

## OPINION

# Peace Would Settle the German Question

By Margarita Mathiopoulos

**B**ERLIN — We are witnessing dramatic political and ideological change in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. It is welcomed almost everywhere, but it brings great risks. If the Eastern revolution gets out of control it will be perilous for the balance of power in Europe and for the whole international system.

This is true for the German problem in particular. German reunification would prevent European integration. It would change the world.

Facing these challenges, the West should pursue two major policy goals: It should encourage freedom and democracy for the people in Eastern Europe, and it should manage the change and hinder explosions in the heart of Europe.

To do that, it is time, 45 years after World War II, to sign a European peace treaty, with final recognition of the existing borders in Europe. That could pave the way for more progress toward freedom in Eastern Europe, including the tearing down of the Berlin Wall.

The Helsinki Final Act of 1975 did provide a de facto postwar settlement. But West German conservatives, then in the opposition, rejected it. Recently, on the 50th anniversary of Hitler's invasion of Poland, Theo Waigel, the federal finance minister and chairman of the Christian Social Union, told the world that the German question remained open — that the German Reich technically exists in its 1937 borders until a peace treaty is signed by Germany, the Western allies and the Soviet Union.

Indeed, according to West Germany's basic law and its constitutional court, only one Germany legally exists, within the borders of 1937. Formally, all of the Western allies agreed to that legal position in postwar treaties with Bonn.

For most West Germans, these legal positions are obsolete. But talking them up again and again and yearning for reunification, as the right wing of the CDU/CSU and the Republicans on the extreme right do, prevents change in the German Democratic Republic and disturbs reconciliation with Poland.

How can the East German leadership be expected to open the Brandenburg Gate and reform its system when confronted by reunification rhetoric in Bonn? Facing nationalist pressures in the Federal Republic, the new Krenz regime must fear for the very existence of its state, and be tempted by the Chinese model of repression.

If West Germany really wants to see freedom and reforms in East Germany, the preconditions would be formal renunciation of reunification and final recognition of a second German state and of East German citizenship.

Bonn might consider taking the initiative for a European peace treaty that would recognize once and for all the postwar order.

All signatories — Germans, Western allies and Soviets — could agree on the following: de jure recognition of East Germany; ending the four-power status of Berlin; respecting East Berlin as capital of the German Democratic Republic and West Berlin as an integral part of the Federal Republic; promotion of political change and reforms in East Germany, following the examples of Poland and Hungary; elimination of the Berlin Wall.

The West and the East could both benefit from such a solution.

Citizens in East Germany do not want reunification. The thousands who leave do so because it seems to them at present to be the only way to

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gain freedom. If there were hope of change, they would prefer not to leave their work, homes, relatives and friends. The newly established opposition groups New Forum and Democracy Now have confirmed this. At recent rallies, people demanded reform, not reunification, saying "We want to stay!" If they could vote, restructure the society and travel, most East Germans would stay, many refugees would move back and some West Germans might consider going to the East, because a reformed system could offer opportunities for prosperity.

A Communist government in East Germany, for example under the leadership of the reformer Hans Modrow from Dresden, could secure the existence of an East German state. The German Democratic Republic could keep its ties with Moscow and remain a member of the Eastern security and trade pacts. By tearing down the wall, the authorities would gain domestic and international respect. They could hope to strengthen their position in free elections. And why shouldn't all of this lead one day to the Finlandization of East Germany?

For a minority of West Germans, this prospect is hard to bear. But they could benefit as well.

Bonn's stated position is that freedom and self-determination are the core of the German question. "Freiheit vor Einheit" (freedom comes

before unity), Konrad Adenauer declared in the early 1950s, resisting Stalin's offer of reunification in exchange for neutralization. Would not a peace treaty initiative, say, by Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, be the logical extension of Adenauer's Westpolitik and Willy Brandt's Deutschland- and Ostpolitik? These two pillars of postwar German foreign policy, known today as Genscherism, have contributed substantially to the stabilization of peace in Europe.

We must recognize the division of Germany to overcome the division of Europe. The Germans, who 50 years ago caused the crisis of Europe, have today a historic chance to end the European crisis by signing a peace treaty. In the end, it would mean more unity for the Germans. It could convince the world that Germans can think as Europeans and act responsibly to preserve peace for themselves and their neighbors.

For the Soviet Union, a peace treaty would also be beneficial. Mikhail Gorbachev could finally prove his sincerity about building a European house, which is possible only without barbed wire in the living room. He has repeatedly indicated that he views the Berlin Wall not as Moscow's but as East Berlin's problem. A peace treaty would stabilize the European power structure and give more leeway to his policies of glasnost, perestroika and sovereignty for his allies.

A treaty would also serve the interests of the United States and the West European partners of the Federal Republic. Willy Brandt recalled recently that in 1959, when he was governing mayor of Berlin, John Foster Dulles told him that Americans and Soviets would disagree on almost everything except one thing: perpetuation of the division of Germany. If, since the 1950s, the United States and the other Western allies of the Federal Republic have paid lip service to the idea of a unified Germany, it has been because they knew it would not come about. This hypothesis has lost all credibility.

A peace treaty would maintain the balance of power, making it possible to manage gradual change and minimize the risks arising from the so far peaceful revolution in Eastern Europe. America has won the Cold War but has lost vision. It is time for Washington to redefine its goals and purposes in Europe. American encouragement for a European peace treaty would find worldwide support.

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