CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION
Mikhail Gorbachev in a face-to-face live TV programme reacted sharply to Ronald Reagan's accusations of human right violations, lack of democracy and foreign policy deficiencies in the erstwhile Soviet Union by saying:

"Mr. President, you are not a prosecutor and I am not an accused. Let's not wreck each other. We represent big countries. Let's treat ourselves as equals". Getting treated at par with the West had been Russia's long standing urge. The presence of a perpetually hostile Germany in the heart of Europe had only circumscribed further the Russian participation in power politics with the West as a geographically adjacent and politically equal partners. Admittedly, the Soviet Policy towards Germany and the German Question, to a great extent, had been conditioned by historical experiences. Germany for long stood as a stumbling block in the way of Soviet desire to push towards the 'warm water' in the West in order to shed off its geo-political isolation. At the same time, the long drawn out German search for fertile agricultural land in the East had been perceived by Russians as a direct threat to their territorial security.

The Soviet perception of Germany as a threat to its territorial integrity and a hindrance to its movement toward the West seem to have substantially influenced the 'Soviet Policy towards the German Question' during the period undertaken for this study. However, it is important to underline here that while defining its approach to the German Question the Soviet leadership rather tried to underplay such a central security concern in order to project and pursue this

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1. Mikhail Gorbachev in an interview with "Lary King Live" of the CNN INTERNATIONAL TV programme at 0730 hrs on 7.4.93 as witnessed by the researcher himself.
issue in a wider ideological framework. Such a tactical approach seemed to be preferable to the Soviet leadership in spite of the fact that the containment of the ever present German desire for territorial expansion had been a matter of immediate concern not only for the Soviet Union but for every other neighbouring European State. Somehow Germans seem to have never reconciled themselves to the fact that the idea of nationalism they espoused should have been co-terminus with the existing German territorial boundaries at a given point of time. Such an urge for national unity in the first instance and later expansionism along with their consequences constitute the core of the German Question in general and since 1871 in particularly.

During the period under investigation in this Study the German Question manifested itself in three mutually antagonistic dimensions. For the Germans how to realize their existence in history constituted the real German Question. For the Western allied powers how to integrate Germany militarily, politically and economically into the postwar European system formed the basic German question. For the Soviet Union, how to make Germany the gateway to penetrate deep into Europe and the rest of the West, at least ideologically connoted the crux of the German Question.

Despite such a sharp difference in perceptions and objectives it was, indeed, amazing to see the Soviet Union fight shoulder-to-shoulder with the Western Allied powers against Hitler. It was, in fact, the common necessity to fight against a common enemy that brought them together. But differences persisted emanated as they did from the basic divergence in their objectives. Stalin wanted an authoritative command over the whole of Eastern Europe.
Churchill was aspiring to retain the British say in Mediterranean as it proved to be a vital link to India which was a British colony at that time. The French were out to settle their scores against the defeated and decimated Germans. Americans, of course, were for the time being interested primarily in winning the War and registering their contribution in winning the war as well as ensuring their postwar presence in Europe in order to cast off their long standing political isolation.

Admittedly, at the end of the War, it was Soviet Union, which, out of the four major wartime allied powers, benefited the most. The Soviet leader, Stalin, was successful in conquering more territory in Europe than any other previous Russian ruler which, no doubt, facilitated the fulfillment of the long cherished Russian/Soviet desire for pre-dominance in Eastern Europe. Stalin also was successful in creating a situation in which the Western powers were left with no other option but to choose between the 'Sovietization', Finlandization or partition of Germany. Keeping the Versailles experience in mind, in no case did the victorious Allied powers want to leave the otherwise defeated Germany alone. At the same time they could not digest the idea of whole of Germany aligned to one or the other Allied power exclusively. They, at last, agreed to disagree. Germany was divided.

The division of Germany, to a large extent, facilitated the division of Europe between the Western Allied powers, on the one hand and the Soviet Union, on the other, apparently on ideological ground. The traditional European power structure was, thus, ruptured beyond repair. The advent of nuclear weapon in the meanwhile further widened such a rupture.
Europe became a theatre of cold war. The West Germany started enjoying dating with the West and the East Germany on its part, dribbling with the Soviet Union.

Stalin, in the meanwhile, in 1952 offered Soviet willingness to German reunification with the sole condition that it should be a neutral state. The Western powers rejected this offer outrightly by dubbing it as a ploy to entice the West Germans away from joining the Western military alliance system. The West Germans on their part not only turned down Stalin's offer but also went subsequently a step forward by joining the NATO in 1955. The subsequent formation of Warsaw Pact in 1955 with East Germany as one of its founding members further institutionalized the division of Germany as well as the East-West divide.

Any rapprochment between the two Germanys was by now logically interlinked to the dynamics of the power politics between the two superpowers. The division of Germany thus proved to be the corner-stone of the postwar antagonistic politico-ideological-military structures in Europe. Even a marginal deviation in the political allegiance of either of the two Germany from its respective bloc structure was perceived as a radical change in the existing balance of power in Europe and the world.

It was at this stage that the Soviet leadership tacitly accepted the division of Germany as the final judgment delivered by the history. From now onwards, Soviet preference for the status quo in Europe became apparently manifest if not pronounced and visible. If the reunification of Germany was to take place by any chance, it must suit the Soviet security requirements, i.e., neutrality of
Germany. The Western powers and the West Germany were adamant at this point. Hence a deadlock.

Interestingly, George F. Kennon did favour the Soviet demand regarding German neutrality by logically suggesting that German neutrality would satisfy Soviet security needs. According to him, that might encourage the Soviet leadership to withdraw from Eastern Europe militarily. As his views went entirely unheeded the deadlock persisted.

But the status-quo too did not suit the Soviet Union, ideologically at least. The Soviet leadership had at least two compulsions in this regard:

1. Spreading Marxism Leninism the world over, and
2. Projecting the Soviet State as a protector and guarantor of Socialism.

In reality, however, the status-quo favoured none of the aforesaid two points. Hence the Berlin crisis of 1961. Berlin, in deed for the USSR, was an ideological and political window to the West. The Soviet Union, therefore, used Berlin as an anvil to test the Western endurance vis-a-vis the German Question. The Soviet leader, Khrushchev, in fact consciously used Berlin for reconnoitering the actual Western commitment towards the West Germany by following the famous Leninist strategy of 'one step forward, two step backward'. Such a Soviet policy regarding the Berlin crisis and the German problem as a whole was evident from the fact that in face of Western readiness to prefer "holocaust to humiliation" on the issue of Berlin, Khrushchev immediately showed willingness to negotiate with the West. In fact, the Soviet condition for peace treaty with Germany preceding any solution of the Berlin crisis as well as
the wider German Question proved to be a ploy to stop further negotiation on the German question. Khrushchev's offensive against the West vis-a-vis Berlin and the German Question was stage-managed. Any serious retrospection of the Berlin crisis, in the light of Khrushchev's voluntary confession that "the crux of the matter was the context of strength and will power between the Soviets and Western powers which was being waged over Berlin", sufficiently proves this point.

In sum, the Soviet Union had been pursuing two-dimensional approach towards the German Question:

1. Germany as a threat to the Soviet territorial security, and
2. Germany as a politics in the wider East-West clash in their various ramifications-political, strategic and ideological.

In no case was the Soviet Union interested in the solution of the German Question undermining those afore mentioned two of its objectives.

Also, as emphasised elsewhere in this study, the German question, by its very nature has never been solved, it only changed its appearances over a period of time.

In spite of the goal of reunification having been achieved in 1989 it may be argued that the rising neo-Nazi movements in united Germany makes this issue still wide open and relevant for further investigation.