

One Germany disturbing idea

By DAVID WOOD

Newhouse News Service

WASHINGTON — The vision of a reunified German superpower is hurtling toward reality with stunning swiftness.

East Germany — the hard-line, jack-booted communist state carved from the rest of Germany by the Red Army amid the rubble of World War II — effectively has collapsed under the pressure of public demands for an end to communist rule.

As East Germany's leaders cave in to these demands — agreeing to free elections and opening the nation's borders to those who want to leave — the country is becoming virtually indistinguishable from its Western counterpart.

And if indistinguishable, Germans wonder, what's the point of having two Germanies?

The answer seems compelling to Germans who recognize that combined, the two Germanys would produce an industrial-strength superpower whose output of Mercedes, high-tech weaponry and Olympic athletes would make it the pre-eminent economic and political power across Eurasia from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

"The unity of the Fatherland," West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl says, "cannot be ignored by anyone."

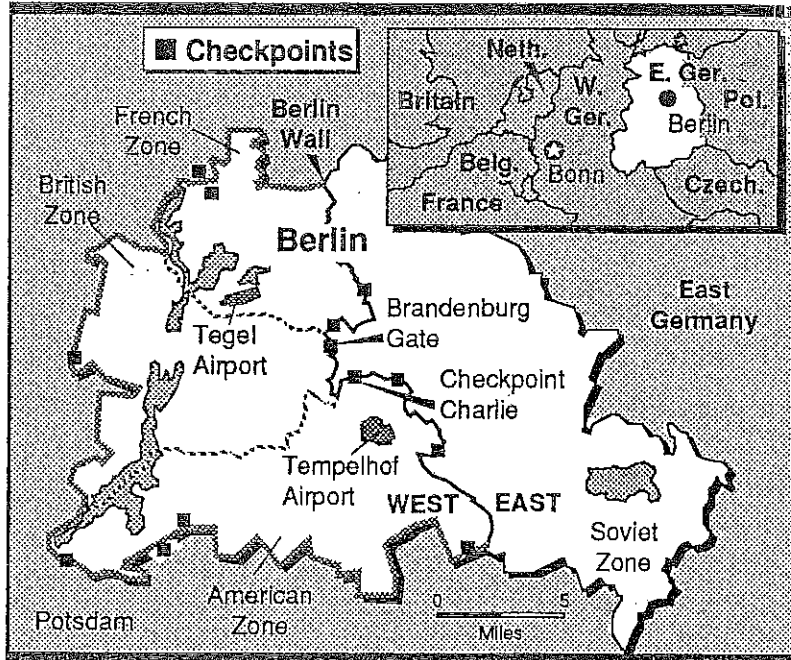
What Germany might do with all this power is a chilling question for nervous European capitals that were overrun by the German army twice this century, and by Americans and Russians whose security until this week had been intertwined with reliable German allies.

Few might mourn the demise of East Germany's totalitarian government, or the destruction of the hundreds of miles of concrete, mine fields and barbed wire that now cut a swath through Germany.

But amid the celebration there is an undercurrent of concern.

"What worries me very much is that old-fashioned populism, nationalism and anti-Semitism can easily emerge in all this confusion," says Charles Gati, an expert on Eastern Europe at Union College in New York.

President Bush said Thursday he was "elated" by East Germany's



Knight-Ridder Tribune News/DAVID JAHNTZ

ANALYSIS

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decision to open its borders, noting that it leaves the Berlin Wall with "little relevance."

But Bush refused to "go into a lot of hypotheses" about what the revolutionary changes mean, saying it is "way too early" to speak about German reunification.

Reunification has for 40 years been a favorite subject of scholars because it had seemed so distant. But in the power centers of London,

Paris, Washington and even Moscow, the "R" word and the deep emotions it stirs had been stashed nearly out of sight, hidden from scrutiny beneath layers of diplomatic double-talk.

As late as Wednesday of this week, French and other European diplomats in Washington were confidently asserting that the reunification problem could be postponed for two years, when Germany could be absorbed into the newly integrated European economic system and German power thus bounded.

And senior U.S. officials, while endorsing the concept of reunification, were saying this week that stability must come first.

But this week's revolution in East Germany has swept these plans aside, and political leaders on both sides of the collapsed Iron Curtain, are discovering to their dismay that reunification is careening down the track with nobody in charge.

"The amazing thing is that this is just happening — nobody's planning it," says an East European diplomat. "The Russians pretend it's not their problem, the Americans pretend it's Germany's problem, and the Germans pretend it's no one's business — nobody in the whole world wants to address it," he says.

in many European capitals

White House officials say they aren't so much ignoring the situation as they are simply being caught flat-footed.

"Everybody underestimated the extent of popular pressure on the government" of East German party leader Egon Krenz, says a senior White House official.

A top State Department policy-maker, speaking with diplomatic understatement, concedes, "Our ability to affect the direction and the outcome is marginal."

At the State Department and Pentagon on Thursday, plans and assessments that were hurriedly revised earlier in the week were shredded as officials struggled to come to grips with the new reality — and along with it, a series of new unknowns:

- Will a newly reunified Germany retain its membership in the NATO military structure or declare itself neutral?

- What of the thousands of U.S. nuclear weapons on West German soil?

- How should the United States deal with the inevitable pressures to remove those weapons and the 247,000 American GIs stationed in West Germany to prevent an invasion from the East?

In Moscow, Soviet Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennady I. Gerasimov gave the Kremlin's blessing to East Germany's disintegration. "Perestroika on their own terms," he said.

Despite that sunny reaction, the Soviets have their own concerns about reunification, at bottom reflecting their experience 45 years ago when 20 million Soviets died at the hands of the invading Wehrmacht.

Senior White House officials say they believe Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev's tolerance would snap if East Germany were to secede from the Soviet military and economic blocs under a reunification scheme.

20. Elie Wiesel Ink/Brush October 13, 1986
Courtesy of Susan Conway Gallery, Washington, D.C.

Name _____



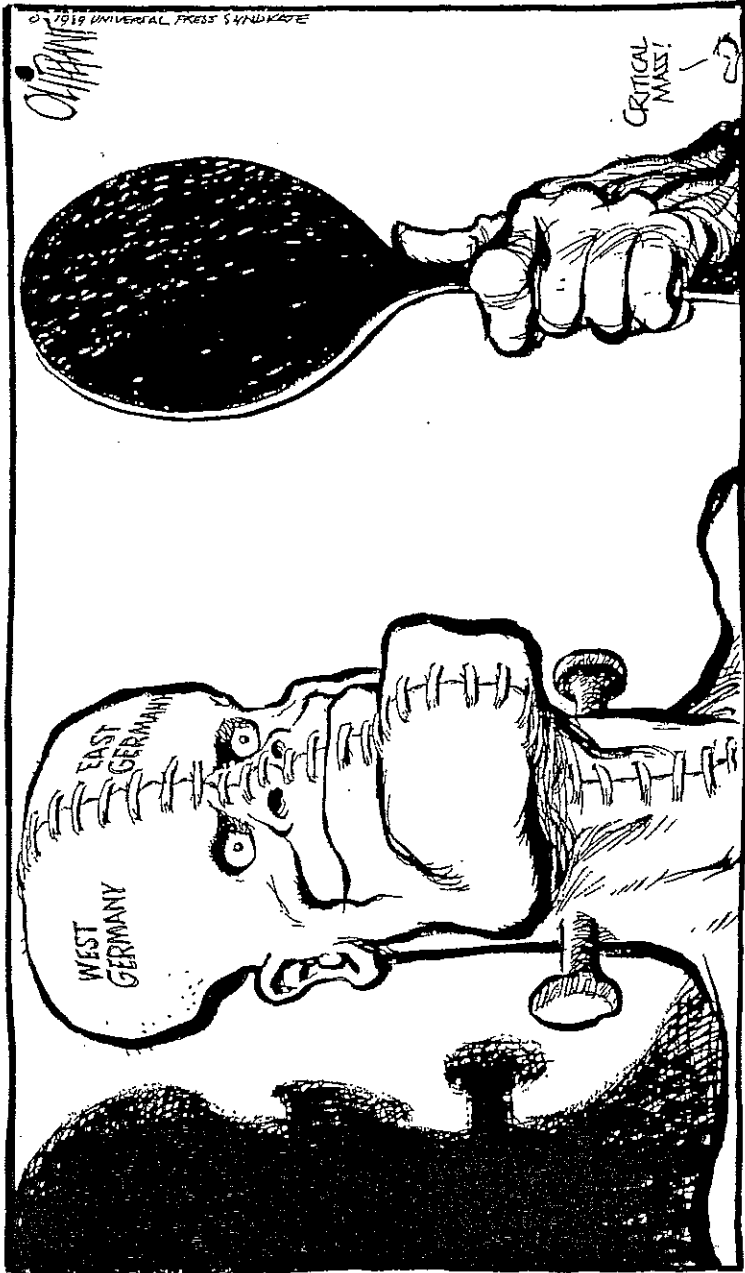
THE VIGIL — ELIE WIESEL, NOBEL PEACE PRIZE 1986

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Questions for political cartoons

1. When trying to understand a political cartoon it's important to look for clues the artist gives to make sure the point is conveyed. Compile a list of clues you see in this cartoon that provide hints: _____
2. Based on your interpretation of the hints, what do you think the artist is conveying? _____
3. Why do you agree or disagree with the artist's bias/perspective? Be sure to include historic details to support your answer. _____

40. **And Germany is Reunited** Pen/Ink/Brush December 12, 1989
Courtesy of Susan Conway Gallery, Washington, D.C.



And Germany is reunited.

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In Germany, the return of a bad dream.

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