

PDS and other parties in the East toward West Germans stems from the period since, not before, 1990. Dealing with that postunification period and its consequences rather than the GDR past is obviously the challenge for the political leadership of today's Federal Republic.

Robert Gerald Livingston

THE FEDERAL CHANCELLORY AND GERMAN UNIFICATION

Symposium at the GHI, October 3, 2001. Conveners: Robert Gerald Livingston (GHI) and Bernd Schäfer (GHI). Speaker: Michael Mertes (*Rheinischer Merkur*, Bonn)

More than eleven years ago, in the historic year of 1990, October 3 as "Day of German Unity" crowned West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's political achievements. Soviet leader Michail Gorbachev, who had merely sought to introduce perestroika in the Soviet system to modernize socialism, had unintentionally unleashed a chain of events that culminated in the dissolution of the Soviet bloc in general and the German Democratic Republic in particular. After Poland, Hungary, and the Baltic republics had started on a path of irreversible transformation into pluralist societies, the GDR dug in and preserved its Stalinist pattern of government and society for some time. But since the GDR was the only non-nation state in the Eastern bloc and was permanently challenged by the existence of comparatively affluent West Germany, the regime's stonewalling proved to be difficult and finally impossible in the wake of the Soviet changes. In late 1989, demonstrations on the streets of the GDR not only forced the opening of the borders and the fall of the Berlin Wall, but also soon led to ever increasing calls for German unification. Barely two months after the first major demonstrations in Leipzig and Dresden, the SED regime had basically been eliminated by December 1989.

Driven by these events, the West had to react. In the Federal Republic it was above all Chancellor Helmut Kohl who seized this unique window of opportunity to further German unification. Although he faced domestic political pressure from the SPD opposition and had just survived an internal revolt in the CDU, from November 1989 to October 1990 Kohl rose to the occasion to save his chancellorship and shape German history in the twentieth century. At that time Michael Mertes was leading the Planning and Speech Writing Department of the Federal Chancellery in Bonn, before he became a division head there until 1998. Currently senior

foreign-policy editor of the Bonn weekly *Rheinischer Merkur*, he shared his insights into the decision making processes within the Federal Chancellery in late 1989 and 1990 with a packed audience at the GHI.

In his presentation, Mertes sought to shed some light on hitherto little-noticed details concerning the role of the Federal Chancellery and Helmut Kohl personally during the process of German unification. He began by outlining the structural and staff resources of this center of political power. Here Mertes emphasized the so-called *Chefsachen*, that is, matters to be handled by the chancellor himself, which included the full complex of *Deutschlandpolitik* or German-German relations.

In this respect Helmut Kohl relied on the intra-German policy specialists in the "Working Staff for *Deutschlandpolitik*" and the generalists in the Planning and Speech Writing Department, holding both in a balance that was characterized by certain conceptual tensions. According to Mertes, the generalists like himself had an easier time coping with the unfolding events because they used "Germany" instead of the "GDR" as their mental frame of reference. Their connection with the CDU headquarters and Kohl in his role as party chairman also increased their political weight for the chancellor. Mertes reported that only six people in the chancellery had constant access to Kohl and worked closely with him outside the official hierarchy.

From the West German perspective, the course for unification was set between November 9, 1989 and the first free parliamentary elections in the GDR on March 18, 1990. Of particular importance was the "Ten Point Program" presented by Helmut Kohl to the Bonn Bundestag on November 28, 1989. Right after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Federal Chancellery experienced a "combination of joyful excitement and a feeling of deep uncertainty" about the future course of events. When GDR Prime Minister Hans Modrow proposed a "Vertragsgemeinschaft" between the two German states on November 17, Kohl and his advisers started to work on a program to take up this challenge and simultaneously outdo it. Mertes outlined the various stages of drafts and discussions and the chancellor's central role in defining a confederation as only an intermediate step en route to German unification. The key sections of the Ten Point Program that Kohl himself set down in writing not only opened the supposedly closed chapter of German unity, but also proposed an eastward expansion of the European Union.

Since the Ten Points were not cleared with the Western allies, however, and deliberately did not mention the recognition of the Polish borders because of the CDU/CSU's domestic constituencies, the initial reactions to Kohl's bombshell of November 28 were certainly mixed outside of Germany. In the end, however, Kohl was able to get international and domestic support for the Ten Point Program as well as his announcement

of an Intra-German Monetary Union on February 6, 1990. The latter came one day after the Federal Chancellor, acting in his role as chairman of the CDU, had forged the electoral "Alliance for Germany" in the GDR, thereby paving the road to the CDU's electoral success in the East German election of March 18 and later in the all-German elections of December 2, 1990.

In his comment, Robert Gerald Livingston underscored Mertes's points about Kohl's activity as CDU chairman during the early months of 1990. Sometimes overlooked in historical accounts of German unification is the massive entry of the West German parties onto the GDR political stage, including the creation of the "Alliance for Germany" in early February, which was the key to the CDU's subsequent success not only in the March 1990 elections but in managing the unification process as a whole so successfully. For Kohl and his staff in the Chancellery did not bring Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the FDP's leader, Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister, into the deliberative process that resulted in the Ten Point program of November 28, 1989. In their dealings with the United States, the decisive supporter of unification among foreign countries, Kohl and his chancellery used their links to George Bush's White House to good advantage and did little to counter the distrust of Genscher and "Genscherism" that was rife in the American administration.

Livingston argued that the truly decisive period in accelerating the unification process was the first two to three weeks of January 1990. The fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 was followed by a westward exodus of East Germans that imposed great housing and welfare burdens on municipalities in the Federal Republic. After a brief hiatus during Christmas, this outflow began again in early January. The cry of the East German crowds "If the DM doesn't come to us, we will go to it" carried an implied challenge that the Federal Republic had to face. Due to the pleadings of West German politicians at the municipal and state levels who feared the coming influx, the timetable implied in the Ten Points drafted by Mertes and his colleagues was greatly accelerated. In the end, the pace of unification escaped control.

Bernd Schäfer

INDIVIDUALITY AND EARLY MODERN AUTOBIOGRAPHY BEFORE 1750

GHI-sponsored panel at the Annual Conference of the German Studies Association, Washington DC, October 5–8, 2001. Moderator: Vera Lind (GHI). Commentator: Kaspar von Greyerz (Universität Basel). Panelists: