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EXECUTIVE BRIEF

Moscow and a Unified Germany: Coping with the Inevitable

- **Having accepted German unification as inevitable, the USSR is scrambling to gain some influence over the external security arrangements of the new Germany while ensuring good relations with it.**
- **The Soviets are still redefining their minimum security needs. How much more they will yield even they probably cannot now say, but further concessions are likely.**
- **The Kremlin will use the "two plus four" talks to draw out discussion of the external security aspects of unification in the hopes that this will allow the unfolding CSCE security process to catch up. The Soviets may also try to delay things long enough for an SPD-led government more amenable to Soviet concerns to replace Kohl's.**
- **Soviet leverage is minimal. Moscow will play to the concerns that other European states have over the security aspects of German unification--borders, troop levels, nuclear weapons-- in an attempt to achieve Soviet objectives.**
- **In the end, Moscow is likely to accept a unified Germany in NATO, provided that, at a minimum, no NATO troops are stationed in eastern Germany and the Soviets are given several years to withdraw their troops.**

This Executive Brief reflects the view of the Intelligence Community representatives expressed at a warning meeting held on 22 February 1990. It was prepared in anticipation of the upcoming "two plus four" talks on Germany. The Brief was drafted by the National Intelligence Officer for the USSR and coordinated within the Community.

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In Search of a Policy

Gorbachev and Shevardnadze have retreated steadily on German unification, from saying in November that it was not on the agenda and would be decided by "history" to Gorbachev's acknowledgment in his 21 February *Pravda* interview that history had begun to work "in an unexpectedly rapid way." Soviet officials have put out conflicting signals on Moscow's conditions for accepting unification, and some have told us as recently as last week that the leadership is still in the process of figuring out its policy. Given the pace of events and Gorbachev's weak hand, further erosion of Soviet bottom lines is likely.

What Do the Soviets Want?

At the absolute minimum, Moscow wants a voice. The Soviets feel strongly that, as a World War II victor, they have a legal and moral right to a major say in Germany's future.

- The German question is a visceral one among the Soviet population, and criticism of Gorbachev's policy is beginning to emerge from people like Politburo member Ligachev and from some military officials.
- Such criticism is no major threat to Gorbachev now. But if it were to appear that Soviet troops were being forced to retreat from the GDR, he had "lost" Germany, and the security environment for the USSR was now more threatening, the domestic fallout--when combined with other complaints--could pose a threat to his position. Gorbachev at least has to have one eye on this contingency.

The Soviets see the "two plus four" talks as, at a minimum, a vehicle to apply the brakes while they attempt to exert influence on the unification process. They want as long a transition period as possible for the external aspects of a settlement.

A primary concern is achieving some constraints on the new, unified Germany.

- This is behind Moscow's calls for a neutral and demilitarized Germany and the conclusion of a formal peace treaty ending World War II.
- It also drives the Kremlin's pitch for rapid movement--via the CSCE process--toward a new European security order that would guarantee existing borders and prevent a united Germany from going its own way.

Another of Moscow's main objectives--perhaps, in the end, the overriding one--is to ensure a good relationship with the new, powerful German state. For this reason, the Soviets do not want to be seen as the sole nay-sayer in working out the external aspects of German unification.

Finally, the Soviets, as Gorbachev indicated in his *Pravda* interview, want economic compensation for their investments in the East German economy and the economic commitments the GDR has to the USSR, currently each other's largest trading partners.

How They Will Try to Achieve Their Aims

Moscow does not want the "two plus four" talks to be simply a vehicle for ratifying a fait accompli by the two Germanies or a pre-cooked deal between "two plus one" (the United States). The Soviets are likely to seek an acknowledgment from Washington of the legitimacy of the USSR's security concerns and the importance of Four-Power rights. Moscow is certain to play to British and French concerns about how the new Germany will fit into the European security order.

- The Soviets will try to enlist their support on joint calls for a long transition period and for limits on the size of Germany's armed forces.
- They will use President Mitterrand's desire for institutionalizing the CSCE

security process to buttress their own, similar stance. Quick movement toward a CSCE summit would allow them to play to a larger European group with concerns about a united Germany and anchor it into a European security order.

The Kremlin will continue to work directly on Bonn in talks we will not be fully privy to. It has few, if any, blandishments to offer, and its ability to threaten lacks credibility. Nonetheless, the Soviets are likely to try to make Bonn think there is a strong possibility they will refuse to remove their troops from East Germany unless their security concerns are fully addressed. Moscow probably would also back any popularly-supported move by a new East German government for a neutral East Germany, hoping this would stall intra-German discussions on the future alignment of Germany.

What Are They Likely to Accept?

The Soviets will go into the "two plus four" talks touting their demands for a neutral, demilitarized Germany, but the **Intelligence Community believes that Moscow will, in the end, acquiesce in a unified Germany's membership in NATO with certain restrictions** (examined below). Our reasoning is that:

- Gorbachev and Shevardnadze are above all realists. They recognize that the USSR has a weak hand. They also recognize that the Kohl Government is firm on remaining in NATO and that the other Allied victors as well as some East European governments feel the same way.
- Opposing it to the end would undermine Moscow's objective of not souring its ties to the new Germany.
- Continued NATO membership probably would provide more near-term European stability for a Germany in transition than neutrality would.

- The Kremlin would see it as only a transitional mode in a radically changing European security structure.

The Soviets will explore a variety of scenarios in which a united Germany stays in NATO. As long as the CFE process stays on track, we believe Moscow would eventually settle for:

- No NATO (including West German) troops in the former GDR.
- A timetable of at least several years for the complete withdrawal of Soviet forces from Germany.
- At least an informal indication by Washington that it will reduce the US troop presence in West Germany below 195,000.
- Some commitment by NATO (even if only window dressing) to become more of a "political" alliance.

In addition, Moscow will want US nuclear weapons removed but probably believes the Germans will push this on their own.

The Soviets are also likely to accept, in lieu of a formal peace treaty, a CSCE document ratifying the external security arrangements of a united Germany as long as the Germans recognize today's borders and ratify the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, and the Four Powers' rights are legally terminated.

Moscow will expect Bonn to honor GDR economic commitments to the USSR. It probably will also ask Bonn to foot part of the costs of maintaining Soviet forces in Germany during the transition period and of resettling them in the USSR.

Accepting a unified Germany in NATO will be a bitter pill, but Gorbachev and Shevardnadze are masters at making a virtue out of a necessity, as they have in Eastern Europe. Taking the long view, they probably are banking on an SPD victory in an all-German election.

- With the SPD in power, the stationing of US nuclear weapons in Germany, the utility of any US troop presence, the size of German forces, and continued membership in NATO will all come increasingly into question regardless of Soviet concessions on those issues now.

- Basing their German policy on such hopes would be risky. (For example, an SPD call for neutrality--though not likely at the moment--could complicate Soviet efforts to constrain Germany's ability to pursue its own path.) But it would be much less risky than attempting to stand astride the course of "history" yelling "halt."