

Chapter 8

“Say One Thing and Think Another:” Internal British Debates in the Late 1980s on Germany’s Potential Reunification

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During the 1980s, no one within the British government welcomed Germany’s probable and irresistible reunification. On this very issue, “we have to say one thing and think another,” Charles Powell, the principal foreign policy advisor to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, noted already in 1984.¹ He articulated what many within the UK’s chancelleries wrote in various memos, reports, and summaries of discussions throughout the decade.

The Cold War status quo suited the United Kingdom well, but British officials concluded it was unsustainable. Soviet power was slowly waning. Without this constraint, the Germans were bound to seek to live together. British planners believed that the Americans, slowly moving away from Europe, were going to become less invested on the continent. Hence, the most likely outcome was a less constrained German state at the center of Europe. Britain’s interests would be harmed, and London’s leverage to avert such result would be limited. A majority argued that novel, creative, or radical policy solutions were needed. And yet, as newly declassified documents attest, UK policymakers concluded that others would pull Britain’s chestnuts out of the fire. Many claimed that France would oppose German reunification. Most important, however, was the mainstream view: the Soviet Union, in spite of its worsening situation, would once again let its tanks roll into Eastern European capitals rather than see Germany unified. In addition, a number of British diplomats concluded that further European integration would anyhow constrain the Germans, despite the fact that London’s own political leadership resented the consequences of such deeper European ties.

For all these reasons, throughout the decade, UK policymakers did not foresee either the contours of the ultimate outcome or the swift-

ness of eventual developments, and so postponed confronting painful choices. To underpin this conclusion, I rely primarily upon recently declassified documents from the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister's Office, both collected at the UK National Archives, as well as upon various other documentary records.

Changed Circumstances: Britain, Europe, and the World in the 1980s

Consigned to the backdrop of international politics throughout the 1970s, the German Question gained increased importance during the 1980s. Massive changes in global and regional politics pushed it back on center stage. Most crucially: the Soviet Union, ever the weaker great power, now faced significant challenges to even sustain its competition with the United States. British planners concluded already during the summer of 1979 that the fundamental contest between East and West was being settled. The Soviets were losing. The menacing size of Moscow's armed forces could not but threaten European nations. Yet things were looking grim from the Kremlin's perspective. In economics, the balance had been firmly tilted. Technologically, the Russians were behind. In military affairs, both economics and technology were weighing increasingly heavy. More important, however, was the fact that the political foundations were crumbling, as Moscow had to rely more and more on coercion to control an otherwise rather pliant population. The British concluded that such Soviet power retrenchment would ultimately eliminate the restrictions under which the two German states had conducted their policies since the late 1940s. And yet, with an attitude that permeated UK thinking from the late 1970s to the final days of the 1980s, the British planners also determined that Moscow would not relax its grip on Eastern Europe, and would rather intervene by force than lose control. As the 1970s came to an end, various UK diplomats wrote that change—in Europe and, implicitly, in Germany—was unavoidable, but assessed that it was not likely “for many decades.”²

In addition to the transformation of the East-West conflict, technology, demography, and growth were sharpening an economic contest between the advanced industrial centers of Europe, Japan, and the United States—with stark implications for the regional European con-

text. Whereas the United States had been the widely dominant economic power throughout the first decades after the war, both Europe and Asia were quickly catching up—aggressively competing with both the American industrial heartland and between each other. Such commercial rivalry, in turn, was pushing the European Community toward deeper economic and, implicitly, political integration. Within this regional context, the German economic powerhouse was facing fewer security pressures, and was gradually dominating the European Community. “A long-term trend towards normality should not surprise,” the British embassy reported from Paris. Four decades had passed since the war. The scars on various Europeans psyches were becoming “less and less visible.” Nevertheless, the French still did not trust the Germans “very far.” While the British believed growing German concerns for their “purse” to be “perfectly understandable,” the French seemed to resent such German assertiveness. Hence, for both structural and ideational reasons, the Federal Republic’s closest partners were seeking institutions that limited Bonn’s clout.³

British planners throughout the Foreign Office concluded in the mid-1980s that Paris, eager to preserve its sway over West Germany and thus influence Europe’s future, was prepared to invest significant political capital in its “fellowship” with Bonn. The French feared “greatly” the possibility of a neutral Germany—a scenario that constituted their “*angoisse éternelle*,” UK diplomats assessed. Conversely, intent on preserving European stability, the Germans were still willing to “give preferences to France beyond what rational self-interest would suggest.” This constellation generated both benefits and costs for Britain. On the one hand, Franco-German amity was greatly preferable to enmity for the stability and prosperity of Western Europe. For instance, Britain often benefited from the “curbs” set on German behavior by deference to France. On the other hand, such fellowship between the two most important continental actors meant less consideration and fewer resources to spare for others’ “needs and interests.” British officials determined that France’s concessions to Germany were limited. In contrast, the privileged attention the Germans gave to French views allowed Paris to punch well above its weight in Europe. Therefore, once common Franco-German positions were agreed upon, they almost automatically became the “European line,” a test of loyalty for others and—sometimes—a difficult hurdle for British policies.⁴

Officials in London understood that protecting British sway in Europe—and, indirectly, around the world—required becoming more attuned to continental preferences. On the question of “beat them or join them,” all British diplomats concluded that forming a “rival axis” within Europe was neither “responsible” nor “workable.” Yet “joining” was anything but easy. France and Germany shared “common attitudes” on “progress towards European unification,” Anthony Brenton, a UK diplomat on the Planning Staff, wrote, for instance, in 1985. If Britain was not willing to change its attitude to these questions, it had to reconcile itself with “remaining in the outer tier.” British officials concluded that their country’s international orientation, its domestic politics, and its allocation of government resources would all need to be altered significantly in order to retain a comparable seat at the Franco-German table. Both French and Germans had made real sacrifices to achieve even the limited amount of unity on display. To put it simply, one diplomat noted, the British people had to become “much more European-minded” than they were. British politicians and officials would have to develop a “more sophisticated” and “indirect” conception of the national interest. Within the bureaucracy, some thought such adjustment would be in Britain’s long-term interest. Conversely, even the most committed Europeanists were aware that the country’s political and economic inclinations diverged markedly from such a path.⁵

Most important, the Conservative Party of Prime Minister Thatcher loathed all implications—at home and abroad—of such realignment. At home, the Iron Lady was hard at work to free British capitalism of its shackles—and opposed to what she believed were leftist setbacks. In Europe, by the second half of the 1980s the British Prime Minister had succeeded in reducing the UK net contribution to the EC budget. She sought an integrated European market, but resented any concessions on the social, monetary, or fiscal front. As long as the Soviets posed a fundamental threat to democracy and capitalism, as long as Britain remained an indispensable link across the Atlantic, and as long as Germany was divided, Thatcher believed she could achieve her agenda in both Britain and Europe. On top of these political considerations, Britain had been a global power for three hundred years, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl told French President François Mitterrand in August 1986. The British had a “hard time adapting” to Germany being the dominant player in Europe. Both Paris and Bonn had to “hold the door

open” for London, Kohl concluded. Mitterrand agreed, but noted that Thatcher was and would remain particularly difficult—an able forecast of problems to come.⁶

Careful Planning: Germany's Eventual Reunification

Against this international and domestic backdrop, UK foreign policy elites realized that Germany's eventual reunification was not Britain's first-best option—but that London could not say this loudly. By the middle of the decade, officials in London agreed that “history [had] not yet spoken its last word” on the German Question, as Julian Bullard, the UK envoy to Bonn, aptly phrased it. Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe had “no doubt” that the problem of two Germanys in Europe was “not dead.” It was not going to “go away” just because “a politician declares it so.” The division had attractions, for almost all the actors on the European scene, Howe noted in January 1985. “But Germany cannot be permanently divided,” he recognized, “or at least we cannot tell the Germans that it is to be so,” he wrote to his top diplomats. With Germans valuing democracy and capitalism more than unification, such outcome was predicated upon overcoming the division between East and West in Europe. Such “healing” was hard to “visualize,” a change “too profound to contemplate.” Therefore, Britain could offer a verbal commitment to a goal of self-determination that could only come about in circumstances that could not be foreseen at present, Howe concluded. Nevertheless, a policy of providing assurances of support for an outcome nobody desired raised many questions within the British establishment. A vivid bureaucratic discussion ensued.⁷

By autumn 1987, policy planners in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office submitted a wide-ranging analysis regarding Germany's potential reunification. Its lead author, Mariot Leslie, a promising young diplomat, would become London's envoy to NATO two decades later. The planning paper noted that the imperfect status quo suited Britain “well,” and the UK had “no interest in bringing it to an end.” Nevertheless, eventual change in Central Europe and thus in Germany was “inevitable.” Such change would have profound implications for the United Kingdom, and there was little leverage available in order to prevent it. To reach these conclusions, Leslie and her colleagues assumed that communism was a “spent force.” Therefore, Soviet dom-

inance would eventually end. The Americans, more interested in Asia and in their own domestic affairs, would cease their security activities in Europe. Hence, the two alliances would be dismantled. A Europe of free states stretching from the Atlantic to the Black Sea would emerge. At its center would be a united German state, swiftly seeking reconciliation towards an Eastern Europe that would be “inevitably” attracted by “what the Germans have to offer.” The British planners argued that Bonn and Moscow would have a “keen interest in each other,” but also compete for influence on the European continent.⁸

Such a world would pose great challenges for the United Kingdom. Britain would try to remain one of the “Big Three in Europe,” but the relationships would be unequal. Germany would be larger, richer, and uninhibited—a “Central European state which looked East as much as West.” The ties binding advanced industrial societies would restrain the Germans somewhat, but the continent’s center of gravity would move further to the East—“the tone and style of Bismarck’s former capital no doubt rather different from the unpretentious bourgeois comfort of Bonn.” On the one hand, both London and Paris would scramble to use their existent links in order to establish a “privileged relationship” with the new Germany. On the other hand, France, the Netherlands, and Italy would worry. Some—or all—would seek reinsurance in the United Kingdom and, perhaps, also in Russia. In the global arena, economic and technological change would render the “developed world” even “more interdependent.” And even if Japan was rising on the Pacific rim, the United States would remain the most powerful state on the planet, and retain “the closest interests” in Europe. Still, significant differences in European and American “material interests and international priorities” would render the relationship “much more difficult to manage.”

Negative repercussions notwithstanding, most British officials considering Leslie’s planning memo concluded that German reunification was not coming anytime soon. On the one hand, the Soviets could break the stalemate in Central Europe. Yet the British thought that the Soviets had no interest in doing so. Moscow would welcome German neutrality and NATO’s dissolution. However, to achieve such an outcome, decisionmakers in the Kremlin would have to accept a major confrontation with the West, the loss of their Warsaw Pact allies, instability in the Baltic states and in Ukraine, and a major ideological

retreat with unpredictable domestic repercussions. Therefore, Moscow was liable to seek other ways of deploying its "German card" than "laying it bluntly on the table." On the other hand, the West Germans could also elicit change, but only at an unacceptably high price. A small minority within the Federal Republic was ready to contemplate reunification notwithstanding the consequences. Nevertheless, there was a broad consensus around democracy, capitalism, and prosperity in West Germany. Michael Llewellyn-Smith, Howe's personal secretary, summarized what all believed: "Chancellor Kohl (like Adenauer) has given to freedom a higher priority than to unity." Thus, as long as the Soviets controlled Eastern Europe, Bonn would not contemplate forcing the pace of reunification.⁹

Consequently, the crux of the matter rested with correctly assessing the probability of the Soviet Union remaining willing to uphold the Brezhnev Doctrine of intervening militarily to safeguard the status quo. A broad majority within the British establishment could simply not imagine change on this front coming anytime soon. It was far from certain that history would take the course described by Leslie, senior diplomats believed. Gorbachev might fail and his reforms might wither away. The Kremlin's attitude towards Eastern Europe might harden in an attempt to hold on to postwar gains. "Violent convulsions" might shatter Eastern European regimes. The bilateral confrontation between East and West might once again become "fiercer." There were so many uncertainties that predictions had to be "of necessity [...] highly speculative," Foreign Secretary Howe concluded. Therefore, the end of such Soviet control was either unpredictable, "many decades" away, or at "the middle of the next century," officials opined. Or perhaps "much sooner," Leslie wrote cautiously in her study, but even she was probably oblivious to how prescient her postscript would end up being. Given these considerations, British ministers and diplomats concluded that London should focus more on improving its relationship with Bonn, but that no radical measures were needed.¹⁰

Bolder Proposal: Advance into Germany, not Retreat into France

Notwithstanding British trust in the immovability of Europe's post-war security architecture, as 1988 progressed change appeared in-

creasingly probable. Developments in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe proceeded at a pace that even a year earlier had seemed “unimaginable.” The European Community made very rapid progress toward a single market, thereby increasing its attractiveness towards the East, giving cause for concern to U.S. planners worried about European protectionism, and challenging Conservative British politicians to worry about what would come next on the European integration front. As the Reagan Administration was winding down, the expectation of a reduced American commitment to Europe became conventional wisdom in London. With Soviet willingness to constrain Eastern Europeans increasingly questioned and the Germans increasingly in a mood of “national self-consciousness,” many concluded that change was in the air. British officials feared that German political elites were keen to rush to capitalize on Gorbachev’s *glasnost*, were determined to develop closer relations with the East, and had “little feel for the sensitivities of allies.” Most within the UK foreign policy establishment concluded that the artificial division of Europe and of Germany could not and would not continue indefinitely.¹¹

For all these reasons, by summer 1988 intrepid planners within the Foreign Office were challenging their doyens’ conventional wisdom. Britain should adopt a strategy that “advances into Germany, not retreats into France,” Donald MacLaren, a young Scottish diplomat within the London FCO, advised. His logic: The barriers were “coming down.” Gorbachev did not want to abandon socialism, but his economic and political reform efforts were genuine. Britain, Europe, and the world would all be more secure if the Soviet leader succeeded. While the Kremlin could still use force to “reverse the foment [Gorbachev] knows he is causing” in Eastern Europe, such action could only be completed with dramatic consequences at home. Hence, the mighty Germans, “riven with neurosis,” were bound to seek “not to remain dissatisfied forever.” Leaders in Bonn had the nationalistic determination, the strength of purpose, and the economic prowess to achieve their aims. Moscow would accept a neutral Germany, but not tolerate a unified German giant in NATO. Therefore, MacLaren assessed that neutrality was the imperfect but only viable option for the Germans. As the ideological conflict faded away, Washington policymakers would be less and less interested in Europe, the planner suggested. Therefore,

the Americans, having “other fish to fry” and “smaller rations of cooking oil,” might accept the German neutrality outcome.¹²

Consequently, MacLaren argued that a different strategy was needed. He accepted that the British, like most other Europeans, “shuddered” at the idea of a large united Germany. Confronted with Germany’s impending reunification and neutralization, Britain’s default policy was to team up with France in restraining the West Germans. In the short term, this was a correct tactic, aimed at preventing the Germans from forcing overly large Western concessions vis-à-vis Moscow. Nonetheless, over the long term MacLaren argued that the policy of opposition “will blow up in our faces.” Widely expanding the “Silent Alliance” with Bonn was London’s only way to ensure that the Federal Republic’s eventual choices would be taken “in accordance with British advice and not over British objections.”¹³ The memo’s bottom-line: it might be possible to cut a deal with the Germans at the expense of the French. Implicitly, MacLaren recognized that his proposed deal would be expensive, and hid the various costs and compromises behind vague formulations. However, his proposal could potentially work, he claimed, in contrast to the other options available on the table—options that simply masked a desire to hedge one’s bets and do nothing. The Germans “always have and always will dominate Europe,” MacLaren concluded. Britain, for once, should “back a winner.”

Senior members of the British government retorted that change was not expected to come so fast. They hoped that Moscow’s obduracy would absolve them of confronting uncomfortable policy options. Most within the UK foreign policy elite accepted that the “glue” was “starting to come out” of the Eastern framework and that the Germans might be “tempted.” However, a majority did not believe that a neutral unified Germany was very likely—as the Germans themselves would not want it, even if the Americans were to leave. In contrast, most agreed that Bonn’s influence in Europe would significantly rise. In terms of solutions, some simply assumed that the Soviet leadership would soon “damp down” the process in Eastern Europe, rendering change anything but “imminent.” Others were less optimistic about Moscow’s abilities, and believed the key lay in European integration. Deeper and deeper ties were offering a basis for cohesion within the continent’s West and a “pole of attraction” to Eastern Europe. In addition, these officials concluded that the “Community bicycle” of Eu-

ropean integration had to keep moving forward for the Germans not to “fall off” and choose a path towards neutrality in order to achieve reunification. Yet these Europeanists were fully aware that keeping this bicycle in motion contrasted “rather sharp” with the British government’s policy—and, in particular, with Prime Minister Thatcher’s objectives. This clear incongruity with British political preferences notwithstanding, other options but for relying on Moscow or pursuing European integration were not considered.¹⁴

By the end of autumn 1988, after reading the planning exchanges within his own department, Secretary Howe chose to delay and postpone, relying on the Soviets to save the British establishment from disagreeable decisions. Howe told his personal secretary that there were many “striking insights” in MacLaren’s paper. Keeping an open mind vis-à-vis the German Question was no longer enough. The British government had to respond “imaginatively” to the German reunification challenge. MacLaren’s paper was “provocative,” however. Its analysis was “absolutist” and “more challenging than prescriptive.” There was “deep-rooted Soviet suspicion of all things German,” Howe claimed, following the view of a majority within the FCO. It was therefore “wrong” to put all British eggs today into the German “basket” that might well be the “market leader” in “some years’ or decades’ time.” In terms of action, the Foreign Office should “try to get across” to Prime Minister Thatcher the “sensitivity of the subject,” Howe concluded, understanding early on that frontal opposition would be counterproductive. And yet the Secretary determined that London’s diplomats in Bonn should only try “filling the role of confessor or candid (listening) friend” when it came to West German officials’ views on their own future. Such “confessor” policy was very far from MacLaren’s “advancing into Germany” option, and UK diplomats spent the subsequent months doing what they had already done before: observing and worrying.¹⁵

Conclusion

By not taking any leaps of faith throughout 1988 or during the first months of 1989, the British set themselves up for either accepting Germany’s unification without protestation or frontally opposing Bonn’s designs. As other scholars have noted, there was little at the end of 1989 and the beginning of 1990 that the British could ask for in exchange for

their acquiescence.¹⁶ The Americans were able to remain a European power by ensuring that Germany unified within NATO. The French were able to advance European integration as a means of expanding Paris' influence and constraining Bonn. The Germans, in turn, got to see their country unified and sovereign. Even the Soviets, the true losers of the 1989-1990 affair as they were forced to abandon an empire in Eastern Europe, got some consolation prizes and promises from Bonn and Washington.¹⁷ In contrast, anything the British could ask for went against German, American, or French preferences. Having waited for so long, hedging its bets throughout the 1980s, London got nothing. Had the Germans considered MacLaren's proposal, had it been articulated? We will have to wait for a broader opening of German archives to pass judgement on this. Nevertheless, given that London never tried, it wasted even the smallest of chances to have succeeded.

Notes

1. Charles D. Powell, "Note for Thatcher: Memo by Budd," October 11, 1984, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNA), Prime Minister's Office Records (PREM) 19/1764.

2. UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Planning Staff, "Planning Paper on Managing Russia," July 11, 1979, TNA, PREM 19/238—available online; UK FCO Planning Staff, "Planning Paper on the Management of East-West Relations," May 2, 1980, TNA, PREM 19/238—available online; Julian L. Bullard, "Letter to Howe: The German Question," October 5, 1984, TNA, PREM 19/1764; and, Colin R. Budd, "Record of a Discussion between the Secretary of State and Chancellor Kohl in Bonn," October 3, 1985, TNA, FCO 33/7992; see also Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "Power, Globalization, and the End of the Cold War: Reevaluating a Landmark Case for Ideas," *International Security* 25, no. 3 (Winter 2001), pp. 5–53.

3. For instance, Roger B. Porter, "Letter to Sprinkel: Minutes of Economic Policy Council, 17 June 1985," July 22, 1985, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (RPL), Beryl Sprinkel Files OA17747, box 12, EPC Meeting US/EC; or Alyson J.K. Bailes, "Planning Paper on the UK/French/FRG Relationship," September 18, 1985, TNA, FCO 33/7965. For British assessments of the European framework, Christopher A. D. S. MacRae, "Letter for Munro: On the State of Franco/German Relations," May 7, 1985, TNA, FCO 33/7814; and John W. D. Margetson, "Letter to Jenkins: Visit of the President of the Federal Republic of German to the Netherlands," June 7, 1985, TNA, FCO 46/4469.

4. Colin A. Munro, "Letter for Bailes: The UK/French/FRG Relationship," June 27, 1985, TNA, FCO 33/7814; and "Letter to Dain: Delors," September 18, 1985, TNA, FCO 33/7965. For the second argument, good illustrations are Pauline L. Neville-Jones, "Letter for Dain: Planning Paper on the UK/French/FRG Relationship, RS 021/3/12, DD 1985/380," November 19, 1985, TNA, FCO 33/7816; Colin A. Munro, "Letter to Jennings: Franco-German Relations," December 6, 1985, TNA, FCO 33/7925; or Michael Alexander, "Letter to Boyd: France, Germany and the UK: Bilateralism within the Alliance," October 20, 1987, TNA, PREM 19/3101.

5. Anthony A. Acland, "Letter for Armstrong: Britain, France and Germany," November 19, 1985, TNA, FCO 33/7816. Also, Anthony R. Brenton, "Letter for Bailes: The UK/French/FRG Relationship," June 18, 1985, TNA, FCO 33/7814; and Colin A. Munro, "Letter for Bailes: Planning Paper on the UK/French/FRG Relationship," June 20, 1985, TNA, FCO 33/7814. For the last assessment, I am thankful to Ambassador Rodric Braithwaite for his invaluable insights.

6. For an excellent U.S. assessment, Charles H. Price, "Telegram to State Department: The New Radicalism Eight Years On: Where Is the Thatcher Revolution Now?," February 16, 1988, RPL, Nelson Ledsky Files, RAC Box 9, United Kingdom—1988—Cables (2 of 8); for the German view, Hermann von Richthofen, "Memo for Foreign Office: Political Half-Year Report Great Britain (Politischer Halbjahresbericht Grossbritannien)," September 1, 1988, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PAAA), B31, ZA 160.037—translated by the author. Horst Teltchik, "Gespräch Des Bundeskanzlers Kohl Mit Präsident Mitterrand in Heidelberg [Conversation between Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand in Heidelberg]," August 26, 1986, in Matthias Peter and Daniela Taschler, *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), document 225, pp. 1199-1205—translated by the author. Also, Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London: Harper Press, 1993); Stephen Wall, *A Stranger in Europe: Britain and the EU from Thatcher to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); and Charles Moore, *Margaret Thatcher: Everything She Wants*, vol. 2 (New York: Knopf, 2016).

7. Colin R. Budd, "Letter to Powell: The German Question," October 11, 1984, TNA, PREM 19/1764. The quote is from FRG's Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, at the United Nations. Also, Michael Llewellyn Smith, "Letter for Bullard for the Secretary of State: The German Question," January 8, 1985, TNA, FCO 33/8083.

8. Mariot Leslie, "The German Question and Europe," September 29, 1987, FCO Planning Staff, declassified in November 2017 at author's FOI Request 1023-17; for an interesting comment on a draft, Stephen J. Wall, "Letter to Leslie: The German Question and Europe," September 8, 1987, TNA, FCO 33/9160; also relevant is Michael R. H. Jenkins, "Telegram to FCO: Whither the US?," November 23, 1987, TNA, PREM 19/2565.

9. Russ Dixon, "Letter to Llewellyn Smith: The German Card," July 17, 1987, TNA, FCO 33/9160; see also Llewellyn Smith, "Letter for Bullard for the Secretary of State: The German Question."

10. For Howe's views on such long-term planning, Lyn Parker, "Letter to Gore-Booth: The German Question and Europe," October 7, 1987, TNA, FCO 33/9160. Also, for instance, the missives by John E. Fretwell, Rodric Braithwaite, Julian L. Bullard, or Jeremy Greenstock, all in autumn 1988, and all to be found in TNA, FCO 33/9160 and FCO 33/9443. For the Franco-German dimension, see Ewen A.J. Fergusson, "Letter to Fretwell: Franco-German Relations," January 15, 1988, TNA, FCO 33/9443.

11. Instructive are Julian L. Bullard, "Letter for Howe: Annual Review for the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) for 1987," January 11, 1988, TNA, FCO 33/9655; Charles D. Powell, "Letter to Parker: Prime Minister's Meeting with Herr Strauss," July 6, 1988, TNA, PREM 19/3768 and the accompanying

memos and reports; or Timothy Eggar, "Letter to Howe: Fifth Anglo German Round Table for CDU/CSU and Conservative MPs," October 7, 1988, TNA, FCO 33/9777. For the US assessment, see Unknown Author, "The State of the Transatlantic Alliance," February 10, 1988, RPL, Nelson Ledsky Files, RAC Box 5-6, NATO Summit March 1988 Memos-Letters-Cables (2 of 12).

12. Donald MacLaren, "East/West Relations and the Future of Europe: Or, Genscher Looks for Opportunities and We Think We've Got Problems," July 11, 1988, TNA, FCO 33/9777.

13. And not over British "dead bodies," MacLaren's superior morbidly joked in an accompanying memo. David A. Gore-Booth, "Letter to Wright: The German Problem," February 12, 1988, TNA, FCO 33/9777.

14. John E. Fretwell, "Letter to Wall: Brzezinski's Lecture," February 12, 1988, TNA, FCO 33/9777; Mark Lyall, "Letter to Gore-Booth: The German Problem," July 19, 1988, TNA, FCO 33/9777; and Patrick Wright, "Letter to Wall: The German Question," October 24, 1988, TNA, FCO 33/9777. The "bicycle" analogy is attributed to Christopher Mallaby. For the foundations and assumptions of UK diplomats' thinking on Soviet intentions, Ann Lewis, "Letter for Fretwell: East/West Heads of Mission Conference," August 9, 1988, TNA, FCO 82/1947.

15. Stephen J. Wall, "Letter to Wright: The German Question," October 24, 1988, TNA, FCO 33/9777. The Soviet suspicion of "all things German" was "in this connection rather comforting," Tim Eggar, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, concluded. Richard Makepeace, "Letter to Waldegrave: The German Question," October 17, 1988, TNA, FCO 33/9777. For the conclusions drawn from these discussions by the UK envoy to Bonn, Christopher Mallaby, "Letter for Fretwell: The FRG and the West," October 14, 1988, TNA, FCO 33/9669.

16. Patrick Salmon, "The United Kingdom: Divided Counsels, Global Concerns," in Frédéric Bozo, Andreas Rödder, and Mary Elise Sarotte, eds., *German Reunification: A Multinational History* (London: Routledge, 2017), 153–76.

17. For an interesting debate around this question, for instance Mary Elise Sarotte, "Perpetuating U.S. Preeminence: The 1990 Deals to 'Bribe the Soviets Out' and Move NATO In," *International Security* 35, no. 1 (Summer 2010), pp. 110–37; Kristina Spohr, "Precluded or Precedent-Setting? The 'NATO Enlargement Question' in the Triangular Bonn-Washington-Moscow Diplomacy of 1990–1991," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 14, no. 4 (Fall 2012), pp. 4–54; and Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrin, "Deal or No Deal? The End of the Cold War and the U.S. Offer to Limit NATO Expansion," *International Security* 40, no. 4 (Spring 2016), pp. 7–44.