



JAMES A. BAKER III INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY
RICE UNIVERSITY

GERMAN UNIFICATION:
EXPECTATIONS AND OUTCOMES
(PANEL DISCUSSION TRANSCRIPT)

MODERATED BY

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German Unification: Expectations and Outcomes (Transcript)

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German Unification: Expectations and Outcomes (Transcript)

Edward Djerejian:

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. It is truly an honor to have you with us this evening and to have with us six statesmen who were instrumental in crafting the historic diplomatic process that led to the unification of Germany in 1990. Their vision and their leadership proved essential in bringing the Cold War to its peaceful conclusion. We are also delighted to have with us in the audience Dr. Klaus Scharioth, the ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the United States. Welcome.

On the video screen is a photograph of the foreign ministers of the United States, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, France, and West and East Germany on June 22, 1990, who were at a meeting in Berlin on the occasion of the removal of Checkpoint Charlie, which separated the Soviet and American sectors of Berlin during the Cold War. Our discussion this evening will be moderated by the well-known historian Dr. Douglas Brinkley, our Baker Institute fellow in history and Rice University professor of history. Doug will introduce our distinguished speakers in one moment.

Before we begin, allow me to add that two of our speakers will be delivering their remarks in their native languages. We have provided headsets for the foreign language translation, which is at your seats. There is an instruction card in each one of your chairs. If you have any trouble adjusting your headset, please raise your hand and one of our Baker Institute staff will help you. Questions from the audience will be taken during the course of the program. After filling out your question card, please pass it to the end of the aisle, and a staff member will collect your question card during the discussion period. As much as possible, I would urge you to direct your questions on your card to a specific speaker. Now, without further delay, it's my pleasure to turn the podium over to Dr. Brinkley. Doug? (applause)

Douglas Brinkley:

Well, thank you for coming here to Rice University, to the Baker Institute, for this very historic occasion. We have an incredibly important panel of people to reflect on what happened on German reunification, and I'm going to briefly introduce them, and we will get on to the questions at the end. We'll be having some questions coming from the audience of the session.

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First, The Honorable James A. Baker, III, secretary of state of the United States from 1989 to 1992. Next to him is The Honorable Roland Dumas, foreign minister of the French Republic, 1984 to 1986 and then again from 1988 to 1993. Your Excellency, welcome to Houston. Next to him, fixing the earpiece right now, is The Honorable Hans-Dietrich Genscher, foreign minister of the Federal Republic of Germany from 1974 to 1992. Your Excellency, welcome. There is The Right Honorable Charles Powell, the private secretary of Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and John Major of the United Kingdom from 1983 to 1991. And The Honorable Markus Meckel, minister of foreign affairs, German Democratic Republic, 1990. Minister Meckel, welcome. (applause)

I wanted to begin by asking each of the gentlemen a question about what they see as being the historical significance of German reunification, and I'll start with Secretary Baker.

James Baker:

OK, Doug, thank you very much. Let me begin by thanking the other panelists for coming all this distance to be with us tonight. They've come a long, long way, and in fact, I think Hans-Dietrich Genscher just arrived from Germany and came straight to the institute, so we're very, very appreciative of their willingness to make these long journeys. I'm particularly pleased also that Charles Powell is with us. He came on very short notice when Douglas Hurd became indisposed.

I think it's probably very easy to think that German unification was somehow inevitable, and you argue, I suppose, that at one level it was. Once the Berlin Wall fell, there was significant momentum toward some kind of German unification, and the idea became pretty much irresistible. But the ultimate shape and form of that unification in both its domestic and its international aspects was far from clear and far from inevitable. After Nov. 9 and the fall of the wall, there were a lot of questions out there that we had to face. First of all, if you unified Germany, what precise form would it take? Would it be a confederation? Would it be a merger of the German Democratic Republic into the existing constitutional structure of the Federal Republic? What would a unified Germany's relationship be to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization? What would it be to the European Union? How would German unification affect

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the then-ongoing efforts to reduce residual Cold War tensions between the East and the West? And we finally and eventually answered those questions, but I think all of my colleagues here would agree that it took some very hard work.

There's a lot of credit, I think, to go around for the achievement of German unification. First and foremost — and I was telling this to Markus Meckel in my office a few minutes ago — I think it must go first and foremost to the indomitable spirit of the people of the German Democratic Republic, just like freedom for other countries in Central and Eastern Europe must go, a lot of the credit, to the people of those countries. But the people of East Germany never lost their longing for freedom, and in a sense, they took history into their own hands on Nov. 9, 1989. But others were due great credit as well, in my view, and those others were our bosses — first of all, President Bush 41, Chancellor Kohl of the Federal Republic of German, Prime Minister Thatcher and President Mitterrand. Their statesmanship, I think, was decisive in the dramatic months that followed that fall of the Wall. And of course, we will never forget, none of us, nor will history forget the critical roles played by Soviet leaders Mikhail Gorbachev and Eduard Shevardnadze, because it was their very brave and courageous decision not to use force to keep the Soviet empire together that made all of this possible. I think really we can all be reasonably proud of our efforts. History presented us with a very, very narrow window of opportunity. I think we took advantage of it, working together, all of us, and our governments, and our leaders, were able to shape events in ways that peacefully reunited Germany, that bolstered regional security at the time, that supported the ongoing economic and political integration of Europe, and that contributed to a peaceful end of the Cold War. Now, perhaps we did not do a perfect job, ladies and gentlemen, but I hope my colleagues will agree with me that we did a damn good one. (laughter, applause)

Brinkley:

Thank you. Minister Dumas, would you like to make a few minutes of...?

Roland Dumas:

(translated) I will speak in French. I'm very glad to be here, and it's the first time that we will be talking about this subject. The historians that will later study this period will certainly confirm

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that the regime before the war was — the world was divided, and obviously people created — at the same time, they created a situation that could not satisfy the Germans who legitimately or from the very beginning claim for the reunification. We have assisted a very slow but progressive growth in the situation in East Germany. The ambassadors, the relationships witnessed the difficulties economically from East Germany, and we clearly knew that with this situation, it could not hold on for a long time. So what I did in Berlin and I said, “At the end of the century, we will see the end of the Communist regime in Germany and in Europe as a whole.” It was a [provision?] at the time, a little bit insolent, but we didn’t know at the time that this would end or how it would end. And today, I think it’s quite funny that everybody say, “Well, we had predicted the fall of the Berlin Wall, we predicted the reunification.” Of course, it’s all very nice after all these years, but when the Wall fell — we do have to re-establish the chronology of what happened.

The key factor after many meetings and the people of Germany with different demonstrations and protests in Nov. 9 — obviously, these were peaceful protests, but they were important. And Nov. 9 was needed. With the East German government’s decision — they made the decision to liberate the borders, to inform that even though the East Germans can go freely to West Germany, this was clearly for two or three million Germans came, and they quickly came back, and there was a — it was like a wave going back and forth. But if you will, the goal, but what happened was really not what we expected. Actually, it took a very long time, almost two years, for this first action that generated the reunification had to become a reality with all the agreements. And I will remind you that obviously 20 days after the fall of the Wall, what happened is that Chancellor Kohl made his speech talking about the confederation of Germany with ten points that were orders and facilities to try to achieve this unification process. But ten days after the fall of the Wall, we didn’t have that [conscience?] of what was going to happen, and actually, we did have to resolve several problems that we will talk about in a few minutes. But we knew it. But we all of a sudden realized that if Germany had lost the war, there was never a peace treaty, and the situation, the international situation of Germany was left within the context of a sharing of this state. So with the original negotiation of the Two Plus Four, the two Germanys with the invitation of the four Allies to talk about how we were going to reunify Germany. So after a few days — we needed six negotiation sessions. The last one was in

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Moscow with Gorbachev, with a signature of a treaty that helped in a sui generis way to be a peace treaty that we really didn't have.

So the fall of the Wall that obsesses us today and that became a huge event as time went by — the comments, the images — were not other than something that was going to happen within two years. And I'm finishing with this, the true conclusion of the Berlin Wall happened two years later, when East Germany — I turn to my colleague — two years later stopped existing. At that moment is where East Germany became the Germany of today. And so we needed two good years before the Berlin Wall fell, from after, of course, the Two Plus Four situation, determine the international situation in Germany, so that these two years go by, and then negotiations happened. So it wasn't just one event; it was a series of events.

Brinkley:

Thank you very much. (applause) Minister Genscher?

Hans-Dietrich Genscher:

For me, on the ninth of November '89, a dream became reality. It's not a surprise to you, I am born in the East of Germany. I left GDR at the age of 25, in '52. And now, this wonderful event: the Wall is open. Was this just a German affair? Many people in Germany thought so, and some people in Europe also. It was not only a German affair as well as a European affair; more or less it was a world affair because it was the beginning of the end of the Cold War.

I was, on the ninth of November, with Chancellor Kohl for an official visit in [Warsaw?]. During the official dinner, we received the message the Wall is open. It became a very short dinner, and we decided to return next day. But in the morning, before we left, I had a meeting with Lech Waśa and with his adviser in foreign relations, Bronisław Geremek, who later became foreign minister of the democratic Poland. And Geremek said, "The fall of the Wall, that means German unification is a great day for the Germans, but this same day is a great day for Poland, because when Germany is united, Poland is neighbor of — NATO is neighbor of the European Community." Today they are a member of NATO; they are a member of the European

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Community. It shows how closely connected the fate of the nations in Europe are and in particular were in this year, '89.

In the past, we could witness the revolutions and demonstrations. And the first time, on the seventh of June 1953 in GDR, Soviet tanks left the barracks and stopped the demonstrations. The same in '56 in Hungary, '68 in Czechoslovakia, then Solidarnosc in Poland. But '89, it was a very new situation, because not only in Poland or in Czechoslovakia or in Hungary or in — all over Europe! What we could witness in '89 was a real European freedom revolution, and the people in the streets did it. They have the merit of overcoming the division of Europe. On the ninth of October, there was a demonstration of 70,000 people in the city of Leipzig, and they [had?] one word: “We are the people.” “We,” not “you.” (inaudible). “We are the people. We are one nation.” And no use of force; it was a peaceful revolution [what?] started. What we could do in the West was to prepare a stable framework in which developments like this peaceful revolution could proceed without any danger for stability in Europe. There were many people deeply concerned about German unification. They saw a problem for European stability. I think NATO was by far more wise in its assessment when we agreed on the so-called Harmel Report in 1967, which said, “The main obstacle for stability in Europe is the division of Germany.” This was real assessment. To overcome this division meant we will gain stability, and we did.

So we are very grateful for all who cooperated with us, supporting our idea. We have to pay gratitude to the people in Moscow had changed their positions substantially, the position of the Soviet Union, by more or less a revolution from above. And for them, the (inaudible) in this very room, for the Soviet leadership in the Two Plus Four negotiations and in our political talks was decisive. What is the position of the United States of America? And we as Germans owe great gratitude to President Bush and Secretary Baker for their unhesitating and strong and clear support for our unification, and we owe gratitude to our French and British friends — British friends ... (laughter) and (inaudible) for their support given to our unification. But the expert to explain the position of Ms. Thatcher is sitting here on my side So thank you very much — I say it here, in this very city, thank you very much, United States, for your help in this decisive phase of our history. (applause)

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Brinkley:

Lord Powell?

Charles Powell:

Well, I will happily talk about Margaret Thatcher's views on German reunification, perhaps somewhat later in the discussion. But let me just say at the beginning that I think the 1980s were the most remarkable decade of post-war history. I think the years immediately after World War II were the great creative surge, when we came up with the United Nations and NATO and the Bretton Woods Institution. That was a great period. The other great period was the 1980s. In the United States, President Reagan rebuilt the country's confidence and the economy and stood up to Soviet communism — wasn't going to be defeated by it, instead wanted to bring it down. He had strong support from Margaret Thatcher, who at the same time was completely changing Britain from top to toe. And great things were happening in Europe, too, in Germany and in France, great changes were taking place. And in a way, I think the fall of the Wall and German reunification at the end of the decade were a fitting end to it because they really drew a line under the post-war period. In 1989 and '90, we essentially achieved what we had wanted since 1945, which was a Europe that was peaceful and united, with at the heart of it a Germany which was peaceful and united. And it took 45 years and some very remarkable people amongst Western statesmen, a very remarkable man in President Gorbachev, but above all, the courage of the people in Hungary, in Czechoslovakia, in Poland, and above all, in Eastern Germany, because they were the ones who in the end did it. I think Western governments created the conditions in which it could happen, but at the end of the day, it would not have happened without the individual decisions, the individual bravery of people who were prepared to go on the street and fight for what they knew they wanted and was their right. So for me, it was a huge historic occasion, one which really made everything we had done during the Cold war worthwhile. I'll stop at that point. (applause)

Brinkley:

Minister Meckel?

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Markus Meckel:

Thank you. I think this is interesting to hear and to listen to the different views. My past was growing up in the communist country, in the eastern part of Germany, and because I grew up in the house of a Protestant pastor, I was resistant to that society from the beginning. It was an experience of my childhood. And my father was coming from the western part of Germany and went to the eastern part back after being imprisoned in a Russian camp after the Second World War. And so the question of belonging together on the one hand, the responsibility of the Second World War, which was an important point for us as Germans, and then to have that communist experience, that was a framework for my childhood. And then, belonging to the opposition, which had much to do with church — not only, but it was important that we had an independent church in East Germany. And we had that experience that if you could see any change in the eastern part of Europe — the Russian tanks came. They came in '53 to East Germany; they came in '56 to Hungary; they came in '68 to Czechoslovakia. And that was a framework of our life. And only in the second part of the eighties, there was some hope with Gorbachev that exactly this could change. And that's why at first I would like to mention that we are very — have gratitude to Mr. Gorbachev that he gave that perspective not only for us in East Germany but also for Poland and Hungary, which at first started to change the domestic situation. Hungary going West with very silent steps. You know the changes with Solidarity in the '80s. And this gave us hope that we can start again. And so in the end of the '80s, we in the opposition looked for new organizations, new structures of opposition. I myself, together with a friend, we decided in [generally?] '89 to create a social democratic party in East Germany, which meant in that time that we (inaudible) really the roots of the Communist Party, which called themselves united one — socialists, social democrats, and communists to be united — and we made clear this is really a communist party and a dictatorship when we started with the Social Democratic Party. And so you know the events during '89. We looked to Poland. It was a roundtable. The first half, free election. We looked to Hungary. I myself visited Hungary and Romania at that time, in summer of '89, and had that experience, which was what was possible there in this country. And I came back. I [in difference?] with really high account of many — of people of East Germany who only wanted to leave the country. I came back, together with friends, to create an opposition and [and to the?] change of the communist country. And we were very happy. It was mentioned by Hans-Dietrich Genscher. The ninth of October — that was a breakthrough with 70,000 people in

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Leipzig. I experienced it with 10,000 in Magdebourg. That was a breakthrough, and we were sure from that day, two days before, we created formally the Social Democratic Party in East Germany, and from the ninth of October, we were sure we will succeed with democracy. And it was clear that two democratic German states, that would be crazy, with a wall. But that, in that time, was a question of after. At first, to create democracy, and then the question of unity in the framework of Europe and [to get?] the acceptance of Europe, this was very important. And so I think that ninth of November was the effect, as it was mentioned, the effect of the victory of freedom and democracy in the eastern part, of especially of the Central European part of Europe. The fall of the Wall was the effect of that peaceful revolution in Central Europe, and the Eastern German revolution is a part of that. And what we had to do in 1990 then, that was only to manage the effects, to manage the effects, because the victory of freedom gave us opportunity for unity, the unity of Germany and the unification of Europe. And [this is a hard?], that from that, Europe could be united. And this, I think, is a change for us today.

Brinkley:

Thank you. (applause) In front of the Baker Institute, we have a piece of the Berlin Wall, and a lot of students go by it, and people who come here, as a symbol of freedom and democracy. And I wanted to ask each of our panelists if they could give us a bit of a personal memory. Where were you when you got the news that the Berlin Wall was coming down? What were the circumstances? Did somebody come in and tell you? And I'd like to hear all of your personal stories, starting with Secretary Baker.

Baker:

Well, I had been secretary of state I think for all of nine months when it happened, Doug. I was, I suppose, the last Cold War secretary of state that this country ever had. And I was sitting — I was at a lunch on the eighth floor of the State Department, a lunch that I was hosting for the president of the Philippines, Corazon Aquino, when someone from the secretariat of the State Department came in and handed me a note that said that the East German government had just announced that there's going to be free transit between East and West Berlin. And it was a rather — in fact, as you go out, ladies and gentlemen, if you want to take a look at the exhibit that's in the front foyer out there, you'll see a copy of that note that was given to me, among other things.

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But it was a rather startling thing. I'm not sure that we were — that any of us were ready to predict that, even though, as these gentlemen know better than I, Hungary had opened a portion of the Iron Curtain and was permitting some transit by East Germans into — across Hungary or into Austria. And so it was apparent that things were in ferment, things were going to happen. Anyway, I got this note, and we — I proposed a toast to the table at the time. We drank a toast to the fact that it looked like the Wall was coming down. We weren't positive at that time.

And then I excused myself and went down to my office on the seventh floor and called President Bush, and he said, "I would like it, if you could, if you could make your apologies to President Aquino and then come on over here." So I left. I did — I went back upstairs, apologized for having to leave, and went back to the — went over to the White House. And it was then and there that I think we basically agreed that this was not a time for the United States to be triumphant, that there wouldn't be any dancing on the ruins of the Wall. And President Bush — those of you who remember that time in the States will remember that President Bush got a lot of criticism for not showing more emotion when the Berlin Wall came down. After all, isn't this something that we had been rhetorically supporting for 40 years? And of course, it was. But he knew — in his wisdom and the really expert way in which he handled this — he knew we had a lot of business still to do with the leaders in the Soviet Union, including, among other things, German unification, and he was simply not going to poke it in their eye and be too triumphant over the fact that the Wall had come down. That's where I was. I spent the better part of that evening over there at the White House and then came back, and it was confirmed to us that in fact there was free transit and that East Germans, as I said in my opening remarks, were flooding the crossing points to get into West Berlin.

Brinkley:

So was there ever a champagne moment in the days after the Wall starting to come down, when you —

Baker:

There was a champagne moment at that lunch, as I told you. (laughter) I proposed a toast, and we drank a toast to the fact that it looked like the Wall was coming down. I don't pinpoint that as the

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end of the Cold War. I think someone here said earlier that was the beginning of the end of the Cold War, and that's the way I see it. But the Cold War ended reasonably soon after that, in my opinion.

Brinkley:

Minister Dumas?

Dumas:

(translated) To evoke this day of November, I would like to first speak about where we were in France. It was the last semester of '89, and France was presiding the European Community. As you know, this changed every six months. And this was in the middle of these events that they were presiding, and to rule over the countries of the community. And so as was usual, the president of the community, together with the minister, which is myself, would tour the capitals to talk about the events that had to happen by December, in a month. So on this day of Nov. 9, we had a meeting to talk about this in Copenhagen, Denmark, with the authorities from Denmark, so that is when we learned about the fall of the Wall, during the day, on the radio, on the TV. And then in the evening, we had to talk about these issues with the Danish — and we were all in contact by telephone. We were not surprised, like I explained a minute ago, because the deterioration with the Eastern German government was clear, so this was the conclusion of an event.

But the next day, we were in Paris, and the next day, President Mitterrand told me, “I need to speak to Gorbachev right away, because in the idea that we had, how is this going to happen? What is going to happen now?” And the concern, of course, was that the Russian troops were in the eastern countries. What are they going to do? What are the Russian troops going to do? There were so many things that were going to happen and that could happen that we didn't know whether Gorbachev would continue with his perestroika and glasnost policy, or is he going to do the contrary with the tradition of remaining strong? Was he going to make his troops advance or not? We didn't know that. So there was a very long conversation the next day between Gorbachev and Mitterrand. Mitterrand began saying — I was there, working as an interpreter — and he said, “This is extraordinary.” And do you know what Gorbachev said? Right there, live,

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he said, “This is extraordinary. It is a pity that this has not happened before.” So that means Gorbachev already knew this was coming. And immediately after we organized the meeting with Gorbachev, because I have to say that the two — and I’m sorry to say this, but you know that the two greatest powers, which was the U.S. and Russia, and we represented Europe, so Europe wasn’t really invited, so as a republic, we were a little concerned, actually. I say this diplomatically. But — (laughter) So we weren’t sure if he was talking on behalf of France or not, but Mitterrand said, “I have to see Gorbachev.” So we organized the famous East German meeting, and this is when, on the ninth in Paris — because the question was “Where were you?” Well, I was in Paris. So the news came out, and we started with the consultations with Gorbachev. And so I say this to show that it had already been decided that we had to go further, which reassured us, because at that time, when the Czech Republic, Czechoslovakia, Poland, (inaudible) in Warsaw, we knew that this was going to move forward. Like I said earlier, we took this proposal with a Ten-Point, and this was going to take time. Gorbachev was furious, and he said, “But this is coming back to the Third Reich. This is not serious. This goes against the movement,” and the movement is what he had already said during his conversation, that is to say, “It’s too bad this didn’t happen earlier.” He was convinced that the direction that he had chosen was the right one, and I can say today, in front of all of you here, you are very informed, and nothing would have been possible, things would not have happened and would not have happened without the energy and the presence of Gorbachev. Gorbachev was the craftsman. He was the most intelligent person that he knew what was going on. I don’t know if all the other Western powers — and we will talk about this later, possibly, today — but of how important the relationship with Gorbachev was and with his policy. It was very important. And on that day, on the ninth, the only one who knew that was Gorbachev. Merci.

Brinkley:

Thank you. (applause) Minister Genscher?

Genscher:

Yeah. I mentioned before that (inaudible) chancellor and I were in [Warsaw?], but what happened before? In summer ’89, not thousands but ten thousands of Germans spent their holidays in Hungary, and then they decided to stay in Hungary, not to return to GDR. And on the

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tenth of September '89, the reform community system and leaders in Hungary took the courageous decision: they decided to open their border to Austria. And they were criticized very hardly by GDR. They were criticized as traitors in the communist camp. They were, by the way, not criticized by the leadership in Moscow. Then the border between Czechoslovakia and Hungary was closed, so those people who wanted to leave GDR could only travel to [Warsaw?] and to Czechoslovakia. That's the reason why more and more refugees from East Germany came into our embassy in Prague. It was in the end of September, where 4,500 people in an embassy and in the garden of the embassy. Can you imagine what that means? And at the same time, we had the General Assembly of the United Nations, so I had the opportunity to speak to the foreign minister of GDR and to speak to the foreign minister of the Soviet Union.

And on the twenty-ninth of September, just before leaving, (inaudible) receives a message that they will inform me next morning in Bonn about the conditions, how the people can leave — not the conditions, but the way how the people in the embassy can leave for West Germany. And they made a remarkable decision. We had discussed what way can they leave Czechoslovakia. They could go directly to [the first?] republic because we have a common border. We had the common border with Czechoslovakia. And the second alternative was the trains will pass GDR, and to my great surprise, they decided the trains should pass GDR, but meant that thousands of refugees by trains of GDR, pass GDR, are not stopped. They had criticized 20 days before that the Hungarian leadership opens a border, and now they themselves just 20 days later decided to open. It was, I think, a clear signal that the Wall would not exist forever. Why did they build the Wall? When — in August 1961, the leadership in DDR decided to build that wall. This was the clear statement that the competition between the two systems — democracy and market economy on the one side and socialism on the other — this competition was lost by GDR. And because it was lost, thousands of people month by month left GDR.

When I personally left GDR in '52 — it was in August '52 — in this single month, 30,000 people left GDR. Thirty thousand in one month. Though they stopped this transfer, but in '89, we had the situation could not — they could not continue their policy. And that's the same time the demonstrations started — demonstrations in the cities, as mentioned by Markus Meckel. So it was really done by the people in the streets, and I think it would never have happened in such a

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peaceful way without the position, the clear position of the Soviet Union, and this clear position was: no use of force. No use of force. If the people want it, it should happen. And this was — I think it's a reason for Gorbachev that he finally agreed to German unification and finally agreed to German unification, accepting that Germany as a whole should be member of NATO and should be member of the European Community. It was not an easy decision for the leadership in the Soviet Union. It was a courageous decision they did, and I admire this courage these two people have — I mean Gorbachev and Shevardnadze.

Brinkley:

Thank you. (applause) Lord Powell?

Powell:

Well, coming back to your question of where I was and what I was doing: If you'd asked me what I was doing and where I was last week, I probably wouldn't be able to tell you. (laughter) But the ninth of November 1989 is one of those days that does stay you, rather like, where were you on the day President Kennedy was assassinated? It was an event of enormous importance. And as we've been hearing, the American president works in the magnificence of the White House, and Monsieur Dumas went running around to the grandeur of the Élysée Palace, and Hans-Dietrich was in the glittering halls of the Bundeskanzleramt. The British prime minister works in a modest little townhouse Jerry-built in 1740, (laughter) which has been the office of the prime minister ever since. And I was in my cubbyhole there (laughter) in the early evening watching television when I suddenly saw what was happening. So I went upstairs to the room where Margaret Thatcher was working and said, "There's something quite interesting going on" — British understatement, this is — (laughter) "Something quite interesting going on. You've got to switch on television and look at it." And then, of course, I kicked myself. She didn't have a television. (laughter) So we went back downstairs to my television.

And I think Margaret Thatcher had three emotions, really, one after the other. One was surprise. I don't think any of us had predicted this was going to happen so quickly, but of course we do now know it was the result of complete incompetence by an East German official who just got muddled up and didn't mean to open the Wall at all. But there we are; life is like that sometimes.

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So surprise was her first emotion; elation was the second. This was what we'd all dreamed of so long: This hated symbol, the worst symbol of the division of Europe was going to come down, and that was just wonderful. And her third emotion, straight after that, was caution. This was a dangerous moment in her view. When great empires like the Soviet Empire start to crumble, then you have to be very, very careful. What was actually going to happen? Could the natural joy of the people pouring through the Wall be restrained, or would there be incidents involving Soviet forces? It could easily have happened. It just needed a small group of people to go and throw empty beer bottles or something at Soviet forces, someone to shoot, and there would be trouble.

And that sentiment was really reinforced a bit the next day when Margaret Thatcher spoke to Chancellor Kohl and he gave her an account of what was happening, and it was a wonderfully dramatic and happy account, and she was enormously relieved and pleased by all that, but then we got a request from the Soviet ambassador to come in late that night with a message from President Gorbachev. Now, in history, on the whole, when Soviet ambassadors ask to see you late at night, it tends not to be good news, (laughter) so we wondered a bit what was going to happen. And I rang General Scowcroft in the White House, my close and dear friend, and he'd had a similar message, and the same was true of Horst Teltschik in Bonn. Now, as it happened, it was a very sensible, restrained message from President Gorbachev, exactly as was described by Monsieur Dumas just now, saying, "We must be careful. We must avoid incidents. We must avoid provocations. This is a very, very delicate moment." And I think that caution at that moment was justified. As it was, everything went smoothly, but we couldn't have known that at the time.

And maybe I could just say one last thing at this time. It's easy just to focus on the fall of the Wall and German reunification, but there were many other great and dangerous events going on just then, above all the massacre in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, which had happened only very shortly beforehand. This was an extremely fraught moment in terms of diplomatic history of the world, and we shouldn't — though naturally, obviously, we're focused tonight on the fall of the Wall and German reunification, don't let's forget what was going on in the rest of the world.

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Brinkley:

Thank you very much. (applause) Minister Meckel?

Meckel:

I mentioned before that for me and from my experience in that time in East Germany, the ninth of October was the most important date, because from that date, we were sure that it would be possible to establish democracy. And then in the evening of the ninth of November, we had a meeting in Magdebourg, a city close to the western border at that time, and we organized and prepared the foundation of the regional Social Democratic Party. And late in the evening, I came home and saw in TV what happened. And in difference to the majority of the whole world, I was not so happy about that, because for me, that day, in that time, it was clear, we will delete the Wall, but after having democracy. And so for me, it was the first message: It will be more complicated because more actors will take place — will take part in the play. And this was immediately aware for me.

And if you see the remembrance today, you can see it, that there is not so much differentiation in the remembrance between the ninth of November and the third of October. It is put together as one event. But that's not the case. It is difficult in the remembrance to describe and declare the people why in East Germany after the ninth of November it was necessary to have a roundtable. Why a partial East German election? That is not understandable if you look back. It is important to make it aware because for us, it was very important that we need a negotiated unification, and this was a crucial point for us. In the framework for that unification and that negotiation, this was a point — but I know that Mr. Shevardnadze is waiting, and so I can continue after his speech, then. But I really think that we have to be aware about that question of how to deal with that in that time. The process of democratization and unification became one process from that day. The time before, nobody — nobody in East and in West — had any clear strategy how to get it, that unification, and this was clear that United States formalized West Germany. All these were part of the play. And [if he sees a?] German-Polish border, at the Ten-Point program, so-called program, of Mr. Kohl, it was not mentioned. In that time, Mr. Genscher in his speech at the United Nations, he mentioned it, but it was much more difficult because of Mr. Kohl to solve that question of that border. For us, it was clear the acceptance of the border was a responsibility

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of the following of the Second World War and other responsibility. If you see the pictures of Mr. Kohl, he was using the phrasing that it is a compensation for the Germany unity, and this is quite another perspective. And this was a difficulty for the following months.

Brinkley:

Thank you. (applause)

Baker:

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I think we are being joined by former foreign minister to the Soviet Union, Eduard Shevardnadze, from Tbilisi, Georgia. Eduard, greetings. This is your friend Jim Baker. How are you? I'm here with all of your former colleagues, and our moderator is the distinguished American historian Douglas Brinkley. He will be addressing you with a question.

Brinkley:

What do you feel was the historic importance of German reunification?

Eduard Shevardnadze:

(translated) First of all, I would like to greet you, my dear colleagues. Thank you so much, Mr. Baker, who initiated this meeting is according to his initiative. I'm greeting to you, all of you, to my friends, to my colleagues, to all friends we know in such way each other. I would like to apologize that I am not with you right now. The thing is that at my age, sometimes I cannot go even to doctors. The doctor said, [Led?], you cannot have flight in such distance. It's dangerous. And so I have to obey to them.

Now, briefly, in two words, I would like to note that we did together, that we were able to do together, we were able to do good. What we practically did. The world has been changed. This is the result of — we think in the same way. We were (inaudible) together, and we are together at the same way. By the way, what we were able to do together for [word?], we tried to do it in details. I try to explain in my last book, memoirs, and I [climbed a glacier?], and I noted that the falling of Berlin Wall is very serious.

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I will try to answer all the questions. I will try to take part in all the discussions that will take place, and I think that this meeting will have good results. We fought together, we know each other, we fought for the same cause, and we were able to change the world. The world is not the same. It's not what it used to be.

Brinkley:

Your Excellency, I wanted to ask you — it would appear that the biggest threat to peaceful unification of Germany would have been a decision by the Kremlin to call on Soviet troops to prevent it from happening. Was there ever any realistic possibility for that happening? (pause)
Your Excellency, can you hear me OK?

Shevardnadze:

(translated) Yes, I can hear you.

Brinkley:

Was there ever a — we were discussing — I mean, is there ever the possibility of the Kremlin calling on Soviet troops to do something to prevent either the peaceful unification of Germany or the tearing down of the Berlin Wall?

Shevardnadze:

(translated) The thing is that — oh, before Germany's unification started, the Soviet troops were already in Berlin and around Berlin. It was half a million people. The army consisted of half a million people, and Stalin ordered those troops to go there. And it wasn't necessary to have so many troops there, but the explanation for that is that United States, which was one of the opposition, the main opposition, they had the nuclear weapons. They had the — the Soviet Union had the nuclear weapons, and if the forces were in Central Europe, near Berlin, and if the United States used the nuclear weapons, then these troops would be ordered to fight and just bomb the whole Europe into the Atlantic Ocean. These were allies of the United States, these countries. And back then, when we were talking about Germany's unification, for that timeframe, to put the troops there, it didn't make any sense at that time.

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Brinkley:

We've been talking about where people were when the Berlin Wall started to come down. Where were you at, at that moment? What's your personal recollection of that historical moment?

Shevardnadze:

(translated) Yes, I remember very clearly. It was on the eighth, and I would like to clarify that the fall of the Berlin Wall should not be discussed as the event that happened all at once. This was a process that took a while to happen. And sometimes there were demonstrations, and there were some representatives in Berlin that used to go, and they were trying to abolish these demonstrations, to stop these demonstrations, and on the ninth, we got the information from the embassy that it was possible for Germany — for Germ — to be changes in Germany, and for the — it might be important for Soviet troops to get involved in this. And there were some agreements that the troops should not be involved, no matter — and also, there were some meetings against it, about it, and we made a decision to fly on the ninth. We arrived in Berlin. You might ask me why two people had to go in the region at that time, but if it was decided for the troops to get involved in this, then the foreign minister might not have listened to this. So it was very important for the general to go there, and we stopped the troops from involvement. It was a big event, which was practically, afterwards, helped for Germany's unification process. And it didn't happen in one or two days; this was a process that took a while to happen.

Brinkley:

Thank you. Secretary Baker?

Baker:

Eduard, I want to say one more time — this is Jim Baker — how very appreciative we are that you have joined us, particularly given the fact that it is 4:30 in the morning in Tbilisi, Georgia. (laughter, applause) And I also want to say that every speaker here this evening, before you came on, has made the point that you and Mikhail Gorbachev deserve enormous credit because you were not willing to use force to keep the empire together. You deserve enormous credit for a peaceful end of the Cold War. Every speaker. (applause)

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Shevardnadze:

I would like to mention that for Germany's reunification process, that Gorbachev played a big role in this. If it wasn't for him, without him, such — it wouldn't have happened. And if we have time, I would like to remind you that our meeting probably — Mr. Baker probably remembers that in Ottawa, in the capital of Canada, we had a meeting, and when we were talking about the issues and when we finished talking, Mr. Baker turned to me and said that, "Eduard, what do you think?" — we were friends; we were very — we were just addressing each other with names; we were very informal — "And do you think it's time to think about Germany's unification?" And despite the issue that I fight — been fighting about this for a long time, but nobody — I haven't had any formal meetings about this issue, and probably we should try to make everything clear that pertains to this issue. But Mr. Genscher — I wanted to hear about Mr. [Genscher's?] opinion. Baker was telling me that Genscher was OK with it, Baker would be OK with such a decision. It was important for us to talk, and we had talks, and to think of the mechanism that would work on the problem of Germany's unification. This was a very historic decision, and James Baker was telling me, "What about Gorbachev? What is he going to do? What is his opinion on this issue?" And it might be very strange, because — but me and Gorbachev, despite the fact that we were friends, we talked together a lot, we had a lot of meetings, we never discussed this issue before, and he was asked very often how possible it was, the thought of Germany's unification. He never said yes and he never said no about it, and he never answered that question.

After talking to James Baker, I went to the office, I called Gorbachev, and I told him what was going on, that Baker had talked to me about this issue, that we could talk about Germany's unification issue, that we should think of the mechanisms, what kind of mechanisms we could use in order to develop this process. And then Two Plus Four mechanism, we thought about. You remember this very well, James? Two Plus Four? Two German states, Soviet Union, United States, France and Great Britain. This is Two Plus Four, and with this mechanism, we had to start working. And Gorbachev was told about this by me, and despite the fact that he had never said anything about this issue, he thought about it for a while — one and a half, two minutes, he thought about it — and then he told me that this issue sooner or later should have been decided, and it would very good that this issue was mentioned, not from the heads of the states but from

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the secretary of state started talking on this issue, so he said he was agreed on it, he wanted to start working on this issue and start on working on unification of Germany. So this was Gorbachev's relationship toward that issue, his position toward this issue. So the initiator for this decision is Jim Baker, who I'm very happy to see, and he looks very young, he looks very well. He looks the same as he looked before when I was talking to him, when I met him.

Baker:

Now, that wasn't planned, Eduard. (laughter)

Brinkley:

Let me bring in Minister Genscher. Would you like to comment — would you like to jump in, too? OK.

Genscher:

What was his last remark?

Baker:

What was his last remark?

Brinkley:

Yes. Well, he was asking you, if you want to — what was your fears from the Soviet Union when you were going through this? Were you worried about what Gorbachev would do at this particular moment in time? Did you have fear of some kind of reprisal coming from the Soviet Union while this whole process was going down?

Genscher:

You mean the process, the Two Plus Four process?

Brinkley:

Yes.

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Genscher:

No. I think the agreement that we should discuss this question in the framework of Two Plus Four shows that Soviet Union leadership was ready to discuss in substance — not only [talk by talk?], in substance. So we had to find out what is the main problems that was foreseeable. The main problem was, is it stable, this status of united Germany? Will be united Germany a neutralized country? And Eduard Shevardnadze said, “We have many options,” when we had the meeting. “We have options: Germany neutralized, Germany in two defense systems, Warsaw Pact and NATO, or only in NATO or only in Warsaw Pact.”

And I answered, “Look into the Charter of Helsinki, where it said that every people has a right to join the defense treaty or defense organization. And to be serious, when we have the freedom to do that, we will join NATO.” And we discussed this, and this was, I think, for Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikhail Gorbachev the most important and most complicated question after they had agreed to German unification. This took place already, I think, four or five days before, when (inaudible) Soviet Union, and Gorbachev said, “German unification is up to the Germans to be decided.” We then said we’d need democratic-elected leadership in GDR — that took place in March when we had the first free elections in this part of Germany after the Second World War, and then they had the government, free elected government — Markus Meckel was the first foreign minister of this state.

But the question, what will be the external aspects, what will be the place of united Germany, this was the main question in addition to the question of recognizing the German-Polish border along the existing line, which already was a fact since the end of the war. So I was not concerned that the leadership would in any way intervene in a military sense. We had discussed — Eduard Shevardnadze will remember — these questions already in September 1988 on the occasion of our meeting in New York when we had the United Nations meeting there, and I said, “Look, we have to envisage demonstrations in the Eastern Germany next year. Why not there, when all over Europe? And never should be repeated from your side what leadership of Soviet Union did in ’53. And so I think all these questions were on the table, but my conviction was that Gorbachev and Shevardnadze not would give the order to use force, that for them, it was more important that united Germany has a status which could not be a threat to the Soviet Union. What this

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meant — this was not clear at the time, that we had to find out in our talks, in our negotiations, in (inaudible) I remember very important was the visit of Gorbachev in May, I think, in Washington when he had the meeting with President Bush where he said, “Let the Germans decide what will happen.”

Brinkley:

Secretary Baker, just to pick up on this, what were the origins of the Two Plus Four concept? How did that begin?

Baker:

Well, I think it probably began somewhere around late January or early February of 1990, when we began to face up to what sort of a forum we were going to utilize to deal with the external aspects of German unification. There were some who thought that German unification’s external aspects should be negotiated by the four occupying powers — the Western — well, the Soviet Union, the United States, France and Great Britain, who had won the Second World War. Others thought that those external aspects should be negotiated in the context of the 35-nation-member conference on security and cooperation in Europe, which would have been, of course, a very unwieldy way to go about it. There were some who favored the idea that maybe just the two Germanys would negotiate both the internal and external aspects. That was not practical, obviously, since there were treaty obligations arising out of the end of the Second World War. And — yeah?

Genscher:

I remember for the first time we discussed the framework when I came in November ’89. It was who should negotiate. (inaudible).

Baker:

My recollection was that was Jan — I said January of ’90. Was it November ’89?

Genscher:

Yeah, yeah.

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Baker:

I remember discussing it with Hans-Dietrich. I thought it was January '89 — I mean January '90. Maybe it was November '89. But we talked a little bit about it. My first recollection of the concept of Two Plus Four is when some fellows that worked in the policy planning staff at the State Department brought me a paper that said, "This is the type of arrangement we ought to use to negotiate the external aspects of German unification, and we called it Four Plus Two." And I met them shortly thereafter, whether it was in the end of '89 or the beginning of '90, with Hans-Dietrich —

Genscher:

This part of the discussion was really in the beginning of '90.

Baker:

Well, you and I talked — we were sitting — we were sitting in front of the fireplace in my office at the State Department, and I said, "Four Plus Two," and you said, "Oh, no, Two Plus Four," (laughter) and —

Powell:

Start again.

Baker:

And that was because you said, "Well, after all, the two Germanys are the two important — (laughter) they're the ones that are unifying." And I said, "Well, you know, we don't have any real problem with that. I'll talk to our French friends and our British friends (laughter) and see how we come out." And we came out OK, and they said, yeah, that's good. And then we went to the Open Skies conference in Ottawa, which Eduard Shevardnadze just recounted to you, where we all talked about whether we should use Two Plus Four, and everybody agreed that Two Plus Four was the proper mechanism because it had everybody at the table who had any interest in the external aspects. But you will remember that on the margins of that Open Skies conference in Ottawa, there was a NATO ministerial meeting where you and I particularly got a lot of heat and a lot of grief from our — from the other member nations of the North Atlantic Treaty

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Organization, other than the United Kingdom and France, for not including them. You will remember that very vividly. (laughter) And I remember Hans-Dietrich — not to be too undiplomatic here — I remember you looking at one of the particular people who was objecting the most, and looked at him, and you said, “You’re not a player in this.” (laughter) And that was the end of that, and we [didn’t?]. And so that’s how we got to Two Plus Four. And it was actually a very good forum, very good mechanism, because that way everybody was at the table and nobody could go off and cut any side deals. And I must say that as far as the United States is concerned, one of our paramount interests, of course, was that the unified Germany be a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. We didn’t want a neutral Germany in the heart of Europe, but we didn’t also want you going off and cutting a deal with the Soviet Union to which we were not a party. (laughter) So it was an ideal arrangement, right? (laughter)

Genscher:

Yes. I —

Brinkley:

Lord — let’s bring Lord —

Genscher:

I should — I think we should, Eduard Shevardnadze, tell one story. We were sitting together in the east of Berlin, the second meeting. He addressed in very hard language — it was just before the party convention. I understood this for domestic reasons, it was necessary. And you give me (inaudible) and give me a piece of paper with the question, “What does that mean?” And I answered, “Window-dressing.” (laughter) “Window-dressing.” (laughter)

Baker:

Window-dressing, yes, right.

Genscher:

For domestic reasons.

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Baker:

Yes, that's right.

Brinkley:

Lord Powell — let's bring Lord Powell into the conversation. What was Margaret Thatcher's — did she seem to have quite a bit of worries about German reunification? What was her concerns?

Powell:

Well, Margaret Thatcher certainly did have worries about German reunification, and being Margaret Thatcher, she didn't keep quiet about them; she expressed them rather loudly, repeatedly and sharply. And really, I think it stemmed from three reasons. One: For people of her generation, who grew up in the 1930s and had memories in their most impressionable years of the rise of Nazism and then of the horrors of the Second World War, there was always a lingering worry that Germany could somehow revert to similar behavior. Now, rationally, of course, she knew that Germany was completely different after the Second World War, but nonetheless, that worry was in the back of her mind. And Margaret Thatcher admired Germany very much. Most of the people she admired most in post-war politics was actually Ludwig Erhard. And she had, on the whole, had a good relationship with Chancellor Kohl, but not really as good as it should have been, and that was very much more, I have to say — and she would admit it — her fault than his. Chancellor Kohl tried very hard to get on with Margaret Thatcher — so hard that he invited her to spend a weekend down in his home in the central south of Germany. And I went along with her, and very hospitably he took her around and showed her everything and took her to his favorite pub, and we ate his favorite dish, which was pig stomach (laughter) — and you can imagine how well that went down. (laughter) And at the end of the visit, he took us to the great Romanesque cathedral in Speyer, where in the crypt, you find the tombs of the early Holy Roman emperors. And while Margaret Thatcher was admiring these prophets of European unification, Chancellor Kohl took me behind a pillar and said, "Listen, now she's seen me here in my home territory, right at the heart of Europe, close to France. Surely she will finally realize that I'm not so much German, I'm European, and you've got to convince her." And I said, "Well, Chancellor, I'll do my best." (laughter) And we then went off back to the airport to climb aboard the little plane we had flown over from London in. And as she

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went up the steps, she threw herself into her seat, she kicked off her shoes and said, “Charles, that man is so German.” (laughter) And I have to say, at that point, I aborted my mission. I thought it — (laughter)

But coming back to be a little more serious about it, I think the other reservation, the other worry, she had about reunification was not the fact of reunification. She couldn't possibly be against that — she, like everyone else, had signed endless declarations supporting it — but she was worried about a rush to reunification. And one of her worries, that it would destabilize the position of Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Shevardnadze, both of whom she admired hugely for what they were doing in the Soviet Union and for the attitude they had taken to the growing evidence of freedom in Eastern Europe. And she was worried there could well be some sort of backlash from hardliners in the Soviet Politburo which might destabilize them, and that would be sad in itself, but it would be terrible for the rest of Eastern Europe. And we must always remember that German reunification was only one part of this process; there were other countries and their interests involved, in Hungary and Czechoslovakia and Poland and the Baltic states — people there, too, were hoping for democracy, hoping for the right to decide what sort of government they should have, and all their interests had to be taken into account. And those worries did make Ms. Thatcher very difficult.

Now, to be honest, she was not unique in Europe in having these worries. She held detailed discussions of them with President Mitterrand of France. She talked to many other European leaders. And she — I think I would say that those worries were certainly shared by others. They were certainly far less outspoken about them, but it was not difficult to be less outspoken than Margaret Thatcher. But it was a concern. What, of course, none of us knew at the time was how fast events were going to move, and really her idea, which was, I think, one already articulated by Markus Meckel, that she thought the right thing to do was to have free elections in East Germany and have a democratically elected government and then move to a confederation between East and West Germany and leading on to reunification, a process spread over a number of years which she regarded as least likely to upset the stability of Europe and the security institutions which we had there. So those were her concerns. Obviously, as history turned out, she was wrong. I mean, German reunification was carried out very skillfully by Chancellor Kohl,

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by Hans-Dietrich Genscher and by the other gentlemen here. But at the time, those were not stupid things to be worried about. They were actually quite sensible things to be worried about, and, as always, I think she had the courage to speak up and make those points, even though they were not exactly popular. Thank you.

Brinkley:

Thank you very much. (applause)

Gescher:

I — I think —

Brinkley:

Let me go first. Minister Dumas, what about France in this situation? In the sense that Germany had started World War I and World War II, why was France ready for German reunification?

Dumas:

(translated) Firstly, I'd like to say to Mr. Shevardnadze that I'm very glad to see him looking great. He doesn't look tired at all, and age doesn't wither him. I'm very happy to see you. So I want to come back to this discussion, which is very interesting — obviously several points of view regarding this last issue which Mr. Shevardnadze brought up, which is this conclusion of this whole period. That is to say, after six meetings — we have had six meetings, don't forget. The last one was held in Moscow with Mr. Gorbachev, and we did sign a treaty. Now, we can say today, did we do a good job? Yes, I can say this in front of all of these people here today, that things were re-established in Europe. The community became the European Union with the addition of East Germany. Germany as a whole is a part of NATO, which Mr. Baker was constantly mentioning that we should not forget about this. So this is the peace treaty — well, the peace treaty — the Moscow Treaty, I should say, which, after many discussions was signed, and the Allies were very severe among each other, and we had a lot of arguments. And with this Two Plus Four, Four Plus Two that my friend next to me was mentioning — I told him at one point, "Well, four plus two makes what in Germany?" and he says, "Well, six." And I said, "Two plus four is how much in German?" "It's six." "Well, then, it's all the same." And he wasn't too

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convinced, though, I must say. (laughter) I asked him that question, Two Plus Four, Four Plus Two — it's all the same! But obviously there is the diplomacy, the tacit meaning, what is not said.

But coming back to what Mr. Shevardnadze said, he most remember clearly the negotiations — of course, since you participated — the Two Plus Four, and you participated very happily. And we did achieve this treaty, I repeat, in Moscow with Gorbachev being present, who — actually, he was the head of the meeting. What was the key concerns for you and Gorbachev during this possibility of the Two Plus Four, Four Plus Two, as far as the sequels from the war, or with the Warsaw Pact, which later was dissolved? The German troops, the Russian troops, the American troops were all retiring, so what was your concern? Because I remember we don't always agree here, so today I would like to take advantage of the fact that you're here with us, and if you do remember. I do have the memory that you had two concerns — I would say more moral than legal, more moral than political.

The first was the attitude that the countries that, again, were acquiring independence, that were under the Soviet rule and were wanting independence: What would be their attitude with respect to the monuments of the Soviet army during the war? I do remember that it was a secondary issue, but, however, during the historical context and today's context as well — which we might be talking about in a few minutes — it had a sentimental value, and I do remember that Shevardnadze had said, “At least there should be an engagement between these parties to negotiate, to talk about, or to have these monuments be cleaned and respected.” And I think this was more of a moral issue rather than a legal or a political issue.

But secondly, the other concern was: How do we deal with these agreements? Because, for example, the troops with the NATO pact that they should not violate the ancient Soviet Union borders, and so clearly today there's a discussion that arises around this subject. But this is unimportant, because what does matter is that the spirit within these conversations happened, the spirit that was present. The pact were disengaged, we come to this peaceful era, and it is important. And as he said — and he's not wrong to say — that this was done in a certain way that was important. So constantly, there are discussions about this; we keep talking about this.

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There were decisions that were made to install, to implement — and we talk about this current policy — maybe you're going to ask about this today — but we, for example, have with — talk about the prior U.S. president, not the current, to go ahead and put in the anti-nuclear missiles in Poland. Maybe Shevardnadze can confirm this, but in the position that I was in, this was against not so much the law (inaudible) the spirit of agreement that we had after this last Moscow conference. So what I understood was that this was not commented very much by the reporters — and I'm sorry if there's some of you in the audience; this is a friendly reminder — but that we stopped these measures and we will take other measures. So Russia had reacted to this, and the reaction was to stop the negotiations regarding the weapons. So the question is: Do you remember these discussions that we had on the Two Plus Four, Four Plus Two, Two Plus Four, it's always six anyway, so — or does this remind you of anything —

Brinkley:

President Shevardnadze, that's to you. (laughter)

Shevardnadze:

(translated) Thank you. I would like to say in one word to do with two questions. First of all, I always was interested in what was going on around the Berlin Wall, not only when it was officially declared as fallen, destroyed. What was going on before that? And my promise was in such — promise was that in spite of existence of the Wall, the West German representatives and Eastern German citizens, they had relationships with each other. There were messages; there were letters; there were transfer of money. Of course, from West, it was more, but Eastern German, respectively they will, so the messages and the parcels sending. And I concluded from that these people live with their own life, and our mission is don't annoy them, and let them unify and live their life, first of all. The second, Hans-Dietrich — they should do — and Hans-Dietrich that when there was [defined the question?] issue that Germans should be unified, there was demand from Germans that Germans should be made as a member of NATO. Me and Gorbachev and the Soviet Union were against that. It was like deadlock.

Then the second issue was how it (inaudible), and troops must — should the German — a unified German should have — ought to have. And there should [be defined?] compromise. We

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agreed that Germany would stay — it would be member of NATO, but it [make?] still — the power would be (inaudible) according to agreement, either (inaudible) for 300,000 or the German in fact — it's huge — the statehood could have half-million troop, but Germany was powerful because the amount of troop (inaudible), and he found compromise. So Germany would be member of NATO, but German took responsibility (inaudible) their military force. It was very important.

And one more issue I would like to draw attention. German unification's problem, it was not between two or three states; it was not solved between these countries. There was presidents — presidents were involved. For example, me. Ronald Reagan, I met seven times, and three times or four times, I have really discussed (inaudible) two times unification of Germany. Ronald Reagan's expressions you remember. Soviet empire (inaudible). There was some truth in this, but in part of (inaudible) first meeting was very meeting hard. The second meeting was a bit milder, and other meetings were (inaudible) and eventually we — and third meeting, Reagan had lunch, and we were talking in ordinary people, like ordinary people, not like opposition people. I would like to remind — it was — do you remember the meeting in Malta, at Malta? Malta, with Shevardnadze, Gorbachev, Father Bush and Shultz were attending. At Malta meeting, we agreed that since then — we are not enemies since then. Then Baker, Jim, invited me [to Wyoming?], and he said to me, I would like to show you my first — my new (inaudible) I built up. I had to fly for four hours. We had second time the meeting, and we composed a document, declaration. There was written a declaration. We are not — not only enemies, opposition, but since then, we are partners. Of this, it's not only my contribution. If not Reagan's goodwill, if not goodwill of — Gorbachev's goodwill also, and French Minister [undecipherable] and others and others, then the German unification wouldn't have happened, or it would deal with world war — oh, we will deal, we will go to world war. I want to assure, if we would not go Gorbachev — with Gorbachev in Paris and (inaudible), then the Soviet troops would be involved, and what does — the troops be involved. That means to start a new war. So was situation. Maybe you remember, many of you.

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Brinkley:

Thank you so much. I want — Minister Meckel has been anxiously trying to get into the discussion, so we're going to have you make your comment, and then I have a question for Secretary Baker; we're going to open it up to some questions from the audience.

Meckel:

I met Mr. Shevardnadze first time in the end of April on our first visit as a new government to Moscow, and I had three messages for him. The first is: We are not yet — as a new, democratically elected government, we are not yet the young brother who has to obey Moscow. That's the first point. The second point is: The German unification will come and will happen, although, if Moscow would like to prevent it — if they would prevent it — because the people in East Germany want — really do want the unification. The third was: We are interested in respecting the interests of Soviet Union in the process and for the future of Europe because it has to be prevented (inaudible) for the Soviet Union for that time, because that would destabilize Europe for the future. This seemed to us three important messages, and if I see what happened in that time, I think we were not so much fixed to the NATO question. My conviction was that after the end of the division of Europe, the whole Europe has to be changed, not only the East. It can't be that the West will only continue. And so my — I insisted in a change of NATO and the change of strategy, you will remember, was not so easy. To talk about change of strategy, change of weapons and much more had to be changed, and that was not so easy to do so. I hoped in the beginning that German unification can be the first step in the instrument in the same time to change the security system in Europe at all. It was clear I was in the beginning of the professional politician. I started my career to be a foreign minister; others finish their political career to be a foreign minister. But I was very much convicted that change of security system for Europe, it all will be important. In March '90, I visited Washington first time, and from that visit, it was my experience that NATO is important because of that integration situation. To have an integrated security, this was, in my view, the most important advantage of NATO, but its concrete strategy, I doubt it in that time, and so the second point was the question of disarmament. Mr. Shevardnadze mentioned it, the question of the troops of Germany both together in addition, and the other — on the other hand, the question of nuclear weapons. I raised that question, as you'll remember, and no of you was happy about that. And I think until now

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that this is really a question. It couldn't be solved in that time, but if you see the situation today, that question has to be solved in the future with all of us, and we have really to do much to solve that question — that question which couldn't be solved in that time.

Brinkley:

Thank you very much. Secretary Baker, I wanted to ask you one last question, and we have — people in the audience have put questions in, and we're going to ask a few. But I have the last question for Secretary Baker. I've read a number of places that you've called the coming down of the Berlin Wall “the symbolic end of the Cold War.” If that's the symbolic end, what marked the full end of the Cold War in your mind?

Baker:

Well, I think the coming — the downfall of the Wall is the — was the symbolic end, but it was more than that, it was the — as Hans-Dietrich said, it was the beginning of the end of the Cold War. The substantive end of the Cold War for me, at least — and Eduard Shevardnadze will remember this — was when he and I stood shoulder-to-shoulder together in an airport in Moscow, and we condemned the actions of a Soviet client state in its unprovoked aggression against a small neighbor. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in August of 1990, that to me really signaled the end of the Cold War, when you could have an American secretary of state and a foreign minister of the Soviet Union standing shoulder-to-shoulder and calling for an arms embargo against a Soviet client state.

Now, before you go to the questions to the audience, Doug, if I might, I wanted — I want the audience to know that we had a lot of difficult issues, but we also were operating in a real spirit of friendship across the board. You've heard a lot here tonight about the reservations that some of the United States' longtime allies in Western Europe had with respect to German unification: the United Kingdom, France. And I never will forget, when we signed the treaty, the Two Plus Four Treaty on German Unification in Moscow on the 12th of September, I thought I might have a little fun with our friend Hans-Dietrich Genscher, and I turned to him after it was all over and we were drinking a champagne toast, and I said, “Now, Hans-Dietrich, when will we now — when will we take up the question of the German-Chinese border?” (laughter) And he looked at

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me rather quizzically, and he said, “The German-Chinese border?” (laughter) Do you remember that? Anyway, let’s go to the questions from the audience.

Brinkley:

OK, well, great. Minister Meckel, people — somebody here was wondering if you could replay history in looking back in 1989 to 1990, if there was anything you would have changed about what you did, and there’s also an interest of whether you were — there was a Christian movement involved in East Germany, you as a pastor.

Meckel:

Looking back, surely I would have done some things in another way. For instance, what I mentioned before, it was clear that what I had in mind in the beginning to change many European issues connected with the German unification — that was impossible. I see it, looking backward, very clear. And so I personally had a wrong strategy for that field, and I in the end have to say that the Two Plus Four talk — not the talks, the treaty — is, in my view, the best of the treaties concerning German unification. But I think also that the challenges that I met — I dealt with — a continuing one, as I mentioned, for instance, was the question of nuclear weapons, and the question of integration, to get and integrate the security, which is important for Europe at all.

Looking back, the question of Christian movement: It’s a long story. I would say I created a Social Democratic Party by theologian reasons, thinking that using the Christian belief for political issues is in my view every time a problem. It has to be argued in a rational way. Everybody has to understand it, and everybody, which is his belief ever, has to be — get to understand it, and that’s why there’s the relationship, but on the other hand, it has to be differentiated.

Brinkley:

Great, thank you. President Shevardnadze, we have a question for you from the audience, and they were wondering whether there was ever a risk that Russian leadership would be overthrown in a coup d’état, and if so, did the Russian leadership have a plan of action if there was an attempt

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to topple your government over apparent weakness over the Germany and the Berlin Wall coming down. (pause) Can you hear me, Mr. President? I'm not sure that the communication —

Shevardnadze:

(translated) I didn't hear — I could not hear before that.

Brinkley:

There's a question to you from the audience, and they would like to know if you ever felt in the Soviet Union that you were going to have a coup d'état or being toppled because of taking a more passive approach to the Berlin Wall coming down and German reunification. Was there a fear of that?

Shevardnadze:

(translated) I would like to say special — to deal with this issue. I wanted to deal with this issue. By the way... (pause)

Brinkley:

Did — do you hear the question?

Shevardnadze:

(speaking, no translation)

Brinkley:

Excuse me for a minute. We're not hearing the translation.

[Translator]:

Hello? Yes.

Brinkley:

Is the translator there? (inaudible).

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[Translator]:

OK. I would like to say that —

Brinkley:

We'll try to get the technical — (Shevardnadze and someone else start to say something) Can you hear us?

Shevardnadze:

(translated) Yes, yes, yes. Hello. I would like to say — I would like to mention this issue before, that falling of the German fall and German unification was not one-time process; it was like component of entire process of ending of Cold War.

Brinkley:

Very good. Thank you for that remark. We're going to have to close for the evening because we've run over by about 20 minutes. I think we could have gone on for another hour or two. And I want to thank all of our panelists, not just for coming here and being a part of this, but for your role in history. You're all great men, and we really appreciate you sharing the observations. Thank you all. (applause)

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