regiment, were conspicuous at the crossing point with their regimental mascot, a Welsh goat, dispensing
welcoming mugs of tea from a Naafi van to the strains of the regimental band. This went down well with the Berliners streaming through.

At this stage the GDR border guards were still standing on the Wall at the Brandenburg Gate facing the milling crowd on the western side. Soviet President Gorbachev sent an urgent message to the three Allied leaders urging them to take action to prevent this potentially inflammatory situation getting out of control. At a meeting of the Allied Ambassadors, Commandants and Ministers to discuss what should be done we were able to propose a solution based on a precedent of the previous year. We had then instructed the West Berlin Police (WPB) to restore order in an area called the Lenne Triangle which lay on the western side of the Wall but was formally part of the Soviet Sector, having warned the Soviet authorities, and through them what we were intending to do.

We now instructed the WPB to police the Unterbaubegiet, the strip of land adjoining the Wall on the western side which had the same legal status as the Lenne Triangle, and to assure order. When they did this the GDR guards withdrew and the crowd were able to start climbing on to the Wall. The images went round the world.

The following day, a Saturday, was unforgettable in West Berlin. This was not just because of the tumultuous scenes at the Wall. There was also the spectacle on the KuDamm of hundreds of East Berliners, having drawn their DM 100 of Begrüssungsgeld from the banks, pressing their noses against the windows of the smart shops and trying to decide what the priority purchases were for each member of the family. Unfortunately DM100 did not go far. This sight made a strong impression on me and made me realise that the most powerful force driving the political process was likely to be the East Germans’ demand for the DM as soon as possible.

I therefore reported after the weekend that we were probably witnessing ‘the beginning of the end-game’ for the Allies in Berlin meaning that with re-unification (a word not mentioned in my telegram) their function would end. With hindsight this may sound pretty obvious but at the time it was a daring and even subversive thought. Our view in BMG even then was that although there would be an interim period during which both German states would try to make a third way solution work in the GDR on the basis of a reformed system this would in time succumb to the overwhelming economic attraction of the Federal Republic and the GDR would implode.

The Soviets in Berlin, who had been as taken aback as everyone else by events, were at a loss how to respond. At a lunch with my Soviet number the following week he said that he emphatically agreed with the Prime Minister that re-unification was not on the political agenda. As regards the prospects for the GDR he said that the Soviet view was to hope that the new leaders could make a genuine socialist alternative work on the basis of democracy and human rights, which, he added with some passion, were not capitalist concepts but the basic rights of all mankind.

In a final desperate bid to keep a Four Power handle on the situation the Russians then proposed the holding of Four Power talks. The Allies would only agree provided these were limited to discussion of the so-called Allied Initiative on the Berlin Air Services launched in December 1987 following the Reagan speech. Talks were held on 11 December in the imposing building of the Allied Control Authority from where the Allies had governed
Germany after the war. The Allies nevertheless had to re-assure the Germans that this was not a last ditch effort by the Four Powers to pre-empt decisions which should properly be taken by the Germans themselves.

In the eleven months between the opening of the Wall and German re-unification there was understandable pressure from the German side for the Allies to relax their grip. Some measures presented little difficulty: the Allied Forces Day Parade was abolished, the hut at Check Point Charlie was removed to the Museum of the Allies at the end of an impressive ceremony featuring six foreign ministers, and the Governing Mayor finally got to host the Commandants for tea! Other measures still presented difficulties on status grounds, at least in the eyes of the hardliners in the Foreign Office. But I was delighted that there was finally agreement to my long-standing recommendation to abolish my post’s obsolescent title of British Military Government (BMG) and to rename it the British Mission, Berlin – a name change which the Americans had brought in without endangering the safety of the city in 1948!

The major question for the Allies in Berlin during this period was whether at least part of the Allied garrisons would remain in the city after re-unification. After the successful conclusion of the 2+4 talks this was easily resolved. Allied troops would remain for a few years until the Soviet troops had withdrawn from the New Laender, but reporting to a Bundeswehr Stadtkommandant. However, the Allied Commandants, as the symbols of Allied authority, had to take their leave after re-unification.

The last act of the Allies before re-unification was to hold the final meeting of the AK on 2 October 1990. At this meeting all the AK members signed a letter (drafted by us) addressed to the Governing Mayor. In it we congratulated the people of Berlin and praised them for their staunchness. As for the Allied role the letter read ‘To-day we look back on the long and difficult road leading to the reunification of the city. We salute the many thousands of Allied men and women who have served in Berlin with dedication and professionalism. The contributions of these Allied soldiers, airmen and civilians helped to lay the foundation for this happy day. They, together and in partnership with the Berliners, saw the city through difficult times. We shall always remember them’.

After handing over this letter to the Governing Mayor in a simple ceremony attended, to our great pleasure, by Willy Brandt, the British Commandant, Maj Gen Robert Corbett, who was Chairman Commandant, presented it to a full meeting of the Berlin Abgeordnetenhaus in a speech in German in which he quoted Winston Churchill ‘The artificial division of Germany is a tragedy that cannot endure’. His speech was greeted with great acclamation.

That evening the Chairman of Daimler Benz, Edzard Reuter, son of the great Governing Mayor Ernst Reuter, generously invited the Allies (including Sir Frank Roberts who happened to be staying with me) to a party at the top of a hotel from where we could view the enthusiastic celebrations taking place in front of the Reichstag to mark reunification. I thought it was a delightful touch, whether intended or not, that as midnight approached, the band played Elgar’s ‘Land of Hope and Glory’!

Michael Burton
PART II

THE TRANSCRIPTS
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CDO</td>
<td>Collateralized debt obligation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDU</td>
<td><em>Christlich-Demokratische Union</em>/Christian Democratic Union (FRG)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSBM(s)</td>
<td>Confidence- and Security-Building Measures</td>
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<td>CSCE</td>
<td>Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
<td><em>Deutsche Demokratische Republik</em> (GDR)</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>FCO</td>
<td>Foreign and Commonwealth Office</td>
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<td>FRG</td>
<td>Federal Republic of Germany</td>
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<td>FSA</td>
<td>Financial Services Authority</td>
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<td>G8</td>
<td>Group of Eight</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GDR</td>
<td>German Democratic Republic</td>
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<td>MBFR</td>
<td>Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>Nuclear, Biological and Chemical weapons</td>
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<tr>
<td>NVA</td>
<td><em>Nationale Volksarmee</em>/GDR National People’s Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>Social Democratic Party (GDR)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SED</td>
<td><em>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands</em>/Socialist Unity Party of Germany (GDR)</td>
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<td>SPD(FRG)</td>
<td><em>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</em>/German Social Democratic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stasi</td>
<td><em>Ministerium für Staatssicherheit</em>/Ministry for State Security (GDR)</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>VOPO</td>
<td>Volkspolizei</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF PERSONS

(with position at the date at which they are mentioned)

Abs, Hermann Josef, Chairman of the Deutsche Bank

Adamishin, Anatoly L., Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, USSR, 1986-91

Adenauer, Dr Konrad, Chancellor of the FRG, 1949-63


Anderson, David, American Diplomat, member of the U.S. delegation that negotiated the four-power Berlin Agreement of 1971 with the Soviets, British and French


Beria, Lavrentiy Pavlovich, chief of the Soviet security and secret police apparatus under Stalin and later head of the NKVD

Bondarenko, Aleksander P., Head of the Third European Department, Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1971-91; Soviet representative in Two plus Four negotiations, 1990

Bozo, Frédéric, Professor at the Sorbonne, author of Mitterrand, the End of the Cold War and German Unification (2009)

Braithwaite, Sir Rodric Q., British Ambassador, Moscow, 1988-92

Brandt, Willy, Chancellor of the FRG, 1969-74


Carrington, Peter A.R.C., 6th Baron Carrington, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 1979-82

Ceauşescu, Nicolae, President of Romania (1974-1989). Following a revolution and the December 1989 military coup, he and his wife were executed

Chernyaev, Anatoly S., Chief Foreign Policy Adviser to Mr Gorbachev

Cradock, Sir Percy, Prime Minister’s Foreign Policy Adviser, 1984-92

Dacre, Lord (Hugh Trevor-Roper), Historian; author of The Last Days of Hitler (1947)

Dufourcq, Bertrand, Political Director, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1988-91

Dumas, Roland, French Foreign Minister (1984-86 and 1988-93)
Eppelmann, Rainer, dissident pastor in East Berlin, one of the leaders of Democratic Awakening

Falin, Valentin M., Head of International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU, 1988-91

Fall, Brian J.P., British High Commissioner, Ottawa, 1989-92

Garton Ash, Timothy, historian, journalist and essayist; author of The Polish Revolution: Solidarity (1983); The Uses of Adversity (1989)

Genscher, Hans-Dietrich, FRG Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Chancellor, 1974-92

Geremek, Bronislaw, leading figures in the Polish democratic opposition, adviser to Solidarność, leader of the Commission for Political Reforms of the Civic Committee (1987-89)

Gorbachev, Mikhail S., General Secretary of the CPSU, 1985-91; President of the USSR, 1990-91

Goulden, P. John, AUS (Defence), FCO, 1988-92

Grishin, Viktor, Vasilyevich, First Secretary of the Moscow City Committee (1967 – 85), in 1985 he stood against Gorbachev for the post of General Secretary

Hartmann, Peter, Head of Group 21, FRG Chancellery (dealing with relations with the FRG Foreign Ministry and Ministry for Economic Cooperation), 1987-91

Havel, Václav, President of Czechoslovakia, 1989-92

Honecker, Erich, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED, 1971-89; Chairman of the Council of State of the GDR, 1976-1989 (18 October)

Howe, Sir R.E. Geoffrey, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 1983-89 (24 July); Lord President of the Council, 1989-90

Hurd, Douglas, Home Secretary, 1983-89; Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 1989 (26 October)-1995

Jaruzelski, General Wojciech W., successively Prime Minister, Chairman of the Council of State and President of the People’s Republic of Poland 1981-89; President of Poland 1989-90.

Jellicoe, Lord (George P. J. R.), spent a year in Germany before studying in Cambridge, during the war he fought in SOE. A Conservative peer, he supported British entry to the EEC

Kastrap, Dieter, Political Director, FRG Foreign Ministry, 1988-91

Kohl, Dr Helmut, Chancellor of the FRG, 1982-98

Kouchner, Bernard, French Foreign Minister (2007-).

Krenz, Egon, Member of Politburo and Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED, 1983-89; General Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED and Chairman of the Council of State of the GDR, 1989 (24 October-6 December)

Kvitsinsky, Yuli A., Soviet Ambassador, Bonn, 1986-90; Deputy Foreign Minister, USSR, 1990-91

Lambsdorff, Otto Graf, Chairman of the FRG FDP, 1988-93

Lever, Paul J., Head of Security Policy Department, FCO, 1987-90

Llewellyn-Smith, Michael J., Minister, British Embassy, Paris, 1988-91

Magirius, Friedrich, Superintendent of the Leipzig East Church District and Joint Pastor of the Nikolaikirche in Leipzig, 1982-95

Maizière, Lothar de, Chairman of the CDU in the GDR October 1989-November 1990; Prime Minister of the GDR April-October 1990; acting Foreign Minister of the GDR, August-October 1990

Major, John, Chief Secretary, Treasury, 1987-89; Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 1989; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1989-90

Mallaby, Sir Christopher L.G., British Ambassador, Bonn, 1988-93

Marsh, David, Chief German Correspondent, Financial Times, 1986-91


Meckel, Markus, Co-founder of the SDP (later SPD) of the GDR, October 1989; Foreign Minister of the GDR 1990 (April-August)

Mitterrand, François M.A.M., President of the French Republic, 1981-95

Modrow, Hans, SED Central Committee member and First Secretary of the Dresden regional leadership, 1973-89; Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the GDR, 1989-90

Momper, Walter, Governing Mayor of Berlin, 1989-91

Munro, Colin A., Counsellor, British Embassy, East Berlin, 1987-90

Parsons, Anthony, Ambassador to Iran, 1974–79
Pöhl, Karl-Otto, President of the Bundesbank, 1980-91

Portugalov, Nicolae, adviser on German affairs to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee. Close to Falin, he was regarded as the author of the shift towards German unification

Powell, Charles D., Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister, 1983-91

Radice Giles H., Labour MP, member of Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, 1987-96

Rau, Johannes, Minister-President of North Rhine-Westphalia, 1978-98

Reagan, Ronald W., President of the United States, 1981-89

Reinhold, Professor Otto, President of the GDR Academy of Sciences

Renwick Robin W., British Ambassador to South Africa, 1987-91


Ridley, Nicholas, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, 1989-90


Romanov, Grigory, Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU responsible for industry, in 1985 he was Mikail Gorbachev's main rival for the succession to Konstantin Chernenko

Rühe, Volker, Secretary General, CDU, 1989-91

Schabert, Tilo, author of Wie Weltgeschichte gemacht wird. Frankreich und die deutsche Einheit (2002)

Schabowski, Günter, First Secretary of the SED in East Berlin, 1986-89

Schmidt, Helmut, Chancellor of the FRG, 1974-82

Scowcroft, Brent, National Security Adviser to President Bush, 1989-93

Shevardnadze, Eduard A., Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, 1985-91

Schorlemmer, Friedrich, German Protestant theologian, member of the civil rights movement in the GDR, one of the founders of Democratic Awakening in Dresden and a member of the SDP

Schürer, Gerhard, head of State Planning in the GDR government

Skubiszewski, Krzysztof J., Foreign Minister of Poland, 1989-93
Stolpe, Manfred, Consistorial President of the Evangelical Churches of Berlin-Brandenburg, 1982-89

Stone, Norman, Historian; author of *The Eastern Front, 1914-1917* (1975); *Hitler* (1980)

Synnott, Hilary N.H., Head of Western European Department, FCO, 1989-91

Teltschik, Horst, Chief Adviser to Chancellor Kohl on Foreign Policy and Inner-German Relations, 1982-91

Thatcher, Margaret H., Prime Minister, 1979-90

Tisch, Harry, chairman of the Free German Trade Union Federation and member of the SED’s Politburo

Trevor-Roper, Hugh (see Dacre, Lord)

Urban, George, Broadcaster and author of books on Eastern Europe and East-West relations; Director of Radio Free Europe, 1983-86

Waldegrave, William A., Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 1988-90

Wałęsa, Lech, human rights activist, co-founder of Solidarność trade union, key role in 1989 Round Table Agreement leading to semi-free parliamentary elections and to a Solidarity-led government, President of Poland (1990–95)

Wall, J. Stephen, Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1988-91


Weidenfeld, Lord (George), publisher, Chairman of Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd since 1948 and columnist for *Die Welt* and *Die Welt am Sonntag*

Weizsäcker, Richard Freiherr von, President of the FRG, 1984-94

Weston, P. John, DUS (Defence), FCO 1989-90; Political Director and DUS (Europe), FCO, 1990-91

Wörner, Manfred, Secretary General of NATO, 1988-94

Wood, Michael C., Legal Counsellor, FCO, 1986-91

Wright, Oliver, Chairman of the Königswinter Conference Steering Committee (1987–97), President of the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce in London (1989–92), former Ambassador to the FRG (1975–81)

Wright, Sir Patrick, Permanent Under-Secretary of State, FCO, and Head of British Diplomatic Service, 1986-91
SESSION 1

THE EAST GERMAN REVOLUTION AND THE FALL OF THE WALL

Welcome

Chris Bryant, MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

I am very hesitant to hold forth about German unification or reunification, especially as this happened under a previous political dispensation. What I am absolutely certain of is that making historical documents fully available in printed form so they are preserved for history is a vital part of making sure that we understand today better and we can make tomorrow better as well.

Ten years ago, I wrote a biography of Stafford Cripps, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1940s, and by some miracle it was published. It is not available in any good bookshops. I was painfully aware at the time that Stafford Cripps was very bad at keeping papers. He kept no diary, except for a brief period when he was – uniquely for a British MP – an ambassador to Russia during the Second World War. One of the reasons that there were remarkably few books about him, and that he is rarely referred to in other people’s histories, is because he was so bad at keeping his paperwork.

Therefore, it is an absolute delight that this series of documents that we have been producing through the Foreign Office is continuing. This is a particularly important one. In terms of our relations with Germany, clearly Germany is one of our most important allies. We speak to Germany on virtually every issue under the sun, on virtually every day of the week, and I cannot stress too strongly how important that relationship is to us. I think we played a helpful role in the process of reunification. Mrs Thatcher has already commented on her own personal misgivings, so I am not breaking any news here, but undoubtedly those in Britain who watched Germany with a very close eye were keen to be able to provide whatever assistance was necessary to make unification possible.

Of course, the reunification has been an enormous success. At times when the German economy has had difficulties over the last few years, sometimes us pro-Europeans in the UK have had to remind anti-Europeans, or Eurosceptics, of the extraordinary feat of political and economic engineering that Germany has had to undergo in the years since unification.
GDP per capita in the Eastern Länder has increased from 42.8% of West German levels in 1991 to 71% in 2008. That level of transformation is quite remarkable and one which I, as a Welsh MP, looking to England with sometimes higher levels of GDP than in Wales, would quite like to emulate. Productivity has reached 79% of Western German levels; the manufacturing industry has grown by almost 55% since 2000 alone, and unemployment has fallen considerably, although obviously it has risen again slightly in the current crisis, to 13.9%.

All in all, I think we can say that reunification has been a historic success. When we look at the scars that the twentieth century left across the whole of Europe, we can point to the European Union as one of the most extraordinary successes. This was helped by the reunification of Germany, but also, of course, the EU itself helped that reunification to happen. As somebody who lived in Spain under Franco as a child, I am aware that, if you look across Europe at the scars of the twentieth century, there were people who are still relatively young today who grew up under dictatorships of left and right, who lived in countries where there were political prisoners, and where there were no human rights, and where the death penalty still existed. None of that is true today, across the whole of the European Union. Therefore, I believe that we, in our generation, and Germany in your generation, have seen an extraordinary success – not a small miracle, but a large miracle. I want to congratulate Germany for it and to say that, with the new German government in the process of being formed, we look forward to an ever-growing comradeship and strength of relationship. I very much hope that you enjoy the rest of this morning’s deliberations. Unfortunately, the Palace of Westminster is going through the business of voting this morning, so I have to go and vote on pleural plaques in a few moments but, former foreign minister, ambassadors, senior academics – all of you here today – I am grateful for your interest and look forward to a long and warm relationship with the successful and unified Germany.

Patrick Salmon, FCO Chief Historian

May I briefly echo Chris Bryant’s words of welcome and express our gratitude, especially to the panellists and the chairmen, for coming, and make some practical announcements. The first is a sad one: Lord Hurd is too ill to be with us today. We saw him here in the Foreign Office only a couple of weeks ago, and I know he was very much looking forward to taking part. We shall miss his unique insight and his wise judgement, and I am sure everyone here will join me in wishing him a speedy recovery.

Secondly, we learned late yesterday afternoon that Lord Watson, already suffering from a cold, was feeling a good deal worse, and that he would not be able to chair the second session today. You can imagine how desperate I felt at that point, but also how grateful I was when Professor Roger Morgan agreed to take his place. Roger, of course, is a distinguished scholar of British-German relations. From our personal point of view, we are
also very grateful that he knows our series of volumes better than almost everybody else, so Roger, thank you very much indeed.

During the three panel sessions, the witnesses will be invited to make brief initial statements, on the basis of the questions in the blue handouts, then the discussion will be thrown open to the floor, and I hope everybody will feel free to intervene. Today’s proceedings will form part of the public record – Chatham House Rules do not apply. Everything is being recorded and transcripts will eventually be published on the internet.

We are very pleased to have tempted our first chairman, Timothy Garton Ash, away from the British Academy for a short time, and I now have great pleasure in inviting him to chair the first session.

**Introduction**

**Timothy Garton Ash**

Thank you. Let me be the first of many scholars and writers to congratulate the Foreign Office historians on what it is a fantastically rich and fascinating collection of documents, reading at some points almost like a thriller, and also for having brought it out after just 20 years, rather than the previously canonical 30 years. This has the added advantage that one can then get into a conversation with witnesses about the documents, which is, of course, what we are hoping to do today. This room is full of remarkable witnesses, starting, of course, with Herr Genscher but continuing with many others, and we therefore want to leave a lot of time for you to contribute comments and questions.

Our first session is on the East German revolution and the fall of the Wall. That is to say, roughly speaking, up to November 1989, a period in which the pace was set by events unfolding on the ground in East Central Europe and in East Germany, not by the policies and diplomacy of the Great Powers. In many moments the Great Powers were running to catch up. The procedure is that each of our very well qualified panellists will speak for about 10 minutes, loosely addressing the questions on page 15 of your song sheet, although perhaps adding a few of their own. I may ask a follow-up question, and then there will be plenty of time for questions and comments. We will proceed, as it were, from the streets of East Germany outward, through the West German reaction, the British Embassy in East Berlin, to the Foreign Office in London. Our first speaker is Markus Meckel, who, like many opposition leaders in East Germany, came out of the world of the Protestant churches. He is actually a priest and theologian. He was much involved in opposition activity through the 1970s and 1980s. He was a founding member of the East German SPD, and very active in the whole transition. He was then, from April to August 1990, foreign minister of the briefly genuinely democratic German Democratic Republic, and has since occupied many high positions in the politics of united Germany. Herr Meckel will speak in German for about 10 minutes, with simultaneous interpretation.
Witness Statements

Markus Meckel

Thank you very much for the introduction, and for the invitation to speak to you today. I think this is a wonderful initiative, 20 years on, to hold such a conference and to look back once again to this era which, to some extent, involves looking back to a different age, because a lot of the questions that we are looking at and having to address now seem to be very different. Yet, if you take a closer look, some things are indeed quite associated with the challenges that we have to face today.

On 9 October, exactly 20 years ago – I think it was just a few days after we had founded the Social Democratic Party in the GDR – there were major demonstrations. The biggest one was in Leipzig, with 70,000 people. No one was shot. We, as activists felt that this was a breakthrough. Our main aim at the time was to create democracy, not necessarily German unity. Of course, it was clear that there would be two democratic German states, and to have a wall between them would be absurd, but, during those days in October, and in the weeks and months leading up to that, that was not actually the aim, because we were also convinced that this was a question which did not just involve the Germans. This would be something that had to be embedded in European processes.

I think a couple of things cannot be forgotten if you think of this era. One factor is Gorbachev. With him, we who were in opposition in the 1980s saw that there was no longer any point in negotiating with the authorities, not only in the GDR but in Poland, Hungary and the other Central European states. If you look back at the major demonstrations today and the pictures from the Baltic, for example, you can see that those pictures actually often come from 1988, so Europe was already in turmoil; it was already moving, and Gorbachev denoted the end of a perspective which we had hitherto nursed as a kind of moral impetus in our movement. I have always said what you need to do in life is to be able to look at yourself honestly in the mirror in the morning. It is really a question of trying to live in truth, and we thought that we could change the system or change Europe.

It was only in 1988 after Honecker had been invited to Bonn in 1987, and he had been a bit reluctant initially, but then there were attacks on the opposition, the attack on the library, and the [Rosa] Luxemburg and [Karl] Liebknecht demonstrations at the beginning of 1988, and those demos were associated with a lot of arrests and a lot of demonstrations. From then on, we realised that we needed new structures in the opposition; new ways of organising.

At the beginning of 1989, Martin Gutzeit, a good friend of mine, and I decided to form the SPD in the GDR. Of course, we could not know that things were going to move so fast in that year, but we thought we needed some forms outside of the Church, because up until then we had been operating within the Church. Then everything started moving very fast. In January, there were just the two of us who took this decision, and said we must really raise this question of power. In February there was the Round Table in Poland – we did not
know anything about that. Even before that, things were changing in Hungary, and I knew
that from visitors. I could not go to Poland, but in 1988 and 1989 I had been in Hungary and
had already seen how much was moving there. So there was already an idea there that they
could do something to achieve things. In other words, there were political aspirations, not
just ethical or moral aspirations. This was a central question.

For us, what happened in Poland in 1989 with the opposition – the Round Table – was
crucial. There was the first free election and, the very same day, in China, there was the
Tiananmen massacre. We also had to hope that we could at least achieve something now.
The Hungarian developments, with the opening up of the Hungarian-Austrian border,
taking down the barbed wire – all of that encouraged various groups in the GDR.

The Polish development tended to encourage the opposition. The Hungarian development
tended to encourage those, who just wanted to get out. In other words, the East German
population had adjusted to there being no perspective for change. A lot of people just
wanted to leave, and Hungary was a great sign of hope for them. There were 50,000 people
that summer who actually sought to get to the West, and this was something that we, in the
opposition, found annoying. We said we need this potential for change in our own country.
So there was a great deal of tension between those two schools of thought in the population
– the ones who just wanted to leave and the ones who wanted to stay and change things –
because for decades we had seen a kind of brain-drain of potential for change. People were
rushing off to the West to make their lives there, so this Central European development was
very important to us.

I mentioned 9 October, and from then onwards for us it became clear that we were actually
going to manage to achieve democracy. After that came this question of the Wall. With
9 November, that prospect was closed down. For me, 9 November was not actually an
occasion for jubilation. I thought this was getting much more complicated. Lots of different
stakeholders were coming in, and the democratisation process and the process of German
unity were becoming intertwined, and it was becoming much more complicated, especially
since, within the opposition, the attitude to reunification was not consistent. There were a
lot of people who wanted a renewed GDR, and were very sceptical about reunification.
That was how things looked in November.

I think it is important to make clear the fact that the Wall fell in connection with a peaceful
revolution. Those who look at the events of that day must not forget the interview with
Mr Schabowski. He did not announce that the Wall was to be opened, as you sometimes
read today. The SED\(^1\) had decided on that day to pass a travel law so that people would
have the right to go to the West, as they already could from Poland and Hungary, with a
clear procedure to be undergone. But since, in the previous weeks, there had been major
demonstrations and nobody had opened fire, and because of this misunderstanding,
thousands of people rushed to the border in Berlin initially, hesitated for a while, and then

\(^1\) The Socialist Unity Party – a communist party – resulted from the forced merger of the SPD and the
KPD in the Soviet zone on 22 April 1946.
they just kicked everything down and went through. As no one opened fire, those in charge of security were totally unsettled by this and they thought nobody would, because they had not done so at the demonstrations, this was a peaceful demonstration, and the Wall fell in connection with this peaceful revolution in the GDR, which was part of a Central European process. That is why I think it is so important to keep 9 November [1989] separate from 3 October [1990] and anything that came before that – it belongs in this Central European context.

I mentioned Gorbachev, who of course played a central role, as this was only possible because there was hope now that there would not be any more tanks rolling in as they did in 1953 or 1956. I think we need to remember, in Germany, 9 November, and celebrate that with the Central European neighbours, because they were part of this process. Everybody else is, of course, very warmly invited, but 9 November, for the Central Europeans, is a bigger day. 3 October is something we celebrate with the allies, the European neighbours, because they were the partners then. Mr Genscher will talk to us then about the CSCE countries, which were then informed. It is important to differentiate between these two days, because generally people do not, and looking back with hindsight, 3 October and 9 November are thrown in the same boat.

Since I will not be able to be here this afternoon for the last panel, perhaps I can leap forward in time to make one brief comment about that. Against the backdrop of this Central European development, after the free election, the relationship with those Central European neighbours was so important. That is why the question of the German-Polish border became so central. This was a point when the FRG became a difficult partner and Chancellor Kohl as well. That is something I have to say at this stage. This question was central for us. My interest in this process was that we should have trilateral talks without the allies, so that we should prove that we are sovereign, and spiritually sovereign, and that the recognition of that boundary is not the price of German unification but the consequence of what happened in the Second World War. That was the background for us, and that is why it was important for me to say that, independently of what we might be negotiating with others, that border should stay as it is and should be recognised forever. It does not have to be confirmed by the allies. It would have been enough for us to meet and the others not to have been involved. That was not possible; there were other processes that had to be undergone, but that had more to do with internal politics, rather than the recognition of the boundary as an aspiration for negotiations. Thank you.

Timothy Garton Ash

Thank you very much, Markus. I think that was extremely helpful: the Central European context, the significance of 9 October, when violence was not used in Leipzig and other cities, which was a real possibility; the fact that the Wall was, in effect, breached by popular pressure, and not conceded from above as a planned opening of the frontier. I want to ask just one follow-up question, because you said something very striking, which was that, for

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2 In the GDR, on 18 March 1990.
you, 9 November was not a matter for jubilation. I think my question is: at what stage did you give up hoping for a renewed GDR? When did you, personally, realise that was not a plausible scenario?

Markus Meckel

In the spring and in July 1989 we called for the foundation of a Social Democratic Party. At that stage we were still talking about recognition of both German states, and at the same time highlighting the special relationship with the Federal Republic, because of common history and shared responsibility and so on. Recognition, for us, did not mean the same as it meant for Günter Grass and others, in other words that this should be cast in stone.

The second point was that, during the course of the summer, we saw an opportunity for something to change. In the summer of 1989, during that exodus, we already saw that there were new prospects opening up then, because my father comes from Barmen in Wuppertal, and former Federal President Johannes Rau comes from there indeed as well, and it is where Mr Genscher, I think, had his constituency for a while. All of my relations were in the West, so I grew up in a house in Berlin, which is now the centre of the Evangelical Church. This was the mission house at Königstor and it was very much a centre for contacts after the building of the Wall in 1961. I felt very much at home in German-German relations. The fact that this was an aspiration, an internal desire, certainly, is true, but the question is whether we thought it was ever going to come about. That is why I think the strategy changed with this hope for change – a sudden realisation that it was possible.

There was a call on 24 July to form that party, and then the publication happened on 26 August and we were talking about recognition of two states. We added something in at the last minute, because something had changed, and it was all a little fuzzy: ‘Future options within the framework of a peace settlement are possible.’ In other words, we dropped this hint that things might be possible. After the fall of the Wall, we made the first declaration on German reunification, and the basic thrust of that was that we recognised German unification, but this had to be shaped by both German states in such a way that no one had anything to fear from it – neither the vulnerable parts of the population nor the neighbours in Europe. Therefore, we demanded free elections. What you sometimes hear is that people do not understand why, after 9 November, everything happened that way, and why a Round Table which began on 7 December was held again in the GDR, and why we wanted free elections for the GDR. Why would you need those if you are unified? People, with hindsight, looking back, cannot seem to understand that, but the background to it was that we were convinced that this had to be a negotiated process, and not just internationally – this is a central point – but also it should happened between the two German states, and for it to be negotiated there had to be legitimate representatives.

Timothy Garton Ash

Thank you. It is helpful to be reminded of that perspective. We must move on to the West German perspective. West Germany was, of course, following these events closer than
anyone. We are delighted to have with us Dr Peter Hartmann, who is one of the Federal Republic’s most distinguished former senior diplomats. He has held many senior diplomatic positions, including ambassador in Britain and France, under-secretary of state in the German Foreign Ministry, and he was, at this time, the deputy foreign affairs adviser to the Federal Chancellor, working to Horst Teltchik, and therefore about as close as one could be to the way these events developed.

In turning to you Dr Hartmann, could I just throw in one little question, which is that the premise of West German Deutschland-Politik, and indeed Ostpolitik for many years had been that you must have stability in the country concerned to enable so-called menschliche Erleichterungen reforms, controlled liberalisation from above. I wonder if, in your remarks, you could address the question of when you felt that paradigm had to change, and that perhaps a little instability was quite helpful after all.

**Peter Hartmann**

Yes, thank you very much. Of course, I have a different take from Mr Meckel. Mr Meckel experienced these changes directly, from the inside. I would not say that any of us in the spring or summer of 1989 could have predicted what happened later that year. Now, I am in the happy position of enjoying hindsight and the whole thing can be constructed in a more logical sequence. I have sought to look at things from a different perspective. I have examined the reports from the Politburo of the SED, and they played a particular role. It is interesting to see why the SED Politburo took the position it did, in relation to the changes afoot in Central Europe that have been mentioned. I would pick up the point in 1986 when Gorbachev stated openly that each Warsaw Pact state had the opportunity to take sovereign decisions concerning its development, so the question was open as to how the individual Warsaw Pact states would deal with this new autonomy. Poland and Hungary seized the opportunity to engage in economic reforms and carried out some cautious political reforms, but the GDR leadership – I am not talking about the people – set its face against these opportunities for reform. The question is why.

It is rather interesting, if you look into the various minutes and records of meetings, that, first of all, they were not taking a realistic approach to the economic situation. At the end of 1981, there was a comprehensive report on the economic situation produced by the planning department, and the figures were absolutely striking. Indeed, those who travelled in the GDR drew their own conclusions from what they saw, and the GDR leadership was just unprepared to engage in economic reform. Secondly, I looked at why they did not countenance the possibility of political reforms. They did not even think about it. Despite Perestroika, despite what was happening in Hungary, the SED leadership assumed that they still had absolute monopoly of power, and that was so vital to them that there was no way that any of it would be ceded. They saw what happened in Poland – that political changes

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3 Liberalisation measures, especially in transport between the two German states, and between East and West Berlin, undertaken by the GDR following the Basic Treaty between the FRG and GDR in December 1972.
ultimately led to the Communist Party having to give up its monopoly of power. On 1 November 1989, things were clearly beginning to crumble, and yet the SED leadership reported to Moscow that it was going to stand firm.

We have to look at the effects of migration to other parts of the Soviet bloc – Poland and Hungary – and also we have to look at what that emigration meant to the population. People in East Germany were thinking, ‘We can see what is possible in Poland and Hungary, in the Soviet Union. Surely that should influence what happens at home.’ At the end of August, the SED Politburo met, and, for the first time, they discussed the gloomy atmosphere prevailing in the country. Mr Schabowski, of course, had a role to play there. They denounced the FRG’s imperialism, and the ideological picture of the world remained untouched in his mind. Mr Meckel: there is one thing that you did not pick up. I would like to know your views on this. I think it is of significance, if we think about the changes in 1989, before the local elections held on 5 May, opposition groups and Church groups had decided that they would either vote ‘no’ or boycott the elections. Then, there was also an attempt made to monitor the elections. 98.8% were alleged to have turned out, but we think that at least 10-20% of the population either voted ‘no’ or did not vote at all. Therefore, for the first time, there were complaints lodged with the electoral offices and demonstrations about that.

In August and September, the crisis was something that the state security service could not really encompass in their understanding, and in fact there were discussions with Mr Mielke, at the end of August and he was told, ‘All you need is a spark to trigger an explosion – to set everything off.’ Mr Mielke said to the Stasi officer: ‘It is a matter of power – nothing more than that.’

However, in August it was unclear as to how they intended to deal with the crisis, but then we had events in Hungary, and I need not go into the details here. The GDR protested and we ourselves understood Hungary’s intentions. There was this big breakthrough in September, when it was stated that people were going to be able to cross the borders, and the authorities just stood back and watched as 40,000 people crossed the border. Of course, we had the dramatic scenes in Warsaw and Prague, and refugees were flowing out of the GDR. Seen from today’s perspective, I think that was a mistake. It meant that the regime suffered a defeat and, on his next visit abroad, Mr Honecker’s standing in the Politburo went down, but of course that ratcheted up the pressure in the GDR. People were particularly concerned about being able to leave the country – freedom of travel.

Then, in October, the demands were scaled up. On 4 October the opposition, for the first time, came out with a joint declaration, which set out very clearly where they wished to move. They said, ‘We want freedom of opinion, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, and we want to have a constitutional change to bring democracy into the GDR.’ That was the programme of the peaceful revolution. However, in my opinion, they were only able to be successful in the following weeks because the opposition joined forces with an ever-broadening citizens’ movement – a popular movement.
In October, the regime stood at a crossroads. There was the matter of power that Mr Meckel referred to, and we also had something that many GDR citizens were concerned about. There was a recent film about Leipzig. A number of participants were interviewed, and you can only have the deepest respect for their courage, because they knew what would happen to them as a consequence. They made very clear statements. Mr Mielke said, ‘Yes, we have to take a hard line with these people. We have to bring down this movement.’ Honecker referred to ‘the Chinese solution’ in terms. There were some 8,000 security officers, the NVA had been called to be on standby at battle stations, and one cannot say that things were not on a knife’s edge before Leipzig – they were, and people knew that very well. What I think is particularly remarkable is that the leadership, when it came to responsibility, shuffled off responsibility to the local SED leadership and distanced themselves from it. They followed everything via camera, though. There was a degree of nervousness, because there were 8,000 people standing by, and when the marches started, they were taken aback by the numbers of demonstrators – 70,000 people on the streets. They were wondering what to do. At literally the eleventh hour, the SED was minded to give the orders to move in, but there is a second event as well: the chief of police was not prepared to do that without further ado and double-checked with Mielke. Mielke said, ‘Do as you see fit,’ and he hung up the telephone.

The GDR leadership, as we now know, asked Moscow whether Soviet forces could be deployed in the GDR, including Leipzig. That was turned down. The SED realised that the Brezhnev Doctrine was dead, as far as it was concerned. There is a report by Professor Schroeder I read a couple of weeks ago, which says that Mielke, then, had second thoughts as to whether they should give the local SED leadership in Leipzig full responsibility for the decision. As you see, that was the turning point – the breakthrough. People talked about Leipzig, but Leipzig did not come out of a clear blue sky. We can but express thanks to the people who, despite the very real threats surrounding them, engaged in the peaceful demonstration.

After Leipzig, of course, the citizens’ movement was something that asserted itself and the regime realised it could not use force of arms to quell the movement. In fact, I think Beria was indeed quoted by Honecker at some stage thereafter. Then we had the events of the middle of October, and Krenz took over, and also was back in touch with Moscow. Honecker claimed that it would be better to keep hands off. There were 50,000 people out on the Alexanderplatz in Berlin. The border to Czechoslovakia was then reopened. Many people sought refuge in the embassy in Prague. Then we had the Schabowski central committee meeting the following morning, and then the head of state planning, Schürer who reported on how disastrous the situation was. There was a tumultuous meeting, and on the same day, Krenz came up with a programme of withdrawal and said, ‘We intend to have a

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4 *The Miracle of Leipzig* (October 2009).
5 In 1968, after the crushing of the Prague Spring, Brezhnev announced retrospectively that the Soviet Union had the right to interfere in the internal affairs of its satellite states to combat forces hostile to socialism.
thoroughgoing overhaul of the economy, of the political structures etc.’ In the same breath, they said socialism had to be further expanded.

At that stage – that is, on 9 October – the Federal Government had not made a public comment on the situation. Of course, we were meeting internally on the subject, but we quite deliberately did not make any public statements. The GDR claimed that we were seeking to destabilise the GDR, but indeed once the Wall came down, nobody in Bonn used the word ‘reunification’. There were conversations with Bush, Mitterrand and Gorbachev on the telephone and, on every occasion, the word ‘stability’ was used. I do not think anyone can reproach the Federal Government for having given active support to the opposition in the GDR or having sought to influence developments. In fact, it was a revolution brought about purely by the citizens of the GDR against a leadership that had not recognised that times had changed, did not wish to change at all, and were taken aback by developments. In November, people were saying they wanted a socialist alternative to the Federal Republic of Germany, but at that stage the citizens had moved beyond that appeal. Perhaps I could say that developments in Central Europe had significant impact of GDR citizens, but what was decisive, as far as I understand it, were the internal developments within the GDR, rather than them being based entirely on what happened in Poland and Czechoslovakia. However, I would conclude by saying that, Mr Meckel, once the Wall came down, we had to look at how we could have a concordance between the new right to travel and the continued existence of the GDR. Thank you.

Timothy Garton Ash

Thank you very much for that clear emphasis on the primacy of domestic developments inside East Germany. I am concerned about time, and that we should have enough time for discussion, so if I could ask our two next speakers to try and be as brief as is humanly possible.

Colin Munro has held a number of very interesting positions in his career in the Foreign Office, including ambassador to Croatia, and head of the OSCE Department. Most relevant for this session, he was deputy head of the British Embassy in East Berlin from 1987-1990. Colin, how did it look to you?

Colin Munro

Thank you very much. The first thing I have to say is that my remarks may suggest that there was a logical inevitability to the developments that occurred. This is perhaps a question of clarity with hindsight. It was much less clear than that at the time, although I have to say that Peter Hartmann and Markus Meckel have made the situation admirably clear for all of us this morning.

In 1985, the Foreign Secretary instructed us to step up our efforts to promote peaceful evolutionary change in Central and Eastern Europe in accordance with the
Helsinki Principles. However, the UK, like France, the USA and other members of NATO, was already committed to promoting a fundamental change in East Germany, namely the common aim enshrined in a treaty of one liberal, democratic state. Therefore, in East Berlin we continued to uphold the Four-Power status of the whole city in accordance with the 1971 agreement which had provided the launch pad for Ostpolitik and rapprochement between the two German states. Honecker’s policy, of course, as we have just heard, was exactly the opposite: demarcation between socialist fire and capitalist water.

However, by the mid-1980s, Honecker and the SED regime could not stop either West German ‘Glasnost’ or indeed dependence on West German economic assistance, which protected the population from the worst effects of real existing socialism. Moreover, Honecker craved the prestige and security that, in his view, flowed from state visits to Western capitals, above all to Bonn. Three events in 1987 moved the German question up the agenda. In front of the Brandenburg Gate, President Reagan called on Gorbachev to tear down the Wall; the 750th anniversary of Berlin reminded us what a grotesque anachronism it was; and, on his craved visit to West Germany, Honecker had to make a crucial concession. The price for it was quite high. Many more young East Germans were to be allowed to visit relatives in the West. Thereafter, the birthday visit business boomed, but so too did popular frustration with oppression, pollution and poverty – relative to West Germany, of course, not to a country such as Poland. Continued restrictions on travel remained the biggest cause of discontent.

In April 1989, Sir Nigel Broomfield identified all the factors that would unleash the peaceful revolution in a document contained in this volume, included transition to democracy in Poland, Hungary and possibly Czechoslovakia. However, reunification, perhaps via an Austrian-style settlement as an interim step, still seemed a distant prospect. Contacts with Warsaw Pact colleagues at a conference I attended in Moscow in May, at which both Perestroika supporters and Soviet old thinkers were present, confirmed two things: Polish and Hungarian support for Honecker was evaporating, and the Russians were divided amongst themselves. Their German policy, as Sir Rodric Braithwaite would put it later, was shot through with inherent contradictions.

Two events in June changed the picture: Gorbachev’s visit to West Germany and Krenz’s approval of the brutal suppression on the pro-democracy demonstrators in Beijing. The SED was in Ceauşescu’s camp on the day that Solidarity won an overwhelming election victory

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6 The Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Helsinki in 1975, with 35 participating states, aimed at improving East-West relations. It confirmed Europe’s existing frontiers but did not rule out the alteration of frontiers by peaceful means. It affirmed respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

7 The Quadripartite Agreement reconfirmed the rights and responsibilities of the Four Powers for the future of Berlin and Germany as a whole. It improved travel and communications between the two parts of Berlin.

8Solidarity (Solidarność): first non-communist trade union in a Warsaw Pact country founded in September 1980 in Poland and led by Lech Walesa. After the imposition of martial law in December 1981 and political repression, the Polish government entered in Round Table Talks with the
in the partially free elections in Poland. However, we still doubted Teltschik’s view, expressed in June, that the GDR was potentially the most explosive country in the Soviet bloc, for three reasons: the Soviet Union’s insistence on keeping the GDR inside the Warsaw Pact, still Gorbachev’s line in West Germany on that visit; deporting dissidents and troublemakers to West Germany diminished the strength of potential opposition; and, perhaps above all, omnipresent state security still seemed able to keep the lid on. I myself doubted the ability of the dissidents to mount a serious challenge until late September.

I think our contacts with them were as good as could be expected of a small post, but I would like to pay tribute to Ralph Morton, who is in the hall with us today, our expert on internal political affairs, who had a remarkable network of contacts with the opposition pastors and the people who would make the revolution. However, a word about them, too: I do not think that in June, or even early July, they would have predicted that, by 23 October, 300,000 people would be on the streets of Leipzig, calling for a reformed GDR.

Turning to events in July and August, Honecker was taken ill at the Warsaw Pact summit, which took place on 7 to 8 July and which decided to abolish the Brezhnev Doctrine, so East Germany was really leaderless as the exodus gathered pace. The Hungarian deputy head of mission told me in early August that they were about to abrogate their secret bilateral agreement with the East Germans to prevent East Germans travelling to the West. An Ethiopian colleague who had worked for the BBC and arranged brotherly visits for the dreadful Dergue told me that an inebriated Harry Tisch had just told him that the Hungarians were traitors who had finished off the GDR by deciding to let the people go.

Therefore, as Geoffrey Howe said in Frankfurt a year later, 10 September 1989 was a decisive day in world history. The German question, although not how it would be answered, was back at the top of the agenda. I recall that the president of the Academy of Sciences told the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung at this time that a capitalist GDR would have no reason for existing alongside a capitalist Federal Republic, and Reinhold used to add that countries such as Britain were actually opposed to reunification and should therefore support strengthening of the socialist order in the GDR. It was at this point that I though reunification might be unavoidable, but I did not think it would be like Teltschik had suggested, that East Germany would explode. I thought it might implode. Disarray in the Politburo as the 40th anniversary approached, and the imposition of a visa requirement for travel to Czechoslovakia at the beginning of October, after the dreadful episode of the sealed trains, meant that people had a fear they might be walled-in all over again. All this ignited the peaceful revolution, which Britain warmly supported. It seemed that free self-determination would set East Germany on a reform course as a separate state. The demonstration on the Alexanderplatz was really the zenith of this reform movement. Of

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Solidarity-led opposition and agreed to elections for June 1989. Anti-Communists won a striking victory leading to a Solidarity-led coalition government with Wałęsa elected as President of Poland.

9 See footnote 5.

10 Dergue: communist military junta in power in Ethiopia (1974-1987), which executed and imprisoned tens of thousands of its opponents without trial.
course, the British Prime Minister welcomed that, but the Wall fell, and this, in effect, united Berlin at a stroke, and it was evident then that the idea of maintaining two states was going to be difficult. Ten days later, the banners in Leipzig and elsewhere were saying not only, ‘Wir sind das Volk’ – ‘We are the people’ – but also, ‘Wir sind ein Volk’ – ‘We are one people’. It was this that the Prime Minister had difficulties with and was unwilling to accept. I think she made the transition from ‘Ein Volk’, to ‘Ein Reich’ to ‘Ein Führer’. So it was after the fall of the Wall that our assertions that reunification was not on the agenda began to change perceptions of Britain in Germany.

Timothy Garton Ash
Thank you very much, Colin, also for making an excellent transition to our next speaker with mention of the Prime Minister’s difficulties, as you put it. I love the idea that Mrs Thatcher should have been persuaded to support socialism in East Germany to prevent German reunification. I wonder if that was ever put to her. Perhaps we must ask our next speaker. William, Lord Waldegrave, who is currently Provost of Eton, Fellow of All Souls College Oxford, has held many interesting and senior positions, both in business and in politics, and most relevantly to this, was the Minister of State in the Foreign Office for the whole of this period. William, how did it look to you?

William Waldegrave
Thank you. It is a great pleasure to be here, partly to blow my own trumpet as a distant descendant of the so-called Waldegrave Initiative\(^1\) for the release of papers before the 30-year rule.

The subject today – and I congratulate Patrick on this book, which I found absolutely fascinating – covers one of the sorriest episodes, in my view, in recent British diplomatic history, where a strong position was squandered and real concerns made more difficult to pursue because of disastrous public positioning. There was no Conservative party in Europe to which the British Conservative Party was closer than the CDU. We never got on with the Gaullists, we could not understand Italian politics, and others had dubious fascist roots. The CDU was a brother party, always. We used to meet in Cadenabbia\(^2\) and we had personal friendships – Volker Rühe, you name it. Teltschik and Mr Hartmann were the principal people to whom I spoke. We started with, I think, a strong position, if we had chosen. We were much less close to the FDP of course, but we were close to the CDU. The CDU people looked, although with some alarm in the early days, to Mrs Thatcher for one thing: an unbending commitment to freedom. They looked at the British position over the previous 40 years, recently restated by Lord Carrington that the British policy was the reunification of Germany by the democratic decision of the two Germanies, and they thought that this was exactly what Mrs Thatcher would be behind. When I arrived in the

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1\(^{1}\) Initiative in the 1993 ‘Open Government’ White Paper, by the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, William Waldegrave, to consider the release of documents prior to the thirty-year limit.

2\(^{2}\) From 1985, British Young Conservatives and the Junge Union organised British-German Round-Table events at the summer residence of the late Konrad Adenauer in Cadenabbia, Italy.
Foreign Office in September 1988, I was met by a note on my blotter saying that David Gore Booth, the head of the planning staff at the time, wanted to see me about the Third World War. This made me rather alarmed. When David came in, he said, ‘I thought I should just brief you about the Third World War. It is over, and we won.’ One of the aspects of victory, you might have thought, was the long-term objective that a free Germany would be reunited.

It was clear from early on that the Soviet Union was terminally weak, and that freedom was going to come all across the Warsaw Pact once it started anywhere, once it was clear that Gorbachev was not going to suppress it, as we have heard. That included East Germany. The view was correct that the only differentiation of the GDR was imposed Communism. Without that, there was no point to the GDR. Finally, the reunification was going to come fast, and nothing except Soviet tanks could stop it, and they were not going to stop it. The papers show one or two general points. Foreign ministries always overestimate the stability of the *status quo* – structure speaks to structure – and so did everyone else. One anecdote: I was in West Berlin in the summer of 1989. A boy swam across the canal to the British sector and the Stasi boat knocked him off. He was holding on to the edge and that meant, under the rules of the Cold War, that he was free, but they knocked him off and took him away. I made a fuss, because I just happened to be there, and it seemed insulting. I went to see the Mayor of West Berlin, Mr Momper, in his pub. He had a leather jacket on and we drank beer together. He was a man of the people. He told me that we should not get too excited about this because we British ministers came and went but the Wall would be there for a very long time to come, and they had this lawyer who would get the chap back. It was not only foreign ministries who underestimated the speed of events.

It is notable when you read these papers that, though the quality of our officials was outstanding, the analytical procedures in the FCO were very ponderous, and that by the time these great essays and analyses had been produced and approved through the hierarchy, they were nearly always out of date. During events of this kind, ambassadors are more valuable than home analysts. Sometimes junior staff out on the streets are more valuable than ambassadors, with all respect to the very many distinguished ambassadors present. This was not normal politics any more. The same applies in relation to good journalists – people who were actually seeing what was going on.

Do not forget, also, overload. We have papers here about one particular issue of overwhelming importance to our German colleagues, but Britain was deeply involved in the mounting Kuwait-Iraq crisis, with events in South Africa, with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, where Mrs Thatcher made some rather unfortunate remarks which had to be suppressed, with Hong Kong, and with Arab-Israel. We had a running drumbeat of crises with hostages in the Lebanon, which ministers were much concerned with. Ministers travelled far too much – nobody travelled as much as Herr Genscher, I have to say, but ministers in general travelled far too much and were always tired. It is an impressive tribute to the quality of the FCO officials we had in post and at home at the time that the
quality of the analysis you will find in here is very very high. I fear there are not so many people nowadays, because we are now understaffed in the Foreign Office.

We cannot avoid the role of our Prime Minister. It is true to say, as Patrick generously does say in the introduction, which I urge you to read, that she had legitimate concerns over the care which we should take with Gorbachev’s position and above all with the pride of Russia. These are legitimate concerns, and we have since seen triumphalism in relation to Russia which has been disastrous in Western policy. So that was a real concern. She had legitimate concerns over the legal and procedural handling: what was going to happen to Soviet troops in Eastern Germany; what was going to happen about the actual legal basis – we needed a structure of process. I have to say, reading the papers and remembering things, I think those were sometimes clutching at straws. She was not quite so concerned about process on other occasions. Her real views, which come out clearly in these papers, thanks to the fact that you have the Number 10 documents as well as the Foreign Office documents, were that a unified Germany would threaten the United Kingdom interests by being too strong economically. No one spotted the huge damage that would be done and the huge strain that would be put on the West German economy, which actually went into a near stall for a period, grappling with the problems of investment in eastern Germany. None of the economists saw that. They all saw that as a simple incremental piece – Germany would be bigger, richer and more powerful. She [Mrs Thatcher] had a more complicated economic plot that she thought Germany was running. As she put it in one of these papers, an undervalued Deutschmark, dumping goods on the rest of us, to be fixed in the single currency and a social chapter imposed on the rest of us through the EU, which would mean there would be no question of anybody else being ever able to compete with Germany. That was what she thought, and she persuaded some other people but not many. She had a visceral historical fear of Germany, I think. There are kind words here from German politicians at the end, saying this is a generational fear and they quite understand it. I do not actually accept that. Peter Carrington and George Jellicoe were the people who had fought the war. They did not have that feeling. This is a sort of post-war feeling, so I think it is generous but not really fair to say that is a generational view.

My strong view at the time, shown in a minute in memorandum which I wrote at home at Christmas 1989, was that the FCO should be much bolder in standing up to her. All my experience as a middle and junior minister had been that, if you did stand up to her, she would sometimes listen. It was much more difficult for my seniors – for Geoffrey [Howe] and Douglas [Hurd] – but it would still have been worth trying, I think. The outcome was that we too often softened what we said to her in order to avoid a row. This is not to deny that she had some real concerns, which were sensible and which should and could have been handled, but the capacity to handle them was fatally undermined, not only with the Germans but with the Americans, because of the obiter dicta that kept getting into the Wall Street Journal and into remarks at the Young Conservatives conference, not normally an event of international importance, which did us such damage. The Four plus Two process or Two plus Four process saved a bit of face for us at the end – beautifully organised by the officials – but it was too late, really, to rebuild powerful influence. From my guess the end
of 1989 onwards, the British government had very little leverage or influence on events, either with Germany or with America.

One thing that I do want to put on the record, and I think, again, historians are very kind people, and in this matter Charles Powell, who you are going to hear from later, is very kind, because he says she was saying things in public that other people said in private. He attaches that in particular to the role of François Mitterrand. I do not believe François Mitterrand believed a bit of what he said to her. He stirred her up. I read these documents with the great hope that there would be evidence of my memory of him coming and saying, ‘This is the autumn of 1913, Margaret’, and there it is. She would go off in great excitement about this, and it would cause another outburst in public. Charles Powell is kind, I think, to Mitterrand in saying that this is what he really believed, and only Mrs Thatcher was brave enough to say it in public. I do not believe he believed it for a moment. I think he was a mischievous man anyway and he was having fun, but he was also moving Britain to the sidelines, which is never far from French policy. Britain could have pursued her interests with much more subtlety by building support in Germany which was potentially there, acting as a bridge to Gorbachev, where we did have a genuinely good relationship, conducting our traditional wise-advisor relationship with the US. But, in the end, apart from valuable official-level input in the Four plus Two and in other events, we were regarded as eccentric bystanders.

Timothy Garton Ash

Thank you very much, William. I thought I was going to have to press you on the subject of the Prime Minister’s attitude, but you have done it for us. Actually what you find in this volume in places, what you call the *obiter dicta*, are quite shocking. The most shocking is buried – if I may draw this to your attention – in footnote four on page 79. It is what she said, according to a note by Anatoly Chernyaev, to Gorbachev in a meeting on 23 September 1989: ‘Britain and Western Europe are not interested in the unification of Germany. The words written in the NATO communiqué may sound different, but disregard them. We do not want reunification of Germany.’ This is not only spectacularly disloyal to a very long-term, faithful, close ally, it is also unbelievably short-sighted and disrespectful of the aspirations of the people of West Germany, and it is said to the only man who could effectively stop the unification of Germany. This is strong stuff and I must say, personally, shocking stuff.

What also emerges from the volume is what almost everybody else in British government and outside told her so repeatedly. Some more delicately, some less delicately, but if I may, as the only person, I think, here present who was a participant in the famous or infamous *berüchtigten* Chequers seminar of March 1990, all of us, coming from very different political corners, including even Norman Stone, conveyed the same message. I will never forget the moment which is hinted at in Charles Powell’s somewhat idiosyncratic record of that event – it was unforgettable. Hugh Trevor-Roper, the historian who had been in Germany in 1945-6, interrogated many of the leading Nazis to write his classic book *The Last Days of Hitler*, was quite quiet through the seminar. Near the end, he suddenly said, ‘Prime
Minister, if anyone had told us in Germany in 1945 that we had the prospect of Germany united in freedom, formally anchored in the communities of the West, we would not have believed our luck. This is the fulfilment of our dreams, and we should go for it and support it. I almost believe he even got through to her, for a moment. It was an unforgettable moment. I think it is important also to say that was the general attitude, not only in British government but among most people who know about Germany in Britain.

We now have about 20-25 minutes for discussion.

Questions

David Marsh, then at the Financial Times, now Chairman, London & Oxford Capital Markets

I just wanted to ask about Mrs Thatcher’s attitude, but also a very specific question to Peter Hartmann. On what she said to the Soviet leader, I think she did actually tell Chancellor Kohl to his face on 18 November 1989 of her qualms about German unification, when she was in the Élysée Palace, so you have to say she was being quite honest. Secondly, regarding the business about trying not to let the Germans know what her attitude was. There seemed to be a very good occasion for the German government potentially to find out what was going on, when you visited Charles Powell at Downing Street on 13 October 1989, and you asked him, according to the Oldenbourg edition of Deutsche Einheit, whether Mrs Thatcher had brought up with the Soviet leader the question of Germany. Charles did not want to give you the answer, but you found it out through Soviet sources – as the Oldenbourg edition reveals. It seems to me it would have been a great opportunity for Charles to have said, quite legitimately, that Mrs Thatcher did bring up the German question. Thirdly – and most interestingly – is when Mrs Thatcher tried to get Christopher Mallaby to engineer a revaluation of the Mark on 1 November 1989, and she said, ‘You must do it discreetly, otherwise you might affect the exchange markets.’ That did seem to show that she had lost the plot. The question is, Peter, whether you have any recollection of that.

Timothy Garton Ash

Thank you. Dr Hartmann, did you actually know what she had said to Gorbachev, or when did you find out?

13 For a dinner with other Community leaders, at the invitation of President Mitterrand.
15 At her meeting with Gorbachev on 23 September 1989. The FCO record of the meeting between Thatcher and Gorbachev is referred to in Document No. 26 (note 4), P. Wright to Wall, 30 October 1989 in P. Salmon et al, Documents on British Policy Overseas, Series III, Vol. VII, German Unification, 1989-1990 (2009), p. 79. See Deutsche Einheit, No. 61. The German Embassy in Moscow reported later that the two leaders discussed dangers for stability in Europe as a result of the German developments.
Peter Hartmann

No. I have only heard that now. That is news to me. On that first question, she did not express herself as clearly to the Federal Chancellor as she did to Gorbachev, otherwise she might have got a slightly dustier answer. But she always stressed to the Chancellor that she was concerned that things should not move too quickly. As far as I know, and we published all the notes of these talks, she never actually came out flatly against German unification. I do not know what Mr Genscher can say about this, but she would always say, ‘I am not basically against, but it is all too quick; it is happening too fast, certain conditions need to be fulfilled.’ She sounded much more pragmatic.

Timothy Garton Ash

I wonder if Herr Genscher would possibly like to make a comment on that particular point?

Hans-Dietrich Genscher

Above all, her argument was that we should not place too much on Gorbachev’s shoulders. I did not really understand that to be a relevant argument, but it did sound better than saying no. I was not that disturbed, because I knew, at the end of the day, she would follow the US line, which was so crystal clear in its support for the process of unification that there was no open flank left. Unlike others, we have always taken our decisions in NATO seriously, and I was always persuaded that at the end of the day the allies would stand by their treaty commitments in the treaty of the 1950s.

A mistake made by many at that time was to overlook the Harmel\textsuperscript{17} report of NATO, and the analysis shown in that report demonstrated that the main barrier to stability in Europe was the division of Germany, whereas others felt that German unification could be a problem for stability in Europe. Seeing German unification as a problem for stability was clearly something we could not accept. We took the opposite view, and that was the very plank of our policy. We had the Moscow Treaty\textsuperscript{18} and the GDR Treaty\textsuperscript{19} – we actually decided that with the three Western allies – and we stated that our goal would be to bring about a state of peace in Europe, and that German unification would be possible on a peaceful basis and that did not stand in contradiction to the Moscow Treaty. In the NATO communiqués and a number of meetings, this was always reiterated, and not without reason.

I do remember a meeting of the four Western foreign ministers – USA, France, UK and Germany – before a NATO meeting, where Berlin was a special subject on the agenda, so

\textsuperscript{17}Pierre Harmel, Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs, submitted a report to NATO which was approved in December 1967. It advocated strong defence combined with good diplomatic relations with the East. It became a milestone in the East-West détente in particular the Helsinki Summit in 1975 and the subsequent establishment of the CSCE and OSCE.

\textsuperscript{18}The treaty between the FRG and the USSR renouncing the use of force, signed in Moscow on 12 August 1970.

\textsuperscript{19}See footnote 3.
that this constituted ongoing deliberations on this very subject. Our aim was to avoid any errors being made, and obviously we listened to what others said as well, but my strongest faith was in the USA and Washington, with all due respect here. I have to say that I was the subject of some criticism from London. People said ‘yes’, we had to take Gorbachev seriously and must not turn up a historical opportunity. I was deemed to be a blue-eyed optimist and a visionary, but, at the end of the day, the debate centred on principles. At the same time, I would like to say that I am grateful and I am very sad that Lord Hurd cannot be here, because of illness, but I am very grateful to the Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd. He was extremely constructive, I could not have wished for a better discussion partner, and I know that sometimes he felt he was sliding down a razorblade, certainly in the last night before the signature of the treaty. I hope he will soon have completely recovered and I would like to thank him for the great clarity of his position expressed at that time.

**Timothy Garton Ash**

Thank you very much, Herr Genscher, for an extremely interesting and helpful statement. We will convey the message to Douglas Hurd. What you say, by the way, is also confirmed by the documents that, from the moment that he became Foreign Secretary, his attitude was entirely positive, and everyone, and William I am sure, will confirm that.

**Tony Nichols, University of Oxford**

Thank you. I wanted to ask Lord Waldegrave if he could tell us whether this apparently visceral hostility to German unification was just because Mrs Thatcher did not like Germany, or whether it was also very much affected by the fact that Helmut Kohl seemed to be the main engine behind driving a federal Europe, and that she was very much opposed to the ideas of that sort of European unity.

**William Waldegrave**

You are quite right to make the connection. I am not going to speculate about Margaret Thatcher’s psychology. I have said as much as I want to say on that, but I think you enter into a very interesting and important subject which, again, comes out in these papers. She saw these events as part of a moving of Europe in the way she did not want it to go. Namely, an exaggeratedly stronger Germany in her mind. These papers actually show – I do not want to keep boasting, but I did write a minute where I said, if you look at the numbers, it does not really make much difference to the already existing preponderance of the German economy in Europe if you have Eastern Europe as well. I was not smart enough to spot that actually it would be a great burden to them for a time – economically, not in other ways. She believed that this was going to make a hugely powerful Germany, committed to the single currency, which she saw as an attack on sovereignty, and that the Franco-German axis would then dominate Europe. Towards the end of the period, she began to see a solution to this, which was the widening of Europe, so that Europe, if we got in as many people as possible, would then become a much looser thing, so the preponderance of Germany would not matter as much. This was why she shifted her
attitude to the accession of other countries for that reason. This was part of a unified pattern to her, and the papers show that some of this she thought of as an explicit German plot, deliberately keeping the Deutschmark undervalued, deliberately dumping the Social Policy on us, in order to maintain an economic preponderance. These were deeply connected in her mind.

**Timothy Garton Ash**

Just to add one quick word to that, again from the Chequers seminar, one thing that struck me very much in that seminar was how she kept swinging back and forth between talking about Germany and Helmut Kohl. It is one of the dangers, I think of leaders meeting all the time, if the personal chemistry is good, like Kohl and Gorbachev or Bush, then it is a huge asset, but if the chemistry is bad and they keep having to meet, it becomes almost obsessive. She did say, 'You did not see Helmut bullying us at Fontainebleau' and so on.

**William Waldegrave**

I think that she starts with quite a good relationship with Helmut Kohl, and it gets worse because he is monocular. I remember meeting him years before all this, where it was clear that this kind of approach to the unification, if it ever came up, would be right at the top of his agenda. He goes for it – of course he does. She therefore sees this as a German tank, running over everybody. Meanwhile, I think one of the fundamental mistakes of our policy at the time, which I feel quite proud about getting righter than some, was the fundamental weakness of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was not going to survive this. She muddled that up with Gorbachev. Supporting Gorbachev was fine, but the end of Gorbachev was going to be the end of the Soviet Union as well. The post-war structures building in the Soviet Union were not irrelevant. Do not forget, either, that the two powers that are weak here in relation to establishment of the post-war structures are the Soviet Union and Britain. We quite like all these quadripartite things and things that describe us as a superpower, and structures where we and the Americans, the Soviets and the French – all right, but the French as well – are dealing with things, because it is really long past the day when that weight applies to our own intrinsic power.

**Hans-Dietrich Genscher**

I just want to make one brief point with regard to the relationship between Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Kohl. I think she had a problem with his first name, Helmut, because it was not any better with Schmidt! It must have been some structural problem!

**Sir Brian Crowe, former Ambassador to Austria**

A question to Peter Hartmann and possibly Herr Genscher. Helmut Kohl made a speech at the end of November, the 10-point speech which seemed if I remember it right to indicate

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20 Chancellor Kohl made a speech to the Bundestag on 28 November 1989 setting out a Ten-Point Programme to overcome the division of Germany and Europe. His aim was to gain the domestic
that even he foresaw German reunification as a pretty long- or medium-term process. What was his mindset at the time, and what exactly happened to change it?

**Peter Hartmann**

Does Mr Genscher want to address that one? The 10 points were a response to Mr Modrow from the GDR, who talked about this treaty community. In order to avoid destabilisation in the GDR, the idea was that we should have a new institutional framework for cooperation, and that was the beginning of this 10-point programme. Indeed, I was interested to read that Christopher Mallaby thought it was rather unambitious and he did not focus on it much, and yet it became quite a big thing later on, with hindsight. We can discuss the substance, but it was not really that far-reaching. At the same time, it did give a signal that the Federal Government was keen to react to events, but it was just an internal German concern. It was not even about German unity. There was always this sentence that came back about self-determination, but it never actually said German unity or reunification. It was to do with a community under one treaty, and he wanted to send a signal to the citizens of the GDR and to Mr Modrow that you just cannot sit back and let things happen.

**Sir Brian Crowe**

Mr Genscher, can I add a supplementary question so that you can respond to it as well? Firstly, Valentin Falin, just before that period, came to Bonn (this is perhaps also a question to Dr Hartmann) and he brought with him the proposal for a confederation. What kind of role did that play in your considerations, because Gorbachev himself seemed to be taken by surprise by that suggestion? Secondly, Mr Genscher, when did you hear about the 10-point plan? Dr Hartmann, when did George Bush hear about the 10 points, because Helmut Kohl says in his memoirs, ‘I informed President Bush beforehand’? Mr Teltschik says that was the case, and the document was forwarded, although rather late and in German.

**Hans-Dietrich Genscher**

The speech was not an argument made by the government. It was a CDU document. The Federal Chancellor’s speech was not given as Bundeskanzler, but as party leader, because it had not actually been agreed within the government. It was a very serious proposal, but we did not make anything of it. My party chair, Graf Lambsdorff asked me immediately afterwards, ‘Did you know anything about this?’ I said no, but I would advise that we do not comment on it, because we are in a historic situation, and nothing would be worse for the interests of Germany than for us to seek to intervene on a party basis in a matter on the future of Germany. Certainly, the speech was given as party chairman of the CDU, not as Federal Chancellor. It is a document that has been superseded by events, because the unification from below had gained considerable momentum. It was certainly done at the political initiative in response to the increasingly dramatic events in East Germany, in recognition also that unification was to be a central campaign issue in the forthcoming Bundestag elections. The speech was drafted by Kohl’s close advisers and delivered without consulting or even informing his own foreign minister, his Western allies or the Soviet Union.
behest of Falin, who made the approach, and Teltschik wrote that German reunification had to be postponed as long as possible, if not avoided, and they thought it might be possible to achieve something such as a confederation, but it is very difficult to bring the concept in. Confederation has a very negative connotations in Germany, and, in a way, it would have released us from the bonds that bound us into our Western alliances.

In fact, things moved on very quickly at that time, and we worked together in the Federal Government. This did not affect my personal relationship with the Chancellor, because there were so many opportunities to be examined. However, as I say, this was not a government proposal. My concern was that two things were not mentioned therein: the matter of the Oder-Neisse border, the eastern border, and secondly the membership of alliances of the Federal Republic of Germany. These would be two central issues if one were to move forward to a possible unification. The lawyers had to be involved; we had to look at the security policy position as well and, in September, I said to the UN that I was actually turning to the foreign minister of the then democratic Poland to say that German will never call into question the border between us, and the German Bundestag produced a resolution embracing that position. Then we had the dramatic developments of the autumn, and the matter of the border had to be settled once and for all, although it was finalised in a paper form, statutory form, in the autumn of 1990.

**Timothy Garton Ash**

The German foreign minister was not informed in advance, or the American president?

**Peter Hartmann**

Yes, that is exactly right. He did transfer the document to Washington, but I think it was past midnight by the time they would have got it. I mean there was a bit of a situation here. I must make one point, because I feel a bit guilty: I did not actually write it, but I did work on it, and we did wonder about whether we should address the question of NATO membership and the Eastern Border. We left it out, and I was the one who was against mentioning it, because if the words ‘Western border’ or ‘border’ or ‘NATO’ had been mentioned then the paper would have had a completely different nature, because everybody would have said ‘Ah this is completely different’, but this is not, was not the case. It is all history now, anyway. Of course, Mrs Thatcher had not received the information beforehand, but it was a management error, because in fact it was Question Time in the House of Commons at the time, and shortly thereafter there was a reception for NATO, and Manfred Wörner in fact poured a great deal of disdain on me, as a representative of Germany, and I think the atmosphere was rectified very shortly thereafter.

**Joanna Hanson, Research Analyst, Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

Colin, you talked about your contacts with dissidents at post. Could you say something about the nature of those contacts? Were they at listening and observation level or, because
we are in the latter half of the 1980s, were they more creative and advisory? Were you perhaps helping them to step up peaceful evolutionary change? What impact do you think you may have had at this dissident and citizen level?

**Colin Munro**

Our contacts, I think I can say, were creative and personal, in the sense that it is normal work of a chancellery in an embassy to have as good contacts as you possibly can with the full spectrum of opinion. It was increasingly clear to us, firstly, that the Church was playing an important role. It had been recognised as having a role in the state, and it had infrastructure and could organise meetings and so on. Then, at the ambassadorial level, the ambassador would host functions at his residence. I had some at mine. These provided an opportunity for people to come together and discuss informally and in some comfort. Of course, there was always the uncertainty as to what was being reported by the waiters, who we knew had a role in relation to the Stasi, but nonetheless I think our contacts with the dissidents and the people who, in the end, made the revolution, were certainly valuable in that we had an understanding of what was motivating people. I can think also back to a time when we had a sit-in in the embassy by 16 people and two dogs, and I thought the two dogs meant that this was perhaps a provocation initially, but spending several days listening to these people describing what life was really like in the GDR was very instructive.

We were also very well plugged in to the many think tanks at which people like Portugalov would appear, and we could gain insight into the evolution of thinking in the Soviet Union, Poland and Hungary. Lastly, I would mention the deputy heads of mission of the Warsaw Pact countries. The heads of mission tended to be rather uninteresting apparatchiks, but the deputies were people who had spent their lives on German issues, and were showing increasing interest in, for example, an Austrian solution, and were asking increasingly what the British government’s real position on unification was, and whether we meant all the stuff in the NATO communiqués. Putting all this together meant we were a well-informed embassy and that we had some helpful contribution to make to the people who created the revolution and the transformed Europe.

**Markus Meckel**

On contacts, the opposition was not a unitary organisation. In the 1980s we had developed networks, and basically you could only establish contacts in Berlin, because outside Berlin it was very difficult for the diplomats to get involved in any way. Two additional comments: I think it is tremendous that this documentation is being made available before the traditional period of twenty years after the Two Plus Four for publication has elapsed, and I have to say that I think it is important. We are now 20 years on, and in Germany I think we should also publish our documentation. Having these two sets available will make it more transparent as to what actually happened, although, as Mr Genscher has already said, we have the documentation of the German foreign office, which has remained sealed, and may not be published in the near future. However, in France and certainly in the UK things are being made open, and I hope that Germany will follow suit. One final remark: there is an
initiative I would like to briefly report to you, on this period of division and the end of the division. We have the Museum of the Cold War at Checkpoint Charlie, looking at the international dimension of the division of Germany, and if you come to Berlin, you will find commemorative memorials for the people of Berlin or for the Germans themselves, but I think there is a broader perspective to be borne in mind, and we do not have anything at the moment for that international dimension. I do think it appropriate that, in Germany, at Checkpoint Charlie, we have an international museum of the Cold War, and that is an initiative that I wanted to draw to your attention. Thank you.

Timothy Garton Ash

Just on the documents, you were being a little generous, in an all-European spirit. Actually, the French have only now, I believe, announced that they will be publishing a set of documents of their own Konkurrenz belebt das Geschäft.21

William Waldegrave

I think this is a very interesting subject – the change in the behaviour of embassies and staff, and indeed junior ministers, because junior ministers were used in this campaign. From the early days of Gorbachev, the Foreign Office was extremely good at pushing to get higher-level meetings with leading dissidents. My memory shows this to have been far easier in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary. In the Ukraine, I had a memorable meeting with the dissidents, recorded in Rodric Braithwaite’s memoirs.22 Then you talked as a politician. After the vodka flowed, one would talk about how to handle politics, very often. However, in East Germany it was very much more difficult and I don’t remember, on my part, any meetings of that kind with dissident leaders until it was not clear who was a dissident and who was not.

Timothy Garton Ash

It is a really important structural problem of policy-making. If you look at our Iran policy over the last year, the failure to build into policy-making an analysis of what seemed likely to happen, what actually happened, where it might lead on the ground in Iran is, in a way, a failure to learn the lesson of 1989.

William Waldegrave

The model, perhaps, if I do not offend any of my senior colleagues was what Robin Renwick did in the Embassy in South Africa, where a broad spectrum, from the Far Azania Black Power people to the Mandela people were meeting in his house to discuss the way forward. In some of the embassies it was possible, but I do not remember it being at all easy to do that in East Germany.

21 Competition stimulates business.
Sir Nigel Broomfield

Colin has described what went on. I will add just a couple of footnotes. One is that, when reserving tables and tickets in Germany, the name Broomfield is untranslatable, so actually I used to use ‘Dr Blumenfeld’ for my nom de plume when doing normal things, and Dr Blumenkohl when I was meeting dissidents, as I did rather often. In fact, Eppelmann who was one of the colleagues, wrote a kind note to Christopher Mallaby when he went on to the Vorstand23 of the CDU, saying that the British Embassy had been very materially involved with Schorlemmer and with all the others, in being a place where they could meet and where they could discuss with Westerners what they were doing. I think that was going on but, as William Waldegrave perfectly rightly says, it was very difficult to find out amongst this amazing motley, very changing, very different lot of people, who had themselves to take very considerable risks to come near a Western embassy – we would meet in other places – exactly what they were trying to get out of it and what we would learn from them. I think that always is the case. I am astonished you say that about Iran because Parsons’s last dispatch, having backed the Shah all the way and having failed to see what was coming up on the black horizon, caused the Foreign Office to recirculate within it a lesson-learned thing, which is that you must always – always – have a very good look at what is happening out in the left field. That became a standard operating procedure. Sometimes it is more difficult to do, sometimes not, but we have been round that track once before, certainly in Iran.

Timothy Garton Ash

On Iran 2009, two points: we may have been trying to do it, but it is extremely difficult for the United States to do it, because they have an embassy there but it is occupied by somebody else. Secondly, and this is the point that William made, it is not just people on the ground, in the embassy, having a sense of what is going on, it is feeding it up fast and forcefully enough into the policy process so that it actually reaches people in Washington and London. I do actually think that is a lesson to be learned from this history. This is, ladies and gentlemen, something that could occupy us all evening. This has been both fascinating morning’s discussion and a very usefully frank discussion. For that, can we please thank all our panellists?

23 Executive Committee.
SESSION 2

BILATERAL RELATIONS AND THE QUESTION OF GERMAN UNITY

Introduction

Roger Morgan

Good afternoon and welcome back for the afternoon session. I first have to apologize for not being Lord Watson, but I shall do my best in the chairmanship. Coming to this building to talk about Anglo-German relations takes me back to an occasion many years ago, when the Königswinter steering committee came here for dinner, which was hosted by a British minister not normally concerned with foreign affairs. When we came to the toasts we drank to ‘the Queen’, and the host then picked up a piece of paper and read in a puzzled tone ‘the President of the FEDERAL Republic of Germany?’ indicating simultaneous disbelief and disapproval. It was obvious that using the ‘F’ word was a troubling experience, but fortunately this has not normally troubled relations between our two countries.

This is a witness seminar, but on this platform we have assembled people who are far more than witnesses; they are protagonists, movers and shakers; and they are here to give their accounts and impressions of things they were involved in 20 years ago. We will be talking about the bilateral relationship before, during and after the dramatic events that are the focus of this discussion, and the panel between them have an enormous experience of before, during and after.

Mr Genscher had already been Foreign Minister for 15 years before 1989 and he continued for some years afterwards. Charles Powell served in the British Embassy in Bonn in the 1970s, and from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s was the Prime Minister’s Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Hermann von Richthofen held senior positions in Bonn, both in the foreign ministry and in the Chancellery, and was here as Ambassador throughout the events we are talking about. Christopher Mallaby served three times in the Embassy in Bonn, finishing as Ambassador there at the critical time. Nigel Broomfield, who also had long experience in Germany, is unique among British diplomats in having been Ambassador to two German states; during the 1980s he was Ambassador to the German Democratic Republic, and in 1993 he came back to Bonn as Ambassador to the united Germany.

Each of the panellists will have 10 minutes without questioning or discussion, after which the floor will be open for further contributions from participants or questions to the panel.

24 The annual bilateral British-German Königswinter conferences for German and British politicians, journalists and intellectuals have been meeting since 1950.
Witness Statements

Hans-Dietrich Genscher

I am supposed to say something about the state of our relations; of course I dwelt on this for a while, and can say they were excellent. I had an excellent relationship with my foreign minister colleagues, and bilateral relations were very unfraught. Of course, there were differences of opinion at the time of unification, and after that on European affairs, so that was not so much bilateral relations. Good relations with London did allow us to work through certain problems, for example, the British contribution for the financing of the European Community (EC); we managed to find sensible solutions to all those little problems.

I can remember one point where I had the feeling that perhaps they were looking at things rather differently here, and that was related to the support for Solidarność in Poland. At that time we pointed out to the EC that the independent farmers in Poland should be given agricultural aid, because alongside the workers it was the small farmers, the smallholders, who were the supporters of the political forces, which were close to the Catholic Church. This failed because of British resistance at the time. Normally they were taking a rational view, they were saying, 'how can we check the money will actually be used effectively'. I said, 'you can rest easy on that score, because the Catholic Church knows how to distribute funding, and my word counts, because I am a Protestant!'

We did have a real conflict towards the end of 1988, over the question of whether to decide, at the NATO summit in the spring of 1989, that nuclear short-range weapons should be modernised through retro-fitting with a new successor model. We could have waited until 1992 to make that decision, because it was not supposed to be introduced until 1994 and 1995, but this was something the British wanted, and the Americans supported the British. It was only during a night session at the summit itself that we managed to reach a satisfactory solution; we did not take a decision on the matter in hand, but we decided to take a decision as soon as possible. This was totally acceptable to us, because our opinion was that in one or two years' time nobody would be talking about short-range nuclear missiles, as the developments in Germany and Europe would make that whole thing redundant.

There were also differences of opinion in the assessment of Gorbachev’s policies; it was not so much just a German – English problem, because it was also a German – American problem, as well as an internal German problem. I was subject to criticism because I had expressed my opinion at a speech in Davos on 1 February 1987, stating that we should take Gorbachev seriously at the World Economic Forum and not miss this historic opportunity to do so; everybody said that I was being naive.

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25 See Session 1, footnote 8.
26 Annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) for business leaders, international political leaders, intellectuals and journalists.
In the unification process itself, despite all the problems that we debated during the previous session, cooperation was good on a daily basis; and cooperation with my British colleague [Douglas Hurd] as well – I am not just being polite if I commend him for his cooperation and constructive attitude. Of course for us, the East – West relationship had a completely different meaning from what it meant to London, because we were dealing with these things constantly. What was happening in the GDR was a chance to improve relations, and unification was a total national priority. As I said in my presentation earlier, this was very much part of our joint policy.

With regard to the short-range missiles, it was obvious, as I said at the time, that the Eastern part of Europe was on the move, and we should not interfere with that movement through talking about ranges of missiles and nuclear disarmament, ranges which could only reach, say, East Germany or Poland and Czechoslovakia, which had suffered so much under the war waged by Germany.

Of course, I also asked myself what was going to happen in the future in the GDR. In September 1988, as was the case every year, I had a meeting with the Soviet Foreign Minister [Eduard Shevardnadze], and I asked him to come to a quadripartite meeting; four of us, four interpreters and four note takers. I said to him, ‘what I anticipate is that the developments that we are seeing in Poland, Czechoslovakia, in a different way in Hungary, and in your country through Perestroika and Glasnost, will not miss out the GDR. Surely, at the latest in the next year, the GDR will be in the throes of the same movement, and we have to reckon that there will be mass demonstrations in summer 1989’. He said to me, ‘We take what you are saying seriously, but I have to say that the GDR is stable, but I will report that to Gorbachev’.

We met in January 1989, and he made a big speech saying that the Iron Curtain was rusting away, and he had a talk with me, saying that they had used all their possible sources to stabilise the GDR. At the end of May 1989, he came to prepare the Gorbachev visit, and there was a communiqué, a press release with a lot of different square brackets that we had to iron out, and he said to me, ‘Mr Genscher, when we, in September last year had a little chat in New York, you were right, and I was wrong’. The assessment on the Soviet side about developments in the GDR had moved on considerably, and indeed much further than in Western capitals.

Nevertheless, despite the differences of opinion, which have become clear here, the relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the UK were very much aligned; for example, in the World Economic Forum. This often came to the fore if we were talking about questions of economic development, stability policy, or market economy approaches; our ideas were very close to the UK ideas on those issues, and vice versa. I was able to establish that there was a great deal of personal confidence and a large amount of agreement, although, of course, there were certain differences on European issues; that was part of the deal when we took the UK in, when they acceded, we knew that their central goals were not exactly the same as for the rest of us. This is so important, because where there are
differences of opinion, and where they did come to the fore, as we mentioned this morning, nevertheless they did not adversely affect the core of our relations. The core of our relations remained unaffected and continued, which is promising for the future.

Roger Morgan

There certainly will be many questions and comments people will want to make on that very interesting survey. That controversial expression ‘Wir müssen Herrn Gorbachev beim Wort nehmen’ – ‘we must take Mr Gorbachev literally’ – in the Davos speech, was misunderstood in this country, because it was translated as ‘we must take Mr Gorbachev at his word’. I had an idea that if one had translated it as, ‘we must hold Mr Gorbachev to his word’, that might have been a more accurate and more useful translation. I call on Charles Powell, who was Mrs Thatcher’s Private Secretary for Foreign Affairs for several years before the events, of 1989 and for some years afterwards.

Charles Powell

Thank you Roger; something tells me you want me to say something about Mrs Thatcher’s views on Europe. Mrs Thatcher never made any secret of her views on Germany or Europe, so with her what you saw was what you got, which was rare in European diplomacy at the time and quite an advantage; sometimes straight talking does pay dividends.

Let me first say what I think shaped her views on Germany. The most impressionable years of her life were the 1930s, and she was deeply affected by what she saw as a girl growing up in Grantham at that time, of what was happening in Germany. She was affected because she had a Jewish pen pal who was living in Germany, who later managed to leave the country. One could say that it was irrational of her to continue to be guided by those views, and in an everyday sense she was not, but there is no doubt that they were very deep in her consciousness and affected her views of how Germany could possibly one day, again, develop; not the Germany she saw then and there, but the Germany, which her instincts, based on her experience of the 1930s, told her could happen again.

That, of course, was not the best position from which to approach the relationship with Germany, but a great deal about modern Germany she hugely admired. She hugely admired Ludwig Erhard, and what he had achieved and frequently spoke about that. She knew quite a bit about German science, above all chemistry; as some of you will remember, she read chemistry at Oxford, and the works of German chemists, and that had had a positive impression on her. Although Herr Hans-Dietrich Genscher this morning said she did not like people called Helmut, she actually had a very great admiration for Helmut Schmidt. It may not have been entirely reciprocated, certainly on some subjects, but it was no doubt on her side that it was.

In the earlier part of her time as Prime Minister, the relationship with Germany outside the European sphere was quite straightforward. We then come to the subject of Margaret Thatcher’s relationship with Helmut Kohl, which was a relationship that ought to have worked, for several reasons. First, they were both members of broadly conservative parties,
and therefore should have had many interests in common. Second, Helmut Kohl devoted a
great deal of effort and attention to trying to develop a good, strong personal relationship
with Margaret Thatcher; he was extraordinarily courteous at their various bilateral
meetings, often bringing her little personally chosen gifts.

She tried to reciprocate, but it was not always successful; the most famous example was
when he invited her down to the Rhineland-Palatinate to visit him on his home territory,
and took her to his favourite pub, where she was served with his favourite dish of pig’s
stomach, which was not an unbounded success as I watched her chase it around her plate
and try to hide it under her fork. He then took us to that remarkable cathedral in Speyer,
where she inspected the tombs of the early Holy Roman Emperors, these great forerunners
of the Commission of the European Community. While she was doing that, Chancellor Kohl
took me around a pillar and said, ‘now that she has seen me in my home territory, right
here, in the heart of Europe, close to France, she will surely realise that I am not so much
German, I am European’. I said, ‘Chancellor, I will do my best’. We went back to the
airport, and she climbed up the steps into the plane she flew around in, threw herself into
her seat, kicked off her shoes, and said, ‘Charles, that man is so German’. I gave up my
mission at that point.

On the whole, despite the tensions and personal relationship, quite a lot was achieved in this
time, both principally between her and Chancellor Kohl, but also because we had a very
good, strong relationship between Number 10 Downing Street and the Federal Chancellery,
particularly with Horst Teltschik, whom I saw in New York yesterday, with Peter Hartman,
and I am sure with their successors too; so there were plenty of channels between Margaret
Thatcher and Helmut Kohl.

The issue at the root of the problems was, above all, Europe. The first issue was Britain’s
budget contribution, on which she bored Europe stiff for five years, but got a good result,
and it mattered to her a great deal to do so, but it obviously caused problems in the
relationship with Helmut Kohl. The second issue, mentioned just now by Mr Genscher, was
problems over NATO and short-range nuclear weapons, in the latter part of the 1980s; she
had strong views on the need to maintain nuclear weapons, including short-range weapons
in Europe, after the INF treaty, she was always more suspicious of Soviet intentions than
perhaps Helmut Kohl was. These were issues of substance on which there were different
points of view; there was nothing anti-German in her view; it was a different assessment of
where British interests lay.

When you come to reunification, obviously some of these underlying feelings played into
the debate. Margaret Thatcher was not against German reunification; she could not be, she
had signed too many declarations supporting it, and she was not the sort of person who
backed down on her word, which had been given that she supported it. What concerned her
was the pace and the process of German reunification, on both of which she had sharp
disagreements with Helmut Kohl and later with other European governments; but more
than with Chancellor Kohl, or with other European governments, with the British Foreign
Office, which in her mind sometimes seemed almost an enemy state. The biggest single factor in her mind as she approached German reunification was the impact it would have on President Gorbachev. She had invested hugely in her relationship with Gorbachev, and in a sense she had discovered him in December 1984; Britain was the first place he came to, the first place where he began to achieve some sort of prominence. She had many meetings with him over this time, and she thought there was a real risk that if he was humiliated over German reunification, he would be swept from power, but more importantly, that everything he had allowed to happen in Eastern Europe would go with it. Therefore, the whole future freedom of Eastern Europe could be in jeopardy if we handled German reunification wrongly.

Was she right or wrong on that? Gorbachev was swept from office, and I have no doubt that the feeling he had given away too much was part of that, but it happened later rather than at the time. She was also concerned that an attempt was being made to push unification before all the aspects of it were properly ready; Germany’s future role with NATO, the GDR’s role in the EU, the questions of borders, four-power rights and so on. She feared that Europe’s future security structure was going to be jeopardised in the pursuit of short-term political gains. She was not wholly alone in those views, one has to remember now; these documents will show a lot of my notes of conversations she had at that time, with Gorbachev and President Mitterrand, where her views on reunification, and in particular the importance of handling it in a very steady way, were shared by others. Indeed, if you read George Bush’s and Brent Scowcroft’s book27 you will find the same feelings expressed. Where she went wrong was, first, to hang on to those views long after everyone else had abandoned them, and second, in failing to recognise the enormous momentum behind the desire for German reunification without delay.

As those of you have read her autobiography will realise, Margaret Thatcher has no difficulty accepting that she got it wrong. She says explicitly in her autobiography that, ‘If there was one area of foreign policy in which my policies were a complete failure, it was on the issue of German reunification’. In a sense, although it must be great fun for some people to trash her reputation on this subject, especially those to whom she did not listen at the time, she has made that adjustment many many years ago, and accepted that she did not understand the strength of feeling for unification, and that it was bound to happen. She did approach it in a reasonably rational way, she took a view of British interests, which it was her right to take; she was, after all, the three times elected Prime Minister of this country, and she thought she probably had a better right to determine British views than the Foreign Office did. I do not say that out of any opposition to the Foreign Office; I was a happy member of it for many years. I am only trying to give you an account of what she thought.

Perhaps I can just end by reminding you of the old story, which she used to like to quote, of the man in the Second World War, walking down Whitehall in the blackout, and asking a

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Roger Morgan

Thank you for a very clear presentation of the view from Downing Street; we turn to Christopher Mallaby for the view from Bonn.

Sir Christopher Mallaby

I want to start before the transformation in Europe, to remind you of some features of the British-German relationship at that time. The security of Berlin made freedom and prosperity in West Berlin possible, and Britain, with the other protecting powers, achieved that. Quadripartite rights and responsibilities had one effect, which was greatly in German interest, which was that they explicitly kept the German question open; they declared that the division of Germany was not the answer to the German question. There was also the repeated British and allied statement: the support for unification in democracy, one which became controversial in British government later, but which was then the standard and frequent statement.

There were 70,000 British forces in Germany in 1989; one third of our army and half our front line air force. There was very strong trade; Germany in 1990 became Britain’s top export market, and Britain was Germany’s third. Investment was very important, and of course the shared external framework of NATO and the EC. In case you have doubts about the EC bit, let me say that at the time the single market was being created, and that was a British-German cause. I came back to Germany after three years in London, and this is a witness seminar, so let me tell you what I wrote in early 1988, this is a quotation from a report:

‘Germans . . . admire our stability and democracy over centuries. They admire the Prime Minister’s leadership and now our economic revival. They still are not sure that we are genuine Europeans . . . They do not see us as an alternative to France as their first European partner . . . but we can influence the Federal Republic in numerous ways. The important factors of our forces in Germany and our special role in Berlin help . . . in this’. I went on to say that people in responsible positions in Germany knew that the UK was important to Germany because of our role in security, trade, investment, and our influence in Washington and Moscow. But the media and the public in Germany were less conscious of all that; we should try hard to correct the lack of knowledge.

This was the beginning of the famous debate about the Stille Allianz – the quiet alliance – and in January 1989, six months later, after many talks with the Federal Government, I reported that the idea of making the Stille Allianz less silent was accepted by the German government as well.

In July 1989 I expressed some concern about the British-German relationship; I felt that the degree to which Britain mattered in decision-making was diminishing in German eyes. One
example was the decision to hold the Inter-Governmental Conference on European Monetary Union, seen in Germany as a concession forced on Britain. There was also the argument, which Herr Genscher has mentioned, about short-range nuclear forces. I wrote on 27 July 1989: ‘The German public believe, with the advent of Gorbachev, that they have security and that progress in East – West relations is what is now needed. If we give the impression of advocating caution and adequate defences without advocating and pursuing enthusiastically dialogue and contacts [between East and West], that will undermine our influence and credibility here’.

There were some more tangible points: Gorby-mania in Germany made defence seem less important, and some aspects of defence, notably the noise of low-flying aircraft, became very controversial. In summer 1989, just before everything started changing, the SPD was trying to launch a public debate about the sovereignty of the Federal Republic, including the presence of stationed forces. My summary of relations before everything started would be that relations were generally good; a bit invisible, there ought to have been more publicity, the quiet alliance was too quiet.

Let’s turn to the period of unification. In the first phase, as the GDR began to change visibly in the third quarter of 1989, consideration of the possibility of unification began in London. On 11 September I wrote: ‘Two pluralist Germanies, with the FRG still in NATO, would certainly be preferable to a single, neutral Germany’. I did not expect neutrality: on 8 November I asked, ‘what if the Soviet Union offered reunification in return for neutrality? I can see some West Germans being tempted. But if . . . the Soviet Union were acting from a position of weakness, in the face of the loss through change in the GDR of its security glacis in Europe, I can imagine the West Germans finding such an offer as resistible as Adenauer found Stalin’s version in 1952.’

From the fall of the Wall until the agreement on Two plus Four – three months – London was indeed concerned, not only the Prime Minister, about what was happening: about the speed of change; about the lack of consultation; about the risk of destabilising Gorbachev, which Charles Powell has explained; about Germany’s future in NATO; and also about the eastern frontier. The British argued for self-determination, for real democratic change in the GDR, before unification should become an actual question on the agenda. That is the period when the British began looking negative to the Germans, and I repeatedly advised a more favourable public position on unification – this goes on through the documents – emphasising that we would lose influence without it. Agreement on Two plus Four on 13 February 1990 was welcomed by Mrs Thatcher, but the British image in Germany did not recover. I told London on 22 February that our image was, ‘at its lowest for years’.

Then there was what weather forecasters call a bright interval: on 23 March, Teltschik told me that there was a marked improvement in British – German relations, following a more

28 On 10 March 1952, Stalin delivered a document – the Stalin Note – to the representatives of the Western allied powers, offering superpower disengagement from Germany and reunification of the occupied zones in exchange for keeping Germany neutral and disarmed. It was rejected.
positive tone in the public statements by London. Then three days after that, and four days before the British – German summit, Mrs Thatcher had an interview in Der Spiegel where she seemed to criticise Kohl directly on the frontier question. Teltschik called me back into his office and expressed the Chancellor’s shock and astonishment. On Two plus Four I am going to differ from William Waldegrave; I think the UK played a helpful and thoughtful role, but that was in private negotiation. The German public view of Britain continued to be negative.

After unification I wrote an analysis on 11 October 1990 about how the bilateral relationship then felt, saying that the effect of the Prime Minister’s statements had caused German observers to react sceptically to any more positive statement by her or by other British ministers about unification, although Mr Hurd had repeatedly won plaudits from Herr Genscher, which we have heard again today. The story of unification was paradoxical because the British should have been able to be important in that negotiation, and were more important than they seemed, but publicly they looked uncooperative. There was tarnish on the bilateral relationship, and that tarnish was not the only change in British – German relations, because there were two or three things that had changed in substantive terms – the end of our role in Berlin; the end of quadripartite rights and responsibilities. But the factors in our relationship in this analysis, I found, were much the same as before, particularly the German admiration for British democracy and stability, and the shared international framework. The impression that we had been reluctant about unification, and were sceptical about Europe, meant that we had ceased to be at the centre, I wrote, of Germany’s radar screen.

In my reports I discussed what Britain should do about this situation. I wrote this on 30 November: ‘The single step which would most enhance our standing in Germany would be to make our policies in the Community more positive, in presentation and where possible in content.’ I saw a risk to international security of a debate in Germany about stationed forces, and I advocated multinational forces in Germany rather than national stationed ones. I advocated joint policies with Germany on what was going on in Central Europe and on cooperation with the new democracies. In bilateral relations, I looked for new elements to compensate for the loss of quadripartite rights and responsibilities, and the reduced importance of defence, where British – German relations had been especially important.

The new Länder, I thought, could be an opportunity for Britain; if we could make an impact for Britain in East Germany that would boost our standing throughout Germany. Then I wrote a long list of suggestions, one of which was a state visit by the Queen, including East Germany, which happened two years later. Another suggestion was that we exploit the opportunity, with English becoming the first foreign language in East Germany, to disseminate information about Britain there. A more specific suggestion was that we increase our cooperation with Germany on intelligence matters, now that the GDR’s threat to security of information in the Federal Republic had evaporated. I wrote about the Großbritannien-Zentrum, the Institute for British Studies in Humboldt University, which has now existed for nearly 20 years, and which we were then in the process of creating. Lots of
particular things I recommended, but I could propose no big thing; we were not going to make European Monetary Union the quid pro quo, which Mitterrand of course was to do successfully.

In all this the UK gained immensely from the transformation of Europe: the end of the Soviet threat; democracy in Central Europe; and Mrs Thatcher played an active role in that. Her firmness in NATO and defence, and her inspired cultivation of Gorbachev, were contributions: the Iron Lady did contribute to the melting of the Iron Curtain. In my view, she is the greatest Briton since Winston Churchill, because of her economic policy, but on Germany there was the paradox that we did play a positive role after the creation of Two plus Four, but the public statements obliterated that in the public mind. In the end, it felt to me that British – German relations in early 1991 were not as good as they had been in early 1989. The question is how long this tarnishing of the British image in Germany was to last. Nigel will speak to that.

Roger Morgan

Thank you very much. That short list of initiatives that you suggested might be taken to develop Anglo-German relations reminds me that in the 1980s there was a special two-man committee set up, consisting of Norman Statham, a senior British diplomat, and Dr Gehlhoff on the German side, who did produce a catalogue of proposals. We come to another view from London: Hermann von Richthofen was the German Ambassador here from the late 1980s through to the early 1990s.

Hermann von Richthofen

First, I should like to thank the Foreign Office for inviting us to this wonderful Anglo-German exchange of views, and I would like to congratulate you, Mr Salmon, for the fascinating work you have put together and given us as a basis for our discussion. I was accredited as the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in London in December 1988, until May 1993, so throughout the whole period we are talking about. I would like to recall the relations in 1988 and 1989, and then the ups and downs in late 1989-1990, and the happy end on 3 October 1990, the day of German unity.

Like Mr Genscher, I would like to stress the deep trust and confidence between our heads of state, ministers, and on my part political directors and bilateral (twin) ambassadors in London and Bonn. When I arrived here I was received by Sir Geoffrey Howe with great human warmth which I will never forget. I also had a very kind reception by Her Majesty the Queen and the Prime Minister. I would not like to dwell any further on the state of relations during the so-called silent alliance, which Sir Christopher Mallaby has done already. What I would like to emphasise is the Königswinter conference. This is a unique part of the relations between the citizens of our countries, and for almost 60 years this conference has contributed to better German-British understanding on all levels, and continues to do so. As Roger Morgan mentioned initiatives were taken to develop British-

See footnote 1.
German relations in 1984 including annual summit consultations and measures in the economic and cultural fields. What we did not achieve was the kind of Jugendwerk (Youth Exchange) that we have established with France – this finds no counterpart in the British thinking, and we have always deplored that.

The year 1989 was characterised by a very good summit that we had in Frankfurt, an outstanding part of it was a talk the Prime Minister had with Karl-Otto Pöhl, whom she highly respected as the expert on price and currency stability. She learned that the cultural budget for Frankfurt was as large as that for the Minister of Arts here in London, and she was very impressed to be guided by Hermann Josef Abs, 90 years old, through the Goethe House; it was a high point in our cultural relations.

The ups and downs in 1989 really showed that the German question was back on the international agenda. I had been involved, like others here, in the quadripartite consultations and negotiations on the Berlin agreement in 1971. This was the first time in the post-war period that we did achieve a true agreement with the Soviet Union on the improvement of civilian traffic from and to Berlin. We also learned at the time that at the heart of the German question was no longer the question of a peace treaty for Germany but the question of the quadripartite rights and responsibilities with respect to Berlin and Germany as a whole. When it came to a successful conclusion of the German question, with the unification of the two German states, it just meant bringing the quadripartite rights and responsibilities to an end in an external framework. That happened in 1990, but was already contained in a nutshell in the deliberations of the early 1970s, as a result of the policy of détente and cooperation.

I heard of the fall of the Berlin Wall, together with Douglas Hurd, at a dinner with the Italian Ambassador. Douglas agreed immediately to visit Berlin. He was the first Foreign Secretary who came and was very much impressed. There are wonderful anecdotes about it contained in his memoirs, the details of which I shall not go into today. He was more positively disposed toward German unification than the Prime Minister. The 10 points of Helmut Kohl on 28 November 1989 aroused confusion in London, because the Prime Minister was not informed, and got the report during Question Time in the House of Commons; I understood why this was embarrassing for her. Herr Genscher came the following day and clarified the situation, and we got back to a more rational course.

In the winter, we were confronted with public statements, and the Chequers seminar. The highlight was the Königswinter conference in March in Cambridge. The Prime Minister waited at the airport in Cambridge, the Chancellor arrived, but was not willing to talk to her. He was offended by an interview on the German-Polish border which she had given to the German magazine Der Spiegel, a magazine the Chancellor particularly hated. They went to St Catharine’s College in separate cars. During the reception the Prime Minister was at one end, the Chancellor was at the other end. When it came to dinner we put Sir Oliver

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30 See Session 1, footnote 7.
31 See footnote 1.
Wright as a buffer between the two; then they both made their speeches, which helped to clear the air. At the summit the following day the climate was friendly again, and we came to discuss current affairs in a moderated tone. Lord Weidenfeld writes in his memoirs about this dinner: ‘the relations between them’, the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, ‘were never simple. They were marked by an amalgam of suspicion, antagonism and prejudice from her side, and irritation, tinged with a sense of spurned love on his’. These traits came out in the banter preceding the speeches they both made, when Mrs Thatcher observed that the Chancellor always wrapped his napkin circumspectly around his waist. She commented that this was a white flag, a symbol of surrender to her. We had another hiccup in June, when Minister Nicholas Ridley, in an interview that he had not intended to give in public caused irritations, but he resigned immediately, because the Chancellor had telephoned the Prime Minister.

Then came the day of German unity; let me just briefly recall that day here in London. First of all, I took over the Embassy of the GDR, which to them was a sad fact, and to us marked the end of the existence of the second German state. At noon, I had the honour of giving a huge reception at the Banqueting Hall under some wonderful Rubens paintings depicting peace and justice. Douglas Hurd and I exchanged messages, and Douglas on this occasion said, ‘It is a glad day, a glad day for our German friends, a glad day for Germans, a glad day for Britain, a glad day for Europe, and the world’, and he wished us all success in the process of German unity. At 14.30 the Prime Minister received me at 10 Downing Street, and out of protocol she came to the stairs, saying that we must have a little choreography because the press were waiting for us; so she came from one side, and I came from the other side, we met in the middle and shook hands, and the press were very happy with it. It was the first occasion she had given to the German press in many months; after that we sat and talked in a close circle, and the climate was very good, with nothing to be felt of the hiccups that had occurred before.

My last talk with Mrs Thatcher, which was not recorded by anyone, was at the state banquet for the Italian state President Cossiga. I thanked her for the kind reception at 10 Downing Street on 3 October, and she said to me, ‘Well, Helmut Kohl must be very happy that after the unification of Germany he can pursue a more national policy’. I said to her, ‘Well Prime Minister, I fear the contrary is the case, because Helmut Kohl now wants to make the integration of Germany into the EU irreversible, and that includes of course working for political, economic and monetary union’. She was shocked, and asked me, ‘Ambassador, do you want me to go to Her Majesty the Queen and tell her that her image will no longer be on our pound notes?’ This ended our relationship while she was Prime Minister.

I would like to make an addendum on the time after 3 October 1990. I was kindly invited by the House of Commons and House of Lords Select Committees, and was asked about the costs of German unity and economic development. During my first meetings in October 1990, I was very optimistic. A year later, Lord Radice invited me again, and I had to admit that we really were too optimistic, and that economically and monetarily in Germany things were not as well as we had thought at the time.
I will end my remarks by thanking all our British friends, who have greatly helped us over these last 60 years in the German question; there was never a doubt that all British Governments were strong supporters, first of all of alleviating the consequences of the separation of Germans into two states and the special occupation area in Berlin, starting with the airlift in 1948-49. In 1954 Britain was very helpful with the Eden Plan, part of which was the Deutschlandvertrag (Treaty on Germany). In Article 7 of this Treaty our political goal was enshrined: to work for a state of peace in Europe where the German people could make use of self-determination to achieve unity.

In 1970-71 Britain was very helpful in the quadripartite agreement negotiations with the Russians, to get the most for the population of Berlin in opening the borders to the GDR for travel and exchanges.

During my London years, I had strong support – and Lord Waldegrave mentioned this – from Lord Carrington, who was the first one to suggest that Manfred Wörner become Secretary General of NATO. From the Labour side, I will never forget the overwhelming applause I got on 2 October at the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool for the unification of Germany following the next day. That showed that the whole Labour party was behind the unification of our country.

The last person I would like to thank is Lord Robertson, who was Chairman of the British-German Parliamentary Group. He actually made a bet with Richard von Weizsäcker in the early 1980s, that when his daughter would be 18, the Berlin Wall would have fallen. Only eight years later he could walk with his daughter through the Brandenburg Gate. This shows the kind support and interest we had, in particular from the whole population here.

Roger Morgan

There are many points there that we will want to come back to. Perhaps that phrase about the ‘state of peace in Europe’ points to one of the really serious differences between our two countries. Willy Brandt and earlier governments in Germany had always said: ‘we can expect the unification of our country only when there is a state of peace in Europe, Eine Europäische Friedensordnung. Maybe in 1989, when everything began to move very fast indeed, the general German reaction was: ‘we have a peaceful order in Europe, we have the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin, the Helsinki Final Act and Gorbachev’s reform of the Soviet bloc, what more do we need’ On the British side there was more hesitation and there were more questions, and some peoples’ thinking tended to go: ‘Germany’s future role in

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32 Western proposals for German reunification and European security were put forward at the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers in 1955. These included the Eden plan for German reunification in freedom, which had been submitted to the Western Powers by the British Foreign Secretary Sir Anthony Eden at the Berlin Conference in 1954.

33 In October 1954, the three Western allies and Germany signed this treaty, also known as the Bonn/Paris Conventions, as part of the process that brought the FRG into NATO. It entered into force in May 1955.

34 See Session 1, footnote 7.

35 See Session 1, footnote 6.
NATO is not firmly settled, and nor are the German-Polish frontier and some other things, so have we really got a European context in which we can happily welcome German unification? I turn now to Nigel Broomfield, who saw these things from East Berlin, then for a time from London, and finally from Bonn as Ambassador to the new Germany.

Sir Nigel Broomfield

The two questions down to me to answer are ones that I do not particularly want to answer, so I shall ask myself two questions which I can answer. The first one refers to the time in the GDR when the last year happened, and I have looked back at those events with a great deal of interest, and asked myself consistently, and I am about to say a number of things that I hope people will not take as being too self-centred. The postings department in the Foreign Office must have thought they had put a round peg in a round hole, because I had served in the army in Germany; I had been attached to the Soviet Army in East Germany just after the Wall went up; I had worked in West Berlin as the political adviser, whose job was mainly to prevent generals from making intemperate remarks; I had been in the Soviet department; and, like Christopher, I had also worked in Moscow and therefore supposedly knew a bit about the Russians.

Charles says that Mrs Thatcher discovered Mr Gorbachev; in a humble way I would take some credit for that, in the sense that I travelled with her every year to bury the General Secretary of the year in Moscow, and on the way back from one of them she said, ‘for heavens sake, try and find me a young Russian’. I thought that was quite difficult, because political life in Russia did not start much before 65. I sat down with two very clever people in our research department, we looked across the board, and we came up with three names: Grishin in Moscow; Romanov in Leningrad; and Gorbachev in the Central Committee.

After a lot of analysis we put our money on Gorbachev, but the problem was he did not have a position that would allow us to invite him. So, I went to the Head of the Foreign Relations Committee of the House of Commons, Anthony Kershaw, and asked him to write to the head of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Supreme Soviet, a man called Mr Gorbachev. He looked doubtful, I reassured him Geoffrey Howe and the Prime Minister were strongly behind this, so he sent the letter off and Gorbachev accepted. Gorbachev came over, and that was the beginning of the time that Mrs Thatcher said she liked him and could do business with him, and the beginning of the time when I spent a week with him, saw a lot of him, and to some extent with Raisa. Raisa shocked the Sovietologists in my department more than anything by buying goods in Bond Street on a credit card, which at that stage of development in the Soviet Union was thought to be an extraordinarily advanced affair; quite different from any other senior Russians we had had over there. As Head of the Soviet Department and East European Department, I also had breakfast in Warsaw with Geremek and Walesa a week before they were arrested in Gdansk.

I had seen some of the actors in these dramas; I knew they were different; why did I not understand better the effects that they would have on the situation in Europe? I will come to the two points that I had defined for myself as judgement points for these events: the first,
would the Russians hold firm; the second, would the East Germans remain loyal? The Russians had remained firm on three occasions, Potsdamer Platz, in Budapest and in Prague. That is to say they had used force to repress popular uprising, so that was their track record. Their history said that was a potential avenue for Russians to follow. Gorbachev, who I had followed very closely and had listened to a lot, in my view, and I regard him as a very great person, did not have a real idea of the effects and implications of some of the things he was doing. I agree strongly with Rodric Braithwaite, who was reporting from Moscow that the Soviet policy was riddled with contradictions. When he came down the steps of his aeroplane, having been caught up in the Putsch in the Crimea, with Raisa and his grandchildren, and he said publicly, ‘I believe that socialism and communism can be reformed in the Soviet Union’. I took the view that this was a man who did not understand the effect of what he was trying to do could have on those particular organisations.

Indeed, I do not believe, although he said those who come too late will be punished by history, and he was definitely saying to the Germans, ‘you sort it out yourselves’, I was feeling uncertain, until very late in the day, what the real Russian position was. That was the first key anchor then pulled. The second key was, if there was to be a really deep change in East Germany, would the East German population remain loyal to this state which they lived in? They had had huge success in the Olympics, they had got lots of gold medals, they were assessed – it seems to me laughably – by the OECD as the 11th largest economic power in the world at the time; there were apparently many things going for East Germany. Regardless of what Herr Meckel says, I never believed that, I did not believe that the East Germans would stick with that state, even if it was reformed, even if it became democratic – I believe they were more German than East German, and that was the fundamental thing. That was the judgement I took, and that is why, when this started to happen I did not believe it would stop short of the goal that it finally reached. Indeed, a lot of the so-called dissidents – Schorlemmer, Stolpe and people you know very well - that I used to talk to in my various guises were always saying what you were saying, ‘we will reform it’.

When I took Douglas Hurd, the last thing I did in East Germany, down to Leipzig, we went to the Nikolaikirche and saw Magirius and asked him what had he thought would happen as a result of the demonstrations. I am very sorry Douglas Hurd is not here today to confirm or deny what I am about to attribute to him. He came away and said, ‘That is extraordinary; they do not really understand politics’. They are in for reform, but photocopier politics about putting slips of paper through people’s doors and telling them about change and your programme was not their style at all. That was a very good thing, because the slogan that was used in Leipzig was probably the only slogan that would have maintained peace, ‘no force, violence’ – ‘keine Gewalt’ and that applied in both directions – Stasi, VOPO and NVA. Once again, looking at my own life, I was born in India and was a serving officer in the British army, and it was that non-violent approach of the Indian National Congress at the end of the day in India, which could not be handled by one of the best and greatest armies there was in the world at the time, the British Indian Army. This was exactly the Christian approach, no violence, but it had enormous political resonance.
So here he was, and I am glad to say that like Herr Meckel and everybody else I was overtaken; the voice of the people was not the voice of the political analysts and the very goodhearted people, many of whom were trying to manage this process. Up it came, and the real voice of the people was – we want to get out; we want to travel; ‘wir wollen reisen’ ‘we want to see the world’. Yes, ‘wir sind ein Volk’ and so on and so forth. It was this feeling of being imprisoned, because they knew, through television, except possibly in Dresden, that there was a different and better world out there, a very attractive world. That pressure surged up and it proved unstoppable.

I would like to comment on what William Waldegrave said about crisis handling. It seems to me in looking at this there are some parallels with the recent financial crisis that has happened in the world economy. That is to say, all of the actors take a prudent look at what they are doing; the banks had risk committees and they all thought they were handling CDOs and other derivatives very well, but cumulatively they were going to break the system. The actors in Eastern Europe were all thinking the same; we will go this far and we will be able to do it, but when the insurer of last resort, in this case the Soviet Union, withdrew the cover, the game was up and it collapsed very quickly indeed. It took some time for that realisation to spread around: that it really had gone and that this was not an option they needed to worry about again.

My conclusion is, rather like the debate we are having now about how to mend the world financial system and what rights the FSA and the Bank of England should have; these things need to be brought together in a collective way. Part of the problem – and Hilary Synnott will have a word about this and may say it is absolutely untrue – is that in the British Foreign Office, East Germany was handled by the West European Department, because it was part of the German question. All of the countries that were actually influencing East Germany – Poland, Hungary and the rest – were handled by the East European Department, which I used to lead at one stage. Therefore, although clearly the huge influence on East Germany was West Germany, the other influence was, as you have said, from the people you were talking to in Warsaw, Budapest, and so on; those were going down a different channel. Patrick Wright said we must pull it all together and have a good look at this and make it right, and that is the model I followed in the job that I did after that, which was to be the lead negotiator with the Americans before the Gulf War, which rightly swept right to the top of our agenda after this and the deployment of troops. I insisted that there was a group of people around that table who represented all constituencies that would be affected by the Arab countries. That is a model that needs to be looked at.

My last question – how did I find it? I arrived in 1993, and I did not find a big black cloud hanging over British – German relations. Yes, there were statements on the record. Yes, there were doubts, and so forth, but because they were attributed very personally to Mrs Thatcher, her exit from that scene and the arrival of John Major, who Helmut Kohl liked and tried to get along well with, and the EU becoming higher up the agenda, I did not find there were political problems. Douglas Hurd got on well with Klaus Kinkel, and so on across the board. Economically, as Christopher said, we were very close. There was a bit of a boom
going on in West Germany, although the bill would be presented later, because of the enormous infusion of buying power that had happened in East Germany by redeeming the East Mark one-for-one; it was like suddenly declaring all this valueless stuff useful, and they were supplying fridges and motor cars eastwards, and the West German industry was having the field day of its life. That was not the case in East Germany, where the sign was up ‘for sale’, and that was a humiliation. I remember going to see Robotron in Dresden and a big crane factory in Magdeburg, and was told, ‘You had better come back on Saturday when our colonial masters have left’, because they were being run by West Germans mainly.

There was real misunderstanding and resentment, and there were also quite a lot of the bills coming home to roost for unification, which had to be paid, and were not greeted with joy in the West. The regionalism of Germany was also very much to hand; not many West Germans went East. I spent quite a lot of my time introducing West Germans to East Germans, because they had not been there and did not know about it. Therefore, there was not a great understanding as a result of the agreement with the unions that wage rates should rise rapidly. East Germany was not a tremendously productive place for foreign investment, because the productivity rates were comparatively very low. In the popular field I found among the young, English was the great thing; that was the world language, and that is what they wanted to learn. They came to Britain in great numbers, and studied here. The thing that upset them was not unification, but the tone of the British press from time to time, which was critical of Germany in various aspects. They said, ‘We do not understand that; it does not seem to be a correct portrayal of our country’. On the official level I had an easy time, I met some people who I regard as some of my oldest friends, I met Peter Hartmann again and Hans von Plötz and a whole lot of other people, who it was very easy to work with; there was not any stand-offishness.

I do not think there was a lasting effect of unification. There was, and remains, a deep difference about the future of the EU, and that is really what Charles was referring to, and lies right at the root of many of the misunderstandings or differences of view between Britain, a country with its own historical past and not quite such a unitary government as we used to have; and Germany, which had been in the middle of Europe, had not had settled frontiers, had this great desire for a union around that, and quite different priorities.

I cannot believe that, had the British had the Deutschemark, that Mrs Thatcher would have been able to persuade the British to give it up as Herr Kohl did in the service of European unity. I have very happy memories of all of my times in Germany, not least the last of them; I now chair the Jung Königswinter conference, and I profit from it greatly. They are a different generation; they see the world quite differently. They are much more interested in working in China, America and all around; they are very travelled, very experienced, in a way that the younger Germans, when I first went to Germany, would never have believed.

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36 See footnote 1.

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Questions

Peter Handel, journalist

I just wanted to touch on one important aspect that has not yet been aired; we have had opinion surveys in the UK following German reunification. I have not got the figures to hand, but it was quite surprising that the support for German reunification went up over time in the UK, from 60% to 70% for example. I would like to know from you, if you look at the breakdown, whether it was the younger generations who were decisively in support of reunification? That is an important aspect of bilateral relations, and not everyone might have anticipated that.

Hermann von Richthofen

I would like to reply to Peter Handel. First of all, we had a very active press policy, I never had as many BBC radio and TV interviews as at that time, which was a significant contribution. Lord Weidenfeld came up with an article at the beginning of January 1990, which gave us a significant boost; I would like to thank him once more for that, because it opened the door for a lot of support that would not have come our way otherwise. The third point, mentioned by Christopher Mallaby; the 70,000 British troops stationed in Germany. Yesterday a taxi driver commented to me about unification in very positive terms, so there was resonance there.

David Marsh

I have one question on the general relationship with the Soviet Union, perhaps above all to Herr Hans-Dietrich Genscher. Nigel, it was very interesting to hear what you had to say about how strong the link was between Mrs Thatcher and Gorbachev, famously ‘discovered’ by the FCO in 1984. At that time the West Germans had a poor relationship with Gorbachev, which was not helped later on by the allusion by Chancellor Kohl in Newsweek37 to Goebbels, albeit that was a mistake. Gorbachev was not in favour of German unity in 1988; what would you say was the one reason that enabled the West Germans to make up so much ground with the Soviet Union over that short period of time?

Charles said very firmly that Mrs Thatcher was not against German unification, she could not be having signed so many declarations. In the FCO document38, there is a report of Sir Christopher Mallaby meeting Mrs Thatcher in Downing Street on 1 November 1989, a very official document here, with Mrs Thatcher quoted as saying, ‘Whatever their formal position, Britain, France and the Soviet Union were fundamentally opposed to German reunification’: note-taker, one C. Powell. Unless she has a great talent for acting, she was either not telling the truth then, or you were not writing it down properly, or what you just

37 On 27 October 1986, Kohl drew an indirect comparison between Gorbachev and Goebbels.
said now cannot be true? I am sorry to put it that hard, but it is an important, and not merely semantic, point.

**Sir Christopher Mallaby**

Firstly, younger people in Britain particularly were excited by the marvellous spread of freedom in East Germany and further East: that caught their heart strings. Secondly, the scenes on British television of the fall of the Wall were dramatic, often repeated, and caught public attention very strongly. Thirdly, we are talking about 1989-1990, and not about 1945 or 1950; young people saw Germany as a place a bit like us, and were excited to see this big change in Germany.

**Hans-Dietrich Genscher**

My impression was that these major changes in 1989 were seen to be a German event; we were focused on what the implications were, what was going on in Germany, and we had not appreciated that it was a European event. There was a European freedom revolution; there were not just demonstrations in Leipzig and the GDR; Czechoslovakia came along with Václav Havel; Poland and the Solidarność\(^{39}\) government. I remember the day after the Wall came down, 9 November, when Helmut Kohl and I were on an official visit in Poland, and during the dinner the news came through the Wall was open. We had agreed that the following morning I would have discussions with Lech Walesa and Bronislaw Geremek. Geremek said, ‘the fact of the Wall coming down means the unification of Germany; it is a great day for Germany, but it is also a great day for Poland, because once Germany is united, Poland will be a neighbour in the EC and NATO’. That was the view of people from the other side of the Iron Curtain, who had understood for a long time that German unification was not just a German matter, it was a matter for the freedom of Europe. That might explain that support, which started out being rather thin in certain western circles, and then gained in momentum. It meant that Poland was genuinely free, Czechoslovakia would be genuinely free, Hungary could act, so it went on. It is important for us always to recognise that the situation in Europe had moved along so far that it was not possible to depart from that track.

In the GDR we had brutal repression – 56, Hungary and then Prague – so what was happening was a European freedom revolution. I am not certain that if there had been full stability amongst our Eastern neighbours we would have seen the reactions we saw from the leadership at the GDR, and the relationship with Gorbachev could not have been influenced by the *Newsweek* interview in 1984; that happened later. Gorbachev was here, he certainly visited Mrs Thatcher and left a very positive impression, which was an important factor in my personal assessment of Gorbachev, and we analysed how he operated. In 1986, I did not go to Moscow then, I was in America, but Gorbachev’s position certainly affected our analysis. We said that if he actually went through with everything he said to us, then we saw a genuine opportunity for freedom for Germany, but we did not have a timeline.

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\(^{39}\) See Session 1, footnote 8.
attached to that, we were looking at a trend. Then we had the important agreements between Reagan and Gorbachev in Reykjavik, and much later in Malta. There was a genuine European policy of détente; it was a climate of détente.

If you analyse how come the impossible suddenly became possible; the West was able to create an appropriate environment for stable development, and certainly that was partly due to German membership of the European Community and NATO, then the Germany treaty [1955], and the Final Act in Helsinki. The Soviet Union had proposed the Final Act, because they wanted to have their position recognised by everyone, but the question was: may borders be changed peacefully – yea or nay? The conclusion was that a peaceful change was possible; that is what changed the position so greatly. We had the Final Act, which stated that each country could enter a defence alliance, and we would have to say, do you really intend to prevent the states of Germany from entering a defence pact? People were calling for their own freedom; that was the people’s movement, and that was the meaning of the demonstrations in East Germany. You had to recognise that and it was included in the Harmel Report in 1967; it said that German unification is not going to create a problem for Europe, but that German division was a problem for Europe. That was a very opposite view to one that had been expressed previously.

There was one point where, in relation to London, we certainly did not do anything in negotiation concerning our wish for reunification that could have made things more difficult for Gorbachev. We were reticent, because we did everything in our power to avoid making difficulties and creating hurdles. The Federal Chancellor and I were in the Caucasus; we went down for the waterside photo shoot, and Mrs Gorbachev’s hand appeared; she said to me, ‘Do you know Mr Genscher what my husband is doing here? I can say to you that Germany has to comply with all of the commitments that it has entered into; otherwise there will be serious dangers’. That was a correct political analysis on the one hand, but it was also the concern of a highly political lady, who realised the fine line her husband was treading in this decision.

If you analyse the process today you may say, yes, the West had to create the broad framework for that. But that was not enough; you needed the firm will of the people in Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. People talk of it as a bloc; it was not a bloc – the situation in Poland was quite different from the GDR. The GDR was structurally the weakest area; it was an occupied country, because it did not have any national identity. In

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41 The Malta summit in December 1989 between George Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev – a few weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall – marked a turning point in East-West relations and offered an opportunity for the two leaders to discuss the changes in Europe.
42 See footnote 10.
43 See Session 1, footnote 6.
44 See Session 1, footnote 17.
45 Kohl and Gorbachev met at Stavropol in the Caucasus on 17 July 1990 and reached a compromise, allowing a united Germany to retain its NATO membership and agreeing a drastic disarmament. The agreement also offered economic aid to the USSR.
Poland the power of the Catholic Church gave the country an identity; you had the Protestants to the west, and the Orthodox to the east. Then we have Charter 77, published in Prague in January 1977 with 242 signatories, which had reached nearly 2,000 by 1989. The document criticised the Czech government for not implementing human rights agreements. Its supporters – including Václav Havel – were harshly repressed but negotiated the return to democracy during the Velvet Revolution.

Roger Morgan

Looking again at the examination paper that some of you were set this afternoon, one of the questions to Lord Powell was, why did you not try to change the Prime Minister’s mind in view of the advice she was receiving from Sir Percy Cradock and others to support unification at least in public?

Lord Powell

I enjoyed David’s question; it was asked with all the aplomb and self-assurance of a backbench MP who has found an incriminating document in the Government’s photocopier, and is about as relevant. Not being a journalist by profession I used to write down things exactly as they were, and I did not believe in airbrushing out what Mrs Thatcher said. In this case she was definitely speaking for effect; I am sure Christopher knew she was speaking for effect. She had been talking shortly before that to François Mitterrand, Gorbachev and even to President Bush; all of whom had said very much the same thing, which was, ‘My God, we have always supported German unification, suddenly it is there; do we really want this? How are we going to cope with this?’ That was very much the attitude expressed at that time, and was understandable. Everything I have heard this afternoon convinces me that Germans too were very surprised by the pace of events, and how suddenly they were caught out.

Coming to the question of trying to control what Mrs Thatcher said. By this time she was in her 11th year as Prime Minister. If people had not noticed that she was outspoken in Cabinet, Parliament, Europe and everywhere then they cannot have been wide awake. We had an incident before this, the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution, and the Foreign Office insisted she must give an interview to some French paper. I said, ‘I really would not; it will be a disaster’. No, no, the French journalist sat down, ‘what do you think of the French Revolution, Madame Prime Minister?’ ‘I thought it was disgraceful, bloody, unprincipled and really disgraceful. The real revolution was the British Glorious Revolution of 1688’. Beside that I am not sure that the Der Spiegel interview really stands up to much criticism. The truth is that if Chancellor Kohl was offended by that interview he was intended to be. She took very seriously, and had been making seriously the point about recognition of the border, since the meeting of the EC in November in Paris, and she repeated that point time

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46 Published in Prague in January 1977 with 242 signatories, which had reached nearly 2,000 by 1989. The document criticised the Czech government for not implementing human rights agreements. Its supporters – including Václav Havel – were harshly repressed but negotiated the return to democracy during the Velvet Revolution.
and again; she could not understand why Chancellor Kohl did not come out earlier and explicitly acknowledge the border, and she was determined to smoke him out on that, which had some effect.

It comes to this wider point that Christopher was speaking of, and which I well understand, the point about good relations. They are, of course, much nicer than bad relations, particularly if you are an ambassador, but quoting one of his own reports, that it made us seem as though we were reluctant on reunification and sceptical on Europe – well, we were. That was the Government’s policy, and it must have been offensive to German ears, but it had a serious point to it. I very much agree with what was said, that these things do not last very long. There was a bad patch in Anglo-German relations at this stage; I do not believe we have suffered any enduring and substantive disadvantage in Germany as a result of that, and a lot of good work by other people on this platform ensured that was not the case. It is no good always burying real problems and differences of perception under fine words, and Mrs Thatcher was not someone who was ever going to do that.

William Paterson, German-British Forum

One way in which Mrs Thatcher obviously differed from everybody else was her gender, and that is part of the answer on this issue. If you look at British relations with Germany, the relations of her contemporaries, the people immediately before and after her, their views towards Germany were affected by military service: those people who fought in Normandy shared the strong feeling that was also even more present in Germany never to have war again; those who then advanced into Germany saw the powerless state of Germany and the need to rebuild it, and that to some extent calmed the sort of feelings they might have shared with Mrs Thatcher in the 1930s. Post-war, the next generation were involved in being stationed in Germany, and that was something that brought British and German people closer. These were experiences that were closed to Mrs Thatcher.

On the Königswinter conference, which I also attended, I remember this reception where the two leaders met participants separately. Helmut Kohl had just won the East German Election. I do not think that he was ever quite on that plateau again: the reception he had received in East Germany had made a huge impression on him. But to give Mrs Thatcher credit she must have been under extreme pressure – there was the poll tax and all these other problems. She talked to me and asked me about unification, and there is this curious paradox that while her strategy may have been wrong, she had had this instinctive feeling for what it would mean for ordinary people. When she asked me about it she first answered her own question, ‘I predict the first thing that will happen is that the price of second-hand cars in Germany will go up’; in other words, what it will mean for ordinary people is they will have the money, but they will not be able to buy new cars’. Her great secret was being in tune with what it was people really wanted; she had lost that by the time of this meeting in relation to Britain, because of the poll tax, but some of that was still apparent in the way she was able to see why East Germans would buy second-hand cars.

47 See footnote 1.
Hans Kundnani, journalist

I am a journalist, and would like to ask a counterfactual question, above all to Sir Christopher and Sir Nigel, which is: if Margaret Thatcher had not been Margaret Thatcher, how would things have been different? If we had had a different British Prime Minister who had approached German reunification perhaps slightly more constructively and looked for a quid pro quo in the same way that Mitterrand did, what might that quid pro quo have been? Or was it simply a matter of just acquiescing in the inevitable?

Sir Nigel Broomfield

It is a beautiful speculation; we did have a change of Prime Minister, the new Prime Minister was called John Major. He did pick up one of the big points that the Foreign Office was making, namely that British policy on Europe needed to be presented more favourably, more positively, in Germany; he spoke in Bonn about Britain at the heart of Europe. If we take that factual thing, and play it back into your counterfactual invention, if he had been Prime Minister three years earlier, the British role in German unification would not have been controversial. We would have wanted it, wanted it because it was good for Germany, and wanted it because it was an immense breakthrough in ending the Cold War. The GDR was the linchpin of the Warsaw pact, of the Soviet hegemony in Central Europe; to get rid of that was a brilliant success. The leitmotiv of my working life until then had been the Soviet threat. To get rid of it was a nice idea. All of that would have been in John Major’s mind, so our performance would probably have looked publicly good, just as it was privately good in reality.

Anne Deighton, University of Oxford

Contra to what Professor Paterson says attitudes towards Germany are not determined by gender; I take slight exception to that. I was very impressed by Mr Genscher’s remarks about East Central Europe; would it be true however to say that those who were involved at the time had very little concern for other states in Western Europe? We have hardly mentioned France, there has been one snide reference to Mitterrand; apart from that Community members have hardly been mentioned. Given that somebody has said the role of Britain was small and declining, would it be fair to say that the old triangle of relations between Germany, the US and the Soviet Union, in fact determined the procedure between 1988 and the unification of Germany in 1990?

Hans-Dietrich Genscher

Mitterrand, who was not opposed to German unification, took a very principled position. He said to me on 30 November 1989, ‘German unification is a historic necessity, and that is why France is on the side of Germany in this, but I ask you which way unified Germany will turn; will it choose the European way of the Federal Republic of Germany, and continue with that, or will a unified Germany go back to the old ways? In other words, repeat this attempt to try and dominate Europe through its position in Central Europe?’ Then he added, ‘if you were to say to me, we were going to go back to the old ways, we would not
oppose unification, but we would have to revive the old alliances’, hence his meeting with Gorbachev in Kiev after that. France did see where the interests of our Eastern neighbours lay; Mitterrand was the advocate of Polish interests, and wanted recognition of the Eastern frontier, that was a central demand for him, and he asked whether Poland should be included in the Two plus Four. We were interested in that as well, and the six countries – the Federal Republic, GDR, and quadripartite – agreed Poland should be allowed in, otherwise we would have had to have a world peace conference, because virtually everyone had been in the war with us, so either directly or indirectly they were successor states of the earlier colonial powers.

We said, let us make it Two plus Four, but when we are talking about the Polish Eastern frontier, then Poland should be included, and Skubiszewski was the Polish Foreign Minister, and that happened at the Paris Two plus Four conference. I had an impression that I would like to share with you, about what European citizenship means: Skubiszewski was a European citizen with a European education, the conference languages were English, French, German and Russian, and the only person who did not have to put their headphones on was Skubiszewski, who spoke and understood English, French, Russian and German. We actually witnessed there what cultural unity meant and what European identity meant; he was a representative of this European educated citizenship, which had existed and had been treated so shabbily beforehand. We were all aware that this would mean unity for the whole of Europe; there could be no doubt about that.

I always felt that there would be no unity of Europe around Germany if Germany was left out, as if everybody was going to be democratic and there would be two German states plonked in the middle. That was a nonsense, just as much as the idea that Germany could be united, and the rest of Europe would be totally unaffected by it. That was why, in the letter on German unification it actually says, ‘the aim is to achieve a state of peace in Europe’. Peace in Europe, so Germany can bring about its unification in a spirit of self-determination. That letter was a German draft, but our closest allies agreed with the way it was drafted, in London, Paris and Washington.

Sir Paul Lever, Head of Security Policy Department, FCO (1987-90)

I would like to come back to the role of Mrs Thatcher. Although it is great fun now to look back on those days and laugh at how bonkers she was, none the less, this was one of the three big failures of British foreign policy since the Second World War, along with Suez and Iraq. In each case, the key factor was a hubristic Prime Minister, who either did not seek, or did not accept, the advice that she was given, and a Cabinet who were apparently unable or unwilling to do anything about it. The story of German reunification does merit some reflection on what happens in our country when collective Cabinet Government is abandoned, a phenomenon not unique to Mrs Thatcher.

48 6 December 1989.
Charles, you say she was principally concerned by a wish not to upset the position of Gorbachev. Maybe, but that is not how she explains it in her own autobiography. She says that although she does not believe in collective guilt, she does believe in national character, and she describes the Germans as, ‘inherently prone to veering between aggression and self-pity’, and she took the view that Germany was, by its very nature, a destabilising factor in Europe. This caused her not only to fail, which she acknowledges in her autobiography, but also to be what she does not acknowledge, wrong. She was politically mistaken, and she was morally wrong in seeking to deny, or at any rate postpone, the exercise of self-determination by the German people.

Third, given that this is a gathering partly of historians; historians will look back and be perhaps a little surprised at Mrs Thatcher, one of the genuinely major heroic figures, certainly in Britain, but also in the world in the latter part of the 20th Century. She who got it right on so many issues in the first part of her Prime Ministership, who did indeed hold out firmly against Brezhnev and his ghastly successors, who did recognise Gorbachev was unable to cope with the consequences of that. The phrase ‘anchor to windward’ was used by a British Foreign Secretary to describe the foreign policy which he was expected by her to pursue – it was not a role he particularly enjoyed. It involved, in effect, trying to say no to almost everything that was happening in the post-Gorbachev world, whether it was in relation to nuclear weapons or whatever. How ironic that somebody of such major stature as Mrs Thatcher will find her reputation tarnished by her performance over German reunification, whereas someone like Helmut Kohl, much underrated and undervalued by commentators in Britain, will be judged by history and future historians in a much more favourable light for having got this right.

Tony Nichols, University of Oxford

I would like to direct this question to Ambassador von Richthofen, because he mentioned the Königswinter conference in Cambridge, and the difficulties between Kohl and Thatcher there. Is it not also true that on that occasion, in the presence of the founder of the Königswinter conference, she remarked that it would take 40 years for the British to trust the Germans? If that is true, apart from it being an extremely unkind thing to say to somebody who had dedicated her life to improving Anglo-German relations, it does rather suggest that her opposition to German unification was rather more fundamental than just wanting to slow it down.

The second point I would like to make is towards the opinion of the panel on an issue that has not been mentioned much so far, the fear among British and German politicians and decision-makers, that there could be a situation of chaos in the GDR if things started to melt down there. This was evidenced in the documents in the volume, which deals with Berlin, a very impressive volume, which shows the British were concerned about what would happen in Berlin if the Wall became more porous – this was in 1988-89 – and the number of refugees pouring into Berlin would increase. There was also the issue after the fall of the Wall, what would happen if people in East Germany thought there might not be unification, or that something might happen to stop it, in which case there would be a huge exodus from
East Germany into West Germany and this would have a destabilising effect; it would possibly threaten the peace.

**Sir Nigel Broomfield**

There was a real worry about the emptying out of the GDR. One of the people that worked in my house came to me on 10 November and said that her son had taken off in a Trabant with a friend. I said, ‘It is all right Rosita, he will come back; it is open, he can go back and forth’. She said, ‘Once he has gone West he will never come back’. I would like to support Herr Genscher. We have said a lot about major political actors in the whole of this scene, and I would like to play tribute to two German actors in this – Helmut Kohl and Genscher. The distance that the Soviet military travelled in accepting the deal in the Caucasus, which Kohl and Genscher were able to persuade them was a non-threatening deal; yes, there was some money and the Soviet military were going to get new barracks, but it had to be that they believed these were non-threatening Germans. The distance they travelled is the distance between my conversation with a Soviet traffic regulator when I was in uniform travelling around the GDR in a car with a Soviet number plate in 1966. He stopped the car and smiled with great joy, and said, ‘We won’. I said, ‘what are you talking about’, and he said, ‘it was the Soviet linesmen who gave the third goal’.

The Soviet military in those days, who had scars on them from the battles of Stalingrad, the terrible destruction that had been wrought by the Wehrmacht in Russia and the Soviet Union, still were like the military anywhere, deeply moulded by the last war. To have changed that attitude to the point that Gorbachev was prepared to believe that these were now good Germans, non-threatening Germans, was an act of major statesmanship. Kohl’s speech in Dresden in December, I thought, was an extraordinary accomplishment. At any moment two wrong words could have set a revolution going. He could have fired them up and they would have been off on the streets destroying property, and it would have come to an end. He used the right words, he talked about patience, and I regarded that as an extraordinary statesmanlike achievement. A lot of credit goes to the leaders in Germany for that.

**Sir Christopher Mallaby**

I would like to respond to the question that mentioned the French role. After Germany I went to be Ambassador in Paris, and got to know François Mitterrand to a certain extent. As to his attitude to German unification, he was emphatic and eloquent in private against it. He even went to the point of going to talk to Herr Modrow in East Berlin, which Mrs Thatcher never did, and I assume that the protocols of those conversations fell into the hands of the Auswärtiges Amt later, after unification, which must have provided an interesting read. The difference is that although Mitterrand did these things, and had some strong arguments, he said nothing at all in public.

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49 German Foreign Ministry.
Hermann von Richthofen

You raised a decisive point Mr Nichols, I’d like to answer. We all know, and Margaret Thatcher expressed something in her fashion, which echoed in 1990, that one could not lay everything at the door of the Nazis in the Second World War. There was an attempt made to forge a long-term relationship of trust with Germany; Mr Genscher, Mr Kohl, and we, as diplomats, were concerned to rebuild that confidence, and the Königswinter conferences were an ideal civil society tool to do that, and it is something that we need to work on further. In coalition discussions people are now saying perhaps we should slim down our Foreign Office, to cut back some of its PR activities; that is a misunderstanding of where our priorities should be. Mrs Thatcher took Article 7 of the Deutschland Treaty,\(^50\) and recognised self-determination as a right for German citizens, and recognised that the citizens of the GDR could vote for the security and economic self-determination, but could not vote for unification, and that was really divorced from reality. The majority is very clear in what it sought, and ultimately Mrs Thatcher understood that. On 3 October 1990 it did happen, and I do not think that it overshadowed our relationships in the very long term.

Lord Powell

I cannot answer the Königswinter conference question; I do not remember it. Margaret Thatcher was never comfortable with Königswinter; she saw it as dominated on the British side by the Jenkins-ites,\(^51\) who had been there for years. She thought it was a hostile political climate for someone of her beliefs, not about Germany but everything, and it took considerable effort to get her to go to anything associated with Königswinter.

On Sir Paul Lever’s question, comments or diatribe – whichever we like to call it – I understand it from a Foreign Office point of view. It lacks a sense of historical proportion. First, because I do not think that her views were, as I have said several times, particularly out of line with others. He referred to the famous book, and my eye fell along the sentence, quoting President Mitterrand, ‘Kohl was speculating on the national adrenaline of the German people, it seemed that nothing could stop him. In history Germany had never found its true frontiers, they were a people in constant movement and flux’. At this point Mrs Thatcher produced that damn map from her handbag; I tried everything to suppress that map, I got the lady who looked after her clothes to open all her handbags and take any maps out of them, lock them in a safe in Downing Street, but there was always one more somewhere. I do not think that when people look back they will see this, admitted, error of judgement as being remotely of the scale of Suez or Iraq. Possibly in front of this audience it would be seen as a major lacuna. In the British national consciousness, I very much doubt it figures.

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\(^{50}\) See footnote 10.

\(^{51}\) The Europeanist Roy Jenkins was President of the European Commission (1977-81), which oversaw the European Monetary System. It was at a Königswinter conference in April 1981 that Jenkins and others set out terms of the future Social Democratic Party.
Hans-Dietrich Genscher

Soon after Mitterrand became president, his future foreign minister (not Roland Dumas) came to me and said, ‘the President is interested in the following question; what would the Federal Republic do if the Soviets draw the map of Germany?’ I said to him, the Soviets have not got a German map, because they would be against unification. They would only have a German map if our Western allies were not to support us during the time of German unification, but there is no danger of that, because everybody has signed the Treaty of Germany\(^\text{52}\) confirming that.

I was exercised by that question that was asked earlier about what we were afraid of with regard to the developments in the GDR. We welcomed those developments with open hearts, and both the people on the streets of Leipzig and the other streets, and the refugees in Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, contributed to accelerating developments; there is no doubt about that. This was always a development that we wanted, and we did everything we could to kill the impression that it was something that the West wanted to use to damage the East, and to humiliate Moscow. That is why we said we would not do anything to rock the boat or destabilise. We are interested in stability, but there was one fear that we did have, which was one of the subordinated people, one of the lower-down people might suddenly lose their nerve. Just imagine what might have happened if, among the 70,000 in Leipzig somebody had opened fire and somebody had been killed. It would only have taken one shot, and I was very much convinced that Moscow would do nothing to encourage the GDR to use their weapons.

I mentioned this morning that I had a chat with Shevardnadze in New York, and I was convinced that they would do everything they could to calm things down. It was so important to say, ‘No violence’; that was an amazing message. There are 70,000 people there, even those who have got their finger round their trigger cannot pull that trigger any more, and that was the enormous moral achievement of the people there, who were saying not just, ‘We are the people’, but also, ‘No violence’. The preoccupation was not so much that people were calling for freedom, we were in favour of that, we wanted that as well, and that was the opinion of all our allies. We had an interest in there being freedom and democracy east of the Iron Curtain, not only in Germany. We never saw this as just a German problem, we always saw this as a pan-European issue, and after the Final Act of Helsinki\(^\text{53}\) we wanted a state of peace in Europe, for freedom to come; of course we wanted that. We had no fear of that, we would not be afraid of freedom, we were just afraid that the little people, one tiny little commander, one single private soldier might do something that could have unforeseen consequences.

Roger Morgan

We have had a fascinating discussion, and I can only ask you to join me in expressing our thanks to our distinguished and informative panel.

\(^{52}\) See footnote 10.  
\(^{53}\) See Session 1, footnote 6.
SESSION 3

THE TWO PLUS FOUR NEGOTIATIONS

Introduction

Sir Stephen Wall

We now come to the final session when we talk about the Two plus Four negotiations. I was just saying to Michael Wood that this is a little bit like the Schleswig Holstein question: I am perhaps one of the three people who certainly knew about it, but I cannot now tell you whether I am the one who went mad or the one who simply forgot. However, there are people here on the panel who will not have forgotten and we are very privileged to have Bertrand Dufourcq, who was the French Political Director at the time, Dieter Kastrup, who was the German Political Director, Hilary Synnott, who was the Head of the Western European Department of the Foreign Office and intimately involved in all these matters, and Michael Wood, who went on to be the Foreign Office senior Legal Adviser and was then the legal adviser dealing with German questions.

I want to say two things very briefly. I was working for Douglas Hurd at this time and travelled with him and there are two things to say about that. One was that Douglas came in towards the end of 1989 rather suddenly when Nigel Lawson resigned and John Major was made Chancellor of the Exchequer. One of the first things he set out to do was to establish a relationship with his opposite numbers around Europe, particularly in France and Germany. The other thing he did, because by that stage Margaret Thatcher no longer had a real dialogue with Helmut Kohl, was to establish a dialogue with Chancellor Kohl and these papers show Margaret Thatcher being told of this by Charles Powell and reacting that ‘we cannot possibly allow this to happen’. However, it did happen and I think to the benefit of both countries.

I went with Douglas Hurd to Leipzig – the visit that Nigel Broomfield talked about a little while ago – and I vividly remember in Leipzig the fact that the trams were being manned by people from the army, and the nurses and doctors were leaving the hospitals. I recall Hans-Dietrich Genscher saying to Douglas Hurd, and Douglas Hurd carried this back to Margaret Thatcher, and I think she at that stage accepted it, that actually the only alternative to reunification at that point was anarchy. In other words, if the Federal Republic did not take over then there would be complete chaos.

One other thing: those who read the documents will see a number of letters that I sent as Douglas’s private secretary to Charles Powell. This is because the Foreign Office system, for those who do not know it, is that all communication with No 10 goes from the Foreign Secretary’s Office so that the Prime Minister can know that the advice that she is
receiving, even if it comes in the name of officials, comes from the Foreign Secretary. That is by way of saying that, although my name is on the letters of advice that went across to Charles and then to the Prime Minister, insofar as they were shrewd and perceptive, which I believe they were, that is entirely due to the fact that Hilary was the person who was writing them. Indeed, there were occasions when I had received what is known in diplomatic jargon as an ‘earful’ from Charles on the German question and I would relay his views to Hilary, and Hilary always very moderately but firmly put me right and the judgements, I believe, that were made by Hilary and his colleagues were the correct ones.

Anyway, enough of that. I will start with you, Monsieur Dufourcq.

**Witness Statements**

**Bertrand Dufourcq**

Thank you very much. May I begin by thanking you for having invited me to this meeting. I would also like to congratulate the Foreign Office for having published a series of documents relating to German unification. The initiative has, in fact, created something of a momentum, because Bernard Kouchner has just announced that certain archives of the Quai d’Orsay will now be accessible to researchers without waiting for the normal 25-year delay. This announcement was made on the occasion of the Festival of German Unity this year. Some Élysée documents were opened to some academics – Frédéric Bozo whose publication will be coming out in English shortly in London – and Tilo Schabert in German. Henceforth, research work will give us a fairer view of the events and everyone’s views at the time with a degree of serenity and qualified in a way that only archival access will permit.

I would like to make the following remarks. Firstly, reading these documents one is struck by the ongoing differences of view between the Foreign Office and Downing Street and we have had an echo of that all day. From the French side, we suspected these divergences of view, but we did not imagine that they would be expressed in such vigorous terms. One has to admire the honesty, indeed the courage of the position taken by Christopher Mallaby in Bonn, a position that Margaret Thatcher qualified as ‘alarming’ – rather an interesting lesson for future diplomats there.

The second observation is that France is hardly represented in these documents, just some 10 or so documents of the 150 in total. There were a series of important meetings between Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl, between Mitterrand and Bush, Mitterrand and Gorbachev.

This leads me to turn to some of the questions put to me by the organisers of the seminar. Given the stress placed on European integration by French diplomacy, how did the British have the impression of a degree of French passivity throughout the whole process of Unification? I would like to refute and reject that term ‘passivity’. Indeed, France had set its priorities, both through François Mitterrand, of course, or in the speech given at the Berlin
press conference on 1 March by Roland Dumas. Those priorities being: dealing with the past in such a way that no future challenge will be possible, either legal or political; in other words, ending up with a final settlement which would be legally binding in international law. The second goal would be to preserve at all costs the quality of the relationship between France and Germany, not to accept any provision that could stand in the way of the future of European construction, particularly the capacity of the Community to adopt a defence dimension in the future. That is, refusal of special status for a unified Germany; no special political and military status and certainly not neutralisation. In addition, to have a formal act in international law with binding force to sanction the Polish-German border, to clarify the situation on ABC weapons and to settle the matter of the residual quadripartite rights and responsibilities for Germany and Berlin and not to destabilise Gorbachev. I believe that those goals were largely achieved in the Treaty which settled the process.

There were very many meetings and I think the merits were shared by a number of people, but the action of France did take things forward. I think in particular of the matter of the borders, ABC weapons and the matter of legal certainty of commitments entered into. I also believe that the role of François Mitterrand was not a minor one. In particular Chernyaev, personal counsellor of Gorbachev, has confirmed this: On 25 May 1990 in Moscow, Gorbachev was led by Mitterrand to give up his idea of dual membership of military alliances and convinced of the unrealistic terms of that formula. He was persuaded that the USSR had, in its own interests, to accept the fact that a unified Germany would remain in NATO. Indeed, Baker and Bush were happily surprised at the change in Gorbachev’s thinking on that subject on 30 May in Washington.

Another point which does not appear in Foreign Office documents, for good reason, is the constant dialogue between François Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl, between Roland Dumas and Hans-Dietrich Genscher, between their assistants in Paris and in Bonn. A dialogue which dealt not only with reunification but also the progress to be achieved in building Europe, preparing an inter-governmental conference on economic and monetary union, then, as of March, on political union. The two orders of representation were intimately intertwined; one would not occur without the other. The US was obsessed with the idea that a unified Germany should become a full member of the Atlantic Alliance, whereas Mitterrand wanted to ensure that the process of German unification should occur in a manner which was compatible with progress being achieved in the construction of Europe; indeed, possibly moving it forward at greater pace. That led to the Maastricht Treaty and the Euro and monetary union. Here you can see the big gulf between the British and the French positions; certainly the gulf between the positions taken by Margaret Thatcher and François Mitterrand. Whereas until March Margaret Thatcher had a firm objection to German unification, because she held that Germany would dominate the Community, Mitterrand said, as of 27 July 1989 in an interview to the Nouvel Observateur, that the German wish for reunification was legitimate, but that it had to occur peacefully and democratically. At the end of 1989, beginning of 1990, he believed that the pace was too fast, but he took a very clear view and was clear about the fact that neither he nor Margaret Thatcher could slow down the momentum and he certainly never sought to stand in the way of unification.
For Margaret Thatcher, the unified Germany in the Community was a problem, whereas for Mitterrand it was a solution.

There is a bit of a contradiction that many French commentators have noted in relation to the Foreign Office publication regarding a sort of Franco-British *entente* against German unification as a result of their meeting in January in Paris. When Mitterrand, on 23 January, used strong words regarding the Germans, he was referring to words he used with the leaders in Bonn themselves about the need for greater prudence. Mr Hurd was quite right in his memoirs. He said that he never believed that Mitterrand shared the precautionary *anti German* trepidation of Margaret Thatcher unless he was simply playing a game. You can see rather sparse contact between French and British representatives from the capitals throughout this whole exercise. An element of consultation occurred in the political-military field, where there was no divergence of view between France and Great Britain, but that dialogue in turn did not produce any significant outcome. However, cooperation between the French and British delegations within the political directors’ group worked well, particularly when it came to finalising the final settlement, where both countries shared the same legal concerns as compared to the accommodating, indeed ‘ laxist’, stance of the Americans. Indeed, the Franco-British axis worked very well. We remember the suspension of the quadripartite rights and responsibilities which was an idea from the British which enabled us to get ourselves off a major political and diplomatic hook.

In light of what has been said today, I would like to come back to the matter of borders. One may ask why Mitterrand was so insistent to have from Chancellor Kohl a clear position in relation to elements of the final settlement for the Polish-German border. Let us never forget that Mitterrand was a man who constantly thought in terms of history. He was marked by his own history, but also the history of France and Europe in general. As far as he was concerned, as somebody said, he realised that the borders of Germany fluctuated over the centuries from one era to another and any uncertainty on that matter ran the risk of destabilising Europe and European construction in particular. I listened very carefully to what Herr Genscher said this morning. He was quite right and it is time, I think, to pay tribute to him, because he played a key role when Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl did not see eye to eye and rather harsh words were exchanged between them. Mitterrand realised that the Polish-German border was a wound as far as the German people were concerned. He also recognised its major importance for the Poles and he did push for the settlement to be concluded.

You may recollect this, Dieter Kastrup, but in May at the political directors’ meeting you presented to the directors’ group the five proposals concerning the settling of the German-Polish border issue. An example of Franco-British cooperation here seemed to me that these proposals had to be turned into principles and the principles should be formally noted in order to give them contractual, binding value. The British delegation – Dieter, you might remember this – turned to the French delegation and suggested that we move from a simple noted declaration to principles which were formally set down. In the French version
of the Treaty one can see that these proposals are, indeed, formally noted. They are not ‘taken notes’ as in the case of previous versions.

In the light of what was said this morning, I would also like to add something on the appreciation of the situation in the GDR in 1989. We were aware of what was happening in the dissident sections of East Germany through our embassy, but we had very poor information about the real economic situation of Eastern Germany and whenever I met Dieter he told me that the GDR was on the brink of economic collapse. I found it difficult to believe because our sources in East Germany, they were not telling us that. However, he was right and that is the point I would like to stress.

I could comment on the atmosphere within the group, but I am sure that Dieter will cover that. As far as we French were concerned, it was rather surprising. On the one hand, there was the Soviet delegation and we were all used to that in previous years in Moscow or elsewhere, led by Adamishin who then gave way to Kvitsinsky and then Kvitsinsky felt that the group was not the right level for him and he left Mr Bondarenko to be the most competent person to lead on matters of Germany. However, that delegation was trotting out 1980s Brezhnev material with an absolutely disconcerting aplomb and we realised that it had no relevance at all. It really was a sad spectacle and others who were used to Sovietology dealt with the Soviets in very harsh terms and we were almost sorry for them because they were obviously crestfallen and defeated and we took a rather more gentle line with them.

With regard to the East Germans, it was rather interesting to see the psychological relationship between the Bonn delegation and the Berlin delegation. There again it was difficult and sometimes there were tensions that struck us as surprising. Happily, Dieter, who was chairing, managed to calm things down when it was called for, but in his delegation there were some people who spoke up in very harsh terms against the East Germans and we were left rather aghast in the French delegation when that happened. However, I will not seek to speak at greater length, although I would be happy to comment on questions.

There is something I would like to say in the light of what Christopher Mallaby said just now. He is referring to what would have been said by President Mitterrand on unification. What I know, and I heard Mitterrand speak very, very often in private, is that Mitterrand was never opposed to German reunification. He felt it was inevitable. There was no way of holding it up. It was legitimate, in his view, and if the French had been in the position of the Germans they would have reacted in an identical fashion. He only had some doubts as to the speed of the process and history now shows that he was wrong. One year and half later I was Ambassador in Moscow. At the time the putsch took place. Gorbachev was swept aside and Soviet Union fell apart. Perhaps, at that moment, reunification would have been impossible. However, I think one cannot say that Mitterrand ever sought to stand in the way of German reunification.

I will leave it at that, but I would be happy to take questions if there are any.
Sir Stephen Wall

Thank you for those intriguing insights both into the process and also into the thinking of President Mitterrand and I am sure we will return to that.

Dr Dieter Kastrup

I am going to try to react to the questions which have been asked of me, referring as much as possible to the documents, as Patrick has urged us to do, and I will not be talking about Mrs Thatcher.

First of all, on the origins and the beginnings of the Two plus Four process, the first question which has been asked of me is something, to be quite honest, I was really surprised at. Was it really the FRG’s intention to press ahead without involving the Four Powers in negotiating on the Two plus Four? I have to say I do not know anyone on our side who at any stage had that intention not to involve the Four Powers, because everybody was all too well aware that the Four Powers were out there and they had their rights and responsibilities, or at least all the three German participants in the panel have in the past been present in the Bonn Group of Four;\textsuperscript{54} in other words, the three powers and the Federal Republic of Germany, they all sat on that panel and negotiated on Berlin issues for years. Herr Genscher mentioned this morning that every time before there was a NATO meeting the four Foreign Ministers would get together to talk about German questions and Berlin and in the case of Herr Genscher, after 16 years in office as Foreign Minister you can imagine he had a lot to say.

If you look at page 19, ‘German disregard for Four Power rights’, I do not understand that reference at all. That must be something that is based on a misunderstanding. Such a British fear cannot be based on a chat that I had with my British counterpart, John Weston, on 5 February 1990.\textsuperscript{55} This is described as the high point of British alarm. I think there is a lack of differentiation between the events which would have to be settled only between the two German states and the aspects which would have to involve the Four Powers because of the very nature of the subjects at hand. I am quite prepared to admit that I did not necessarily express myself with the necessary precision and the time of the discussion must be borne in mind, 5 February. Our own considerations and even those of the other partners had not reached a full conclusion by then. What I was keen to make clear, as I say in this report, I was ‘...adamant that Four Power discussions on Germany would not be acceptable. The Four Powers could not be seen to act over the heads of the German people.’ That was my core message and there is a history to that which I must explain to you. On 11 December 1989, the Ambassadors of the Four Powers met in the Allied Control Council building in Berlin and you will find Document 73\textsuperscript{56} gives you a report of that meeting. The

\textsuperscript{54} The Bonn Group, comprising representatives of the three Western Allied embassies in Bonn and the Federal German Foreign Ministry, was a forum for discussion of issues relating to Germany as a whole, including Berlin and the GDR.


photograph which was taken after that meeting and which went around the world press was described by Vernon Walters, US Ambassador, as the worst picture of the year, and that is in fact included in the footnote to that report in the book.

I am not sure whether our Western friends appreciated the psychological effect of that meeting at that point in time. It is true that the initiative for the meeting came from the Soviets, but one gets the impression that the three Western partners were not exactly dragged kicking and screaming to the table. They were keen on it as well and there is a note about the talks which said ‘. . . formal and legal status we are enjoying for Berlin and Germany as a whole, at yesterday’s meeting of the four Ambassadors in Berlin will have reminded the Germans.’ In other words, this happened at just the right time to make it obvious to the Germans that there were still Four Powers who had rights and responsibilities and I can say that as far as we were concerned there was no need to remind us of that, but the effect was that this form of procedure strengthened our resolve not to allow negotiations to go on above our heads, and Herr Genscher made this patently clear to his counterparts. That is why it says ‘adamant’, we were adamant. It was only a few days later in Ottawa that a clear differentiation was drawn between what were considered to be external aspects in the agreement and what were deemed to be internal German matters which could be dealt with just by the Germans.

These notes led automatically to your other question, which was who made the biggest contribution to the Two plus Four process. Of course, success breeds a lot of founders, as we say, or fathers to it, but there is one thing I really believe: without the clear position taken by the German Foreign Minister on this issue then participation of the Germans would not have gone without saying right at the start and would not have been taken for granted as it was later. I think one should also commend the American Secretary of State, Jim Baker, who through his colleagues also championed this idea. Therefore, if you are looking for the fathers of success, I would certainly mention those two people.

Why, Patrick, you are asking me, did we not think of Four plus Two earlier, because it seemed to be the most obvious solution? Well, you have to look at the sequence of events. The fall of the Wall was 9 November, agreement in Ottawa 13 February, so if I count that correctly there are three months between the two and if you then consider that it was only by the end of the year that we could really get down to specifics about a negotiation context where we could look for a solution to the German unification question, then I do not think it took us too long to get there. You yourself say: ‘A framework had been acknowledged with increasing urgency at least since the middle of January.’ Less than four weeks later, therefore, we had this whole deal wrapped up. I think everybody gave their best here, given the shortage of time and all the circumstances, and arrived at a very good result.

With regard to how the Four plus Two negotiations went, do you think that the British negotiators felt that the Americans sometimes were more German than the Germans, you ask. Well, I could say yes to that; I could confirm that. It is true and I will not disguise from you that sometimes I found that rather annoying because people would say to me, ‘Surely it has to be in the German interest to resort to this solution?’ Now, if you look at your own document, you will also see from the beginning right through to the end that at regular intervals it says that the attitude of the Americans was striking because they constantly were guided by the German interests and objectives. It went so far that we noted the American
leading negotiators quoted Genscher more often than I did! I could give you various examples of this, but that would probably be going into too much detail. What is much more interesting is what is described as the ‘endgame’ in the British papers.

Was there a danger, I am asked, that the negotiations might have failed because of the British attitude at the last stage? Well, it is very difficult to answer a question ‘what would have happened if...’ in history. The negotiation crisis is covered in Document 238, if you want to read the details of how it went. The assessments of the British colleague do not find me in agreement. The problem that we had is something that is quite hard for us to understand today. The question was should manoeuvres of allied troops be allowed on the former GDR soil after the withdrawal of Soviet troops? As far as I remember, that question never came about in practice in the years to follow, but at that stage on that evening when the political directors dispersed at about 21.30 with no result, our assessment was clear to us because towards 22.30 we had the news that the Soviets were not prepared to sign the Two plus Four document the following morning. Furthermore, they would like to postpone the signing to an unknown time.

We thought that this was a relatively minor question and I was unable to convince colleagues of that and therefore we were facing the situation, what were we supposed to do? I received the Foreign Minister in the hotel at about 23.30, as he was returning from a dinner with his colleague Douglas Hurd, as it happened, during which nothing had been said about this issue because the Foreign Secretary did not know anything about it, nor indeed did my Foreign Minister. Hans-Dietrich Genscher was in fine fettle that night and, unfortunately, I had to bring him back down to earth and tell him the news and he immediately decided that he had to talk to Jim Baker. By now it was midnight, perhaps even beyond. We rang the American delegation and we found that the Secretary of State had preferred to have a martini and a sleeping pill and then go to bed and that his aides were too scared to wake him, basically. However, we urged them to reconsider and we drove through the night in Moscow to the American delegation hotel where we met the American Secretary of State in his pyjamas and discussed this issue with him, which then led to the compromise as reflected in the protocol to the Treaty.

Even from this distance I have to say that there would not have been any understanding among the German public if the agreed signing of the Treaty had been postponed for such a tiny matter. This became very clear to me when very late in the night I spoke to De Maizière who had taken on the job of Foreign Minister because of the collapse of the coalition. I had to inform him of what had gone on during the night and he was amazed. Fortunately, all of this since then has become history which all ended very happily.

Mr Chairman, that is all I need to say now and I welcome any questions.

**Sir Stephen Wall**

Dieter, thank you for that. Not only did you answer all the questions on the exam paper, but you managed to bring the whole issue very vividly to life in doing so.
Sir Hilary Synnott, Head of Western European Department, FCO

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I am very conscious that it is Friday evening and there is a reception after this. I am going to offer you a very different perspective, not from the sense that I have anything to contradict about what has been said, but a perspective in the sense that you have heard from the captains and the admirals and really I was in the engine room, at a very different level at that time. It may seem extraordinary to you, but in those days I was one of the younger generation and had had some experience of living and working in Germany for three years 10 years before I found myself just posted from Jordan on the eve of these tumultuous events. I think the people who are more capable of explaining the British position or at least the views in the Foreign Office authoritatively, neither of them is here: my captain, as it were, John Weston, who cannot be here, and the admiral, Douglas Hurd. We have already heard the views of the commander in chief, of course.

I am going to address the two questions; the first one very briefly, and the second one at greater length. I will then come on to the very interesting point about the last night of the proms, the eve of the Moscow summit.

Did the Two plus Four mechanism come as a surprise to the Foreign Office? Frankly, yes. We had not thought of it. I suppose we could have kicked ourselves for not having thought of it, but I think there was some logic as to why we could not think of it. It was clear by that time, February 1990, and this is as funny way of putting it, but the Foreign Office felt itself severely constrained by edicts from No 10 and we were very conscious of a need and a wish for some sort of framework for managing these very important discussions. We were very conscious of German discomfort at appearing to be breathed down the neck by the Four Powers. I suppose we could not really think of a mechanism to bring in East Germany, but I think the biggest constraint was that if the British, of all people, had come up with a framework for managing these matters they would have been interpreted as shackles rather than as a logical way of dealing with things. I think what happened, although I was not there in Ottawa, was that by this time this idea had reached ripeness and when the principles came together it just seemed the obvious thing to do, and I think it was enormously welcomed by all concerned.

The second question is how well prepared were we British officials for the Two plus Four negotiations and here I have to explain what my role and the role of my colleagues were in what was called the Western European Department. Essentially, it was one of bureaucratic officialdom. Our job was coordination, detail, analysis, looking ahead, but all at official level, not at the political level. Of course, individuals’ attitudes were coloured by their own perceptions. I had been in Germany at the time of the Doppelbeschluss57 of the late-1970s, early-1980s and I did not feel that Germany was an ogre. I felt that there was a significant

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57 The double-track decision on nuclear modernisation and arms control was taken at a special NATO meeting of Foreign and Defence Ministers on 12 December 1979. It aimed at pursuing the modernisation of theatre nuclear forces in parallel with negotiations on arms control.
generational shift. To me, it was inconceivable that Britain could oppose unification and, with the benefit of hindsight (but this is a witness seminar so forgive my immodesty) the papers show that we put up a line to take to the Foreign Secretary on 6 October, before the Wall came down, which was very positive in tone, a line to be taken publicly.

We drafted our first really big think piece on 11 October and its title I think is interesting. The title of this think piece in draft was ‘German Reunification’. This was before the Wall came down. Now, unfortunately, we heard that the deputy under-secretaries and the senior mandarins of the Foreign Office were far too busy with other things, like an incipient Gulf War and other issues, and that they were not going to be able to address this paper for a fortnight, which I thought was far too late myself, but there we are. By the time that fortnight expired, we had had to put the paper round for consultation, as one does, and it had transformed into a different sort of paper. It was then called not ‘German Reunification’ but ‘The German Question’. Maybe it should still have been kept as the former.

I would like to say here that it was shortly after that time – and we were very conscious from the reporting we were getting from Berlin and, of course, from the media, of these extraordinary events happening on the streets of East Berlin – that I thought it was time I went there. When I was serving in Bonn I was not allowed to go to East Berlin; it simply could not be done – I might have been seduced or something; I was in danger from espionage and all sorts of things. However, I went there and was taken round by one of our junior officers to meet a number of dissidents and to see for myself. No amount of reporting, very good reporting though there might have been from the mission, can really replace going to see the place and certainly that reinforced my view that there was a reality happening here on the street which we just had to deal with. I think our hope at that time was that we, the British, should position ourselves vis-à-vis the Federal Republic of Germany in precisely the way that the Americans ended up doing. The Americans ended up in a position that some of us would have liked to have been in where we were working together in a common interest, sharing knowledge, expertise and so on.

However, why could we not? Well, as has been discussed very frequently already and I will not go into it too much, but it was clear by this time that our elected Prime Minister was making the policy here and I have written down here the words ‘it was a constraint on us’. Well, it was not a constraint; it was a direction to us. Such is our prime ministerial/presidential system our job was to follow what No 10 told us. Although this was presented, as we have heard today, as being simply a matter of pace and progress, I have to say that that was not how it seemed to us and, I guess, to outside observers. I think the phrase ‘not in my lifetime’ resonates with me and we read the Spiegel and we read Mr Ridley’s article in the Spectator.

Obviously, that led to a strategic shift of thinking and again I am talking at the working level; I am not talking as a politician, but if you are at the working level in the foreign ministry obviously you have to have a little political ‘feel’ I think is what we call it in the trade. What could we do in these circumstances? We were very conscious that at the
Dinner Herr Kohl and Mrs Thatcher did not speak to each other. What could we do to limit the damage? Looking back, I am not sure I saw this as a major foreign policy failure on the British part to compare with, say, Iraq, which I was involved with in a different capacity later, but I did and still do see it as a major opportunity that was missed. Who knows what that opportunity could have led to, but the opportunity was essentially working very closely with, first of all, an un-united Germany and then a united Germany constructively together. There has not been serious lasting damage, but what benefits could there have been if that had worked out, I do not know.

What could we do to limit the damage? What we actually did, for which there were two reasons, was we just got down to some very hard work. We felt we needed to think through all the issues, even the most arcane ones, which could arise from the issue of unification. We felt, and this may have been an injustice, that Germany was possibly so concerned with the reality of what was happening, the Russians were on another planet, I think, and the Americans maybe were not as close to detail as we were, and maybe we had a comparative advantage here. Michael Wood, who may be too modest to say so, had written an authoritative book on Berlin legal issues, which I know was consulted and used by German officials, and was an authority on the subject. We had a very capable research department; we had some very zealous and able junior officers working for us, so we felt we needed to make a contribution to the Two plus Four process which would make this process as smooth as it could be, avoid sterile discussions about misunderstandings where they need not happen.

To be frank, though, it was not just our charitable and good nature that led us to do this. Of course, as has been alluded to in the previous session, Margaret Thatcher was asking the whole time all these detailed questions: ‘This cannot happen because there are these problems.’ ‘You have to slow it up because there is this problem.’ Every time a problem emerged, therefore, we said, ‘Well is there a problem here? Let us research it. If there is a problem, how can it be solved?’ So that is what we tried to do. We tried to facilitate the process. Just a little anecdote: I think many British diplomats have found in the past that the English language is a jolly useful device for dealing with difficulties in multilateral negotiations. For instance, when Mr Bondarenko came up with an idea or an objection which was completely off the wall, somebody said, ‘Well, Mr Bondarenko, the situation is like this . . .’ and then you had to translate the matters into a form of agreement. We had a junior officer there with one of the first laptops, still powered by steam, I think, and we were producing texts in real time from the laptop with a printer and pushing texts around the table. This was a device whereby we could say, ‘Mr Bondarenko, I think you will find that in English this entirely encapsulates your point.’ By this time, on many occasions, he was looking for a way to back down in a way that saved face. That is a little anecdote and I do not think these negotiations were unique in that; it is a nasty British trick, if you like.

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58 See Session 2, footnote 1.
I would also like to say that my own perception, and I think I attended just about all the Two plus Four discussions at official level, was that notwithstanding the difficulties of Mr Bondarenko, to be frank, the atmosphere and the constructive nature of these negotiations was phenomenal. Given the potential for animosity at official level because of the clear differences at political level, it could have been a very tricky atmosphere. I am going to talk about the endgame later, but subject to that, I think it was very good and, if I may say so, Herr Kastrup, many British officials looked at your patience and your physical stamina in these and we thought ‘when I grow up I would like to be able to do diplomacy like that.’

Let me come to the much trickier bit of the endgame. I am not really the person to speak authoritatively on this because I was not a key player, but I think it is right that our perception was that the German delegation felt that the issue was less important than we felt it to be, and we felt the issue was important: the issue of manoeuvres in the former GDR. It sounds completely arcane now, after the fall of the Soviet Union, but what it really revolved around was the idea of the singularisation of a united Germany within NATO. It would be subject to completely different rules in this respect from other NATO countries, so we did feel it was an important point, but also we sincerely did not believe that this was a wrecking issue. Why not? The point has already been made that the United States were perhaps being a little more German than the Germans, but we knew very well that the United States attached a great deal of importance to this matter. I cannot speak for Mr Baker, but I can certainly speak from my memory of the official position and that was that the Americans did attach importance to this and I believe the French did too, though Monsieur Dufourcq could comment on that. However, it was late, everyone was tired and negotiations can enter into a dynamic. At that point, it was clear that the leader of the British delegation was leading on this issue and in those circumstances the leader of the American delegation can sit back and let the work be done by the British, and that is what happened. It was seen as being a rather polarised issue, but I do not believe it was. However, nor do I think it was a brake, because our assessment, and again we may have been wrong, was that when the Russians started threatening to postpone the meeting they were bluffing: they had a weak hand. We felt that the matter was readily resolvable if people focused on it, but they had reached a stage late in the evening when official stamina, I guess, ran out, and it came to be resolved at foreign minister level, which perhaps was the right level, and it was resolved entirely adequately. The resolution was that this would be a matter for a sovereign German government to decide for itself; an absolutely admirable conclusion which satisfied everybody. I think it was one of those things which I became more familiar with later: at the end of long negotiations when you have a summit ahead of you things can blow up a bit.

One final anecdote: I had the enormous privilege of being present when Checkpoint Charlie was lifted up and moved away. Each of the foreign ministers made a speech and I tried to push and orientate to be able to write Douglas Hurd’s speech and the key line of the speech, of course, would be the last line, which would be the press sound bite. It was not the job of my department to write speeches, it was the job of the planning staff, and I thought a good line was ‘Checkpoint Charlie has checked out’. I was very disappointed that line was not
taken and the wretched planning staff’s was taken, which I have to admit was a better one and that was ‘Charlie has come in from the cold.’

Thank you.

Sir Stephen Wall

I know that Herr Genscher wants to comment on this issue and we want to hear from him, but I will just let Michael Wood speak before we come to that.

Sir Michael Wood, KCMG, Legal Counsellor, FCO

Very briefly, if Hilary was in the engine room I am not sure what I was; I think I was probably the coal he was throwing on to the fire.

You said there was no animosity in these Two plus Four talks – or Four plus Two as they were called for an hour or two at the beginning. I would like to recall, however, the One plus Three talks, which were the very complicated talks between the three Western Allies and the Federal Republic which took place within a couple of weeks, were hugely complex for the lawyers and dealt with issues like stationing of forces, status of forces, and flights to Berlin. These, I have to say, were quite acrimonious at times and I am not sure they are reflected in this book.

The organisers, for some reason, have asked the legal adviser the question: what were the most important contributions made by British officials to the success of the Two plus Four process? It rings a bit of desperation to ask the lawyers what the most important contributions were, but I will just refer to one or two legal matters.

I think that, firstly, if the British lawyers made contributions they did it jointly with the lawyers from France, from Germany and from the United States, and the lawyers worked together very well throughout this negotiation.

Secondly, I would say that, as Hilary has pointed out, we did make every effort to ensure that every legal issue that needed to be addressed was addressed. At the same time, however, we were very careful to keep it to those few legal issues which really had to be addressed and not allow matters to become complicated. Sometimes they did become complicated. The Americans, for example, decided that we had to list all quadripartite rights and responsibilities and then say they were terminated and I think it was the British who said, ‘No, we do not need to do that’ and we ended up with Article 7 of the Treaty on the Final Settlement[^60] which simply says, ‘The Four Powers hereby terminate their rights and responsibilities relating to Berlin and Germany as a whole.’ Hence there was no need to try to list them and go into the details.

I think a major contribution, which Christopher Mallaby and Monsieur Dufourcq referred to, was the idea of suspending quadripartite rights and responsibilities immediately upon

[^60]: Treaty on the Final Settlement with respect to Germany, signed at Moscow 12 September 1990, entered into force 15 March 1991.
signature of the Treaty and before ratification, which could have been delayed for years and could have never happened. The idea that these rights and responsibilities would be suspended immediately on 3 October was, I think, a crucial point and it is one that the British can take credit for – not me, it was my colleague at the embassy in Bonn who came up with the idea.61

Just a word about the way lawyers were treated in this negotiation. I think we felt that we were to some extent the underdogs. There was a view, perhaps on the German side, perhaps on the American side, that the lawyers would only complicate matters and that they should not get involved. On the British side there was a fear that if the lawyers became involved, if we asked for them to be involved, people would think that it was ‘she who must not be named’s’ doing, that she was trying to delay matters by looking at all these legal points. So the solution, which was rapidly reached, was to form a sort of non-group. There was a non-working-group of lawyers which met regularly and it really did not exist but they were allowed to meet and play with bits of paper, and we came up with a very useful short paper setting out the main legal issues that had to be addressed. This was a working group of the three Allies and West Germany. I am not sure that paper is in this set of documents, but it should certainly be published.

Eventually, the lawyers were let loose and we were told we had about two weeks to draft everything, mainly in August and September, the drafting of the main Treaty but also of the One plus Three treaties, which were, as I have said, very complex. I have to say it was a very busy time for the lawyers and so when Condoleezza Rice, who was writing a book as part of her work on the delegation, an excellent book which set outs the American position based on their internal documents at the time62, used to come up and ask me questions and say, ‘Why are we doing this?’ I would say: ‘I have no time, go away’ and it brought home a lesson to me that one should be nice to everybody because you never know where they are going to end up.

Just one last story, as it were. On that exciting day in Moscow, 12 September I think it was, when the Treaty was signed and all these grand people were waiting for it to be signed, there is a reference in John Weston’s letter on page 470 to the various causes of this delay in signature. However, the chief cause that I remember was that we found a mistake. We decided we had to change one word and the Russian lawyers insisted that since this was a Treaty it had to be typed on an old-fashioned typewriter so that the letters would go through into the paper and you could not forge the paper afterwards. They would not allow even their primitive word processors to be used for this, so the whole page had to be retyped and I think we kept Mr Gorbachev and everybody else waiting for a good hour while we retyped the Treaty. So the lawyers had their revenge at the end of the day!

61 Jeremy Hill, Legal Counsellor. See the Declaration by the Four Powers suspending the operation of quadripartite rights and responsibilities, New York, 1 October 1990.
Thank you very much.

Questions

Sir Stephen Wall

Michael, thank you. I think those have been extremely interesting contributions and I would like to open it up, but I think it would be very good if to start with we could hear from Herr Genscher.

Hans-Dietrich Genscher

I have only asked to take the floor because the last two statements demonstrate what differences of appreciation were present on matters of substance. We agreed that we wanted to expect significant steps to be made by the Soviet Union. In particular, that a unified Germany would belong to NATO 100%, but we had to make it more palatable to the leadership and so we offered them certain things to help in their deliberations. There would be a ceiling, a cap on German materiel in the united country so that we would then give up biological weapons, for example, and in the area of the former GDR such weapons of mass destruction would not be stationed by the allies and no allied troops would be stationed in the former GDR territory. That was something that was generally accepted by the British as well. On the last day, a demand came out that the allies wished to carry out manoeuvres there and we thought, ‘what is all this about?’ I went to Moscow and Herr Kastrup met me at the airport and said that this matter had now been raised. It was quite clear to me that that would create significant difficulties for the other side, but at the same time I realised if I was meeting Shevardnadze he would say ‘what is all this? We are not prepared to go along with that.’ However, I said to him that our Western friends consider this to be a matter of vital importance and therefore I will propose a compromise; in other words, that the German government of the unified Germany would decide matters as to whether manoeuvres took place or not in such a way as to guarantee the security interests of all those affected. Now, in diplomatic language I think you will realise that that was carefully couched and Shevardnadze said, ‘I am sure you will do that correctly, but how long are you going to remain in office as Foreign Minister?’ and I said, ‘Longer than you!’

He called up Gorbachev and came back and said, ‘Gorbachev agrees.’ That letter was then put together in appropriate language and in the evening I dined with Douglas Hurd, as was mentioned. I invited him to the German Embassy, in fact, and as we were going back I received a call from one of Kastrup’s assistants saying that the British do not agree with the letter, they want a letter which states that manoeuvres are possible. To my very great surprise, the Foreign Secretary knew nothing about that expressed wish of the UK. I did not know if this was an idea of the British delegation in Moscow and I had to make my best guess as to from which street and which number in the street that particular demand came. I took it seriously, did not think it was a bluff, and I have to say that today we heard frequently that one of the reasons for conditions set by No 10 was to avoid jeopardising Gorbachev’s position and making his position more difficult, and yet we were supposed to
go along and say that the allied troops nevertheless insisted on being able to carry out manoeuvres. These two things were contradictory. That is why I requested discussions with Jim Baker, who was so enormously helpful and I had to turn to him again and say, from the bottom of my heart, ‘Help us here as well’.

The following morning, the three Western foreign ministers and I were invited to the French Embassy for breakfast. I went along early and I said to Roland Dumas, ‘Roland, I have never asked you for anything in these talks. I am going to do that now. Please bring this matter up on the table and say immediately that France will sign.’ He complied with that and then Jim Baker said, ‘The US will sign’ and then all eyes turned to Douglas Hurd and Douglas Hurd said, ‘Yes, of course the United Kingdom will sign as well.’

It was a serious crisis. Imagine had those signatures not been forthcoming, then all of the forces working in Moscow against the Treaty would have had a wind in their sails and I have to say that as far as I was concerned everything was at stake in the course of that evening and night. However, when I came back from my meeting with Baker I had the impression that he had understood and we should not push it too far.

I think the Two plus Four Treaty is the most brilliant document I have ever seen in terms of international politics. It is masterly. It brings things together that appeared to be impossible to bring together. If I, as a younger diplomat, were called upon to learn what high diplomacy is I would have liked to have had that document in my hands. It certainly took us forward. It opened things up. It did not create any restrictions for the future and I think all of those who were involved have certainly a great and deep vote of thanks from Germany; and Herr Kastrup I think will also accept praise, because he did not find it an easy position throughout all those talks.

**Sir John Goulden, Assistant Under-Secretary (Defence), FCO, 1988-92**

I would like just to spend a little bit more time on the defence issues, which clearly were a problem at the very last stage but were also very much, I think, in the minds of British officials as well as British ministers in the period of uncertainty around November-December, before we really got into the endgame.

Anybody who had been brought up in the Cold War in the British Foreign Office or in the Ministry of Defence or in No 10 or the Cabinet Office was terribly preoccupied with our commitment to the defence of Germany and how to implement it. That involved certain dogmas that we all believed in: that you needed to have the ability to put troops anywhere, to exercise them anywhere, to put weapons anywhere, right up against the border, if necessary, because we felt so vulnerable right through the Cold War. I am sure this attitude influenced our view of the rush towards German reunification at the end of 1989.

In the context where the Americans were, as Monsieur Dufourcq said, slightly laxist, where the Russians were talking about all kinds of options which were not compatible with NATO membership and in which the Germans, quite understandably and rightly, were anxious to take advantage of the window of opportunity which might close again but which was open
for a period. In that context, the British took on the self-imposed role of trying to clarify the very small details, because the ability to implement Article 4 of the NATO Treaty depended on where we put our 70,000 troops, how we exercised them, what weapons we put and where, etc. These were not minor issues for people in the Ministry of Defence and people on the side I was dealing with in the Foreign Office, which was the defence side.

Of course, it came to a very happy and brilliant conclusion thanks to the great work by the political directors and the lawyers. However, I think it is fair to recall that in the period, say, November-December-January there were genuine worries here quite apart from visceral suspicions and all that, which most of us did not share, but there were genuine worries about whether we would be able to continue the defence commitment which we had become used to over 40 years and thought we would probably need for another few years to come.

**David Marsh**

I wanted to make a comment about the Berlin meeting of the four ambassadors and then also to ask a question about Vernon Walters, which I would like to put to either Dieter Kastrup or Hans-Dietrich Genscher. The comment is that although Vernon Walters himself said it was the worst photograph, I had the impression that Christopher Mallaby rather enjoyed it, because you came out very well in that photo, I think, Christopher. It made you look rather noble and I think you enjoyed your time in the limelight there.

The more serious question is Vernon Walters, who of course came to Bonn in April 1989 and was suddenly filled with this idea that Germany was going to be unified very quickly. What did you really make of him and did you think he had some special information? Did you think he was mad? I must say I thought he was rather quixotic. It is also very interesting that in Patrick’s volume it becomes clear that he was the recipient of great confidences. It says, in a dispatch from Michael Alexander from NATO on 18 September 1989, and I have already pointed this out to Hans-Dietrich Genscher, ‘Chancellor Kohl has told Vernon Walters of his concern that Genscher may well die before the next election.’ Vernon Walters was obviously used as a bearer of great confidences, including having the ear of Chancellor Kohl. Thank goodness not all of his predictions came true.

**Sir Brian Crowe**

My question is a bit out of left field. Could Herr Genscher or, indeed, any of the panel comment on the significance or otherwise both in the reunification process that we are talking about and perhaps more widely of the assurance given, undisputed I think, by Jim Baker to Gorbachev or perhaps Shevardnadze – but anyway to the Soviet leadership of the time – that NATO would not, after a German settlement, expand further east.

**Sir Michael Wood**

I have just one very quick comment in response to Herr Genscher’s praise for the Treaty on the final settlement, the clarity and simplicity of it. It was certainly my aim that it should
pass what I called the ‘Blumenwitz test.’ Professor Dieter Blumenwitz was a German professor of international law and if he could find a way round it to say that the border is still open or we have not finalised one point or another point we would have failed. I am pleased to say that the Treaty did pass the Blumenwitz test.

Sir Hilary Synnott
The only issue which would relate to what I have been talking about is what happened on that last night and, if I may say so, I found Herr Genscher’s clarifications very interesting and provided information which I was not aware of. I think there are others in this room who are better able to comment on the significance attached by the British government to defence issues and I am not well placed to comment on that.

Dieter Kastrup
On the question of whether in connection with the negotiations on German unification the Soviets were given any guarantees that NATO would not be further enlarged to the east, this is something that has been mentioned again and again. Russians have said that this was the case again and again since then. As far as we were concerned, and I think Herr Genscher will probably confirm this because we rang each other up on several occasions about this, we did not make any such statement and we could not have made one. At that stage, just bear it in mind this is 1990, even for the greatest optimist no one could imagine that Poland and Hungary and Czechoslovakia would become members of NATO in the foreseeable future, so a statement by the Germans of that nature could not have been given because we were not in a position to speak for NATO. The negotiations were centred around German unification and here you are talking about the extent to which a special military status should be given to the GDR which still existed and this was reflected in that agreement and that was the end of it.

As to whether the Americans ever made such assurances, which could have been construed in that way, or which possibly were even intended to mean that, that is something I cannot comment on, although I could hardly imagine they would have given such assurance.

Bertrand Dufourcq
Two observations first of all. In terms of Mr Baker’s commitment on his visit to Moscow, according to which he may have said that NATO would not move east of the Oder-Neisse line, when I was Ambassador in Moscow my American counterpart Matlock confirmed to me that Jim Baker had indeed said that, but it was an oral statement and there was no written documentation. Mr Matlock produced an article in the US making this point. Whether it is true or not I really could not say, but that is certainly what I was told by Matlock.

I would like to add to the paternity of the Two plus Four process. On 30 October 1989, the Europe director in the Quai d’Orsay produced a memorandum proposing a meeting of the
two Germanies and the Four Powers with the idea of convening an international conference subsequently. I would just like to flag that point.

Hans-Dietrich Genscher

The negotiations dealt with the external aspects of German unification. That was all that was involved. We, as Germans, did not feel that it was legitimate for us to decide what Poland or Czechoslovakia sought. Indeed, it was not in our interests at all to expand the scope of negotiations in relation to the Treaty. We wanted to focus entirely on the German question. It could be that the term ‘no expansion of NATO structures’ was misunderstood because, in fact, NATO structures were not expanded, because the allies had a right to station troops in NATO and that was not the case in the former GDR. That was a matter for Germany. We had no indication that the Americans had said that. They reported back to us as to their discussions with the Soviets and that was not deemed to have played a role.

Coming back to the UK, I have always understood that German unification would create enhanced security for the allies, but there would be a difference as to whether the Red Army was stationed half way into Germany or to one side of it and there was, indeed, a problem for the eastern side.

With regard to your last question, I had the opportunity to read what was discussed when Ambassador Walters visited and in fact that did not affect German unification, but the Americans said that the resistance to the modernising of short range missiles should be given up. Does that mean that Walters assumed that there would be no unification before 1994? I think that is contradictory. I made the point to the American ambassador, saying that perhaps there was some confusion, but I have read some of these records and in fact the minutes correspond with my recollection of the matters. Mr Walters was talking about a missile proposal and he assumed that the German question was not a current position and he was looking at the idea of the deployment of short range missiles against the East.

There is a lot of secrecy surrounding these processes, but in the end I believe that all of us should be grateful that all of the parties involved, and I include the Soviet side, showed a high degree of responsibility in resolving this hugely complex question. If I was to put the clock back 30 years and I was sitting here in this room 30 years ago and asked what is the most complicated question of international politics, everyone would have said ‘the German question’. Ten years later it was capable of being solved in the manner in which it was resolved and many people made a remarkable contribution to that. I think it was a very positive phase of international politics. German unification opened up the way for freedom for our eastern neighbours, so it did not stop with Germany. The road led on to freedom for Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic states and people living in the Soviet area acted with great energy, with great circumspection, but with a huge level of citizenship responsibility and I have the deepest respect for them.

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Sir Stephen Wall

I would like to thank Herr Genscher and also our panel. There are two things that stick in my mind from that period. One is that, as Hilary said, and I was the person who was in receipt of, not just the missives from Charles Powell but very many phone calls during the course of every day, we were in no doubt that the Prime Minister was ferociously opposed to German reunification. That was her policy and we were equally convinced that it was the wrong one, but as Hilary said, that was the policy we were obliged to follow.

Secondly, because I was privileged to be present on a number of occasions both when I worked for Douglas Hurd and later when I worked for John Major, first of all at meetings with Herr Genscher and Helmut Kohl and, subsequently, meetings between John Major and Helmut Kohl. I remember thinking then and it is even clearer now that we, in what we then called the ‘free world’, were extraordinarily lucky to have at that period two men in Helmut Kohl and Hans-Dietrich Genscher who had a vision and the political skill to bring that vision to fruition. Those of us who have been lucky enough to live in a post-war world in Europe are particularly lucky that at that point those two people as well as President Gorbachev were there and helped contribute to the result that we now enjoy.

A final point before I hand over to the German Ambassador. I talked this morning to Douglas Hurd’s secretary, who saw him as recently as Tuesday, and she reported that he is doing much better. He had a very serious stroke, as everybody knows, about three weeks ago, but he is sitting up, the use of his hands has returned, his memory is fine, his speech is fine and the hope is that, although he will be out of action for a while yet, with physiotherapy he should be able to resume the vigorous life that all of us who know and like Douglas hope to see him restored to.

Without more ado, I will hand over to Ambassador Boomgaarden, who is going to conclude our proceedings.

Concluding Remarks

His Excellency Georg Boomgaarden, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany

First of all, I would like to thank the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for us being able to organise this witness seminar together. We did this on the basis of an excellent edition of the British diplomatic papers, all of which Patrick Salmon and his team have organised and I would particularly like to applaud them.

What we have read here is a study on the way in which diplomacy functions and its difficulties in a stressful time. Often there is a nuance between understanding and misunderstanding and what we have heard from the participants here has added layers of nuances which has made it possible for us to understand these documents and it enriches our understanding, so thank you very much to all the panellists.
In November 1989, nobody knew where this movement would lead to and there were great fears and uncertainties which of course were in all our hearts and, in some cases, it meant that people opposed the change or at least feared it and we shared a lot of those concerns. We were concerned about Gorbachev’s stability, about the stability in Eastern Europe and of course we were concerned about the possible boomerang effect which could occur anywhere. Herr Genscher said, ‘What might happen if one single soldier was trigger happy at one demonstration?’ That could happen anywhere in any of the other countries as well, but what was important was the major protagonists and particularly the American government but also the French government had the courage and resolve to try to shape events and not just let things happen. That is particularly true for our government in Germany back then.

Charles Powell once said Chancellor Kohl surfed a great big wave and I like that image because the big wave was the revolution from below and Markus Meckel made that very clear. People in the street who were moving not just in Germany but right through Central and Eastern Europe caused a revolution and, of course, revolutions by their very nature are insecure or unsure things, but when you are surfing it is about keeping your balance on the surf board and I think that was the major achievement of Helmut Kohl and Hans-Dietrich Genscher and those who participated in the whole event of Two plus Four beside the Four Powers.

What have we learned from today? Well, firstly, it is very significant that personal relations and chemistry play a role and this is no small thing. I know from my own time when I was in Moscow that some newspapers were rather scathing about Helmut Kohl’s sauna diplomacy, but I can say without the sauna some things would not have worked afterwards as they did because of the sauna issues. It is all about confidence and trust, especially when you are taking risky decisions. In the German notes there is a small note that Shevardnadze pushed across to Herr Genscher at one time and all it says is ‘We trust each other and that is what counts for us to make progress on this’. That is all it said and I think that was a really decisive point.

We learned the significance of diplomacy because today people just act as if sometimes things only happen between heads of state and telephone calls, but you need the assessment, the closeness and the information about the context, the background, what is happening all around. We can see from these very documents an example of the best professional standards of British diplomacy and I can only say when I read this, Mr Mallaby and Mr Broomfield, I would advise everybody to read this book. It is wonderful language as well and they understood not just what their duty was to get across the message to the elected politicians but also, to the best of their knowledge, to give advice and when there was unwelcome advice to give they still gave it, as we see from these papers.

We can also learn from these books that reliability – a very Genscher-istic word, in fact; there were hardly any speeches when he was Foreign Minister in the 1980s that did not refer to this – this reliability is a basis for trust for anyone who signed the Germany Treaty and
many other treaties, obviously if you have signed a treaty you have to stick to it even if nobody is watching you. We have an example here of the best British culture of debate and that is something which helps us for the future, because we keep having to work on this matter of mutual trust. This is something which is never guaranteed and that continues every day. That is why the list that Sir Christopher Mallaby sent to London after 3 October 1990 when he said ‘this is what we have to do to ensure a closer dialogue and meetings in civil society, youth meetings, Königswinter\textsuperscript{64} and so on and so forth’ – that list is just as topical now as it was then. That is why I am a little concerned about the budget of our foreign ministries, because it is true that we have to do a lot more in Asia and Latin America, but not to the detriment of North America or our European neighbours. It would be absurd if our friends in Shanghai and Sao Paolo are better informed about us then our closest neighbours. We have enough international problems on the agenda today, so we need to strengthen our dialogue and work on this basis of solid cooperation in the past.

Thank you to everybody here, once again, and particularly thanks again to Patrick, I think he really deserves it.

**Patrick Salmon, FCO Chief Historian**

Can I just detain you a little bit longer before you are allowed to have your drinks? Of course, I have many people to thank and I would like to do so now. First our Minister for Europe, Chris Bryant, for opening our proceedings this morning. Secondly, of course, all our distinguished panellists and chairmen, with a special word of thanks to Roger Morgan who really helped us out a great deal today, and also the contributors from the floor. We have had a lot of advice and support from many partners, including the Churchill Archives Centre, the Centre for Contemporary British History, the German Historical Institute in London, and the Margaret Thatcher Foundation. Within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, first of all, I would like to thank today’s interpreters for their magnificent work. I am also grateful to the events team who handled everything so smoothly as well as our caterers, and finally my own team who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes both before the event and during today. You hardly noticed them but they have been there and they have been very, very busy.

Last but not least, of course, I would like to thank the German Embassy. We have worked together for over a year now in planning this event, which I am glad has turned out to be such a magnificent success. It has been a very successful partnership but also a real friendship; I would like to think that it is a microcosm of the larger British-German relationship.

Thank you.

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\textsuperscript{64} See Session 2, footnote 1.