Steven Muller

Democracy in Germany

TRAUMA IS A WOUND OR SHOCK PRODUCED by sudden injury, as from violence or accident. For Germany and the Germans, the twentieth century has been a succession of traumas: the war of 1914–1918; the inadequate Weimar Republic, burdened by the ruinous reparations of the vengeful Treaty of Versailles; the hyperinflation of the 1920s; the evils of National Socialist dictatorship; the resulting war of 1939–1945; the total occupation of Germany by the victorious Allies; the loss of territory in the East, involving a flood of Germans fleeing westward; division into two mutually hostile states; and, most recently, unification produced by the sudden collapse of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Today, Germany and the Germans are still in trauma—the trauma of unification, obviously, but in fact the whole succession of traumas which followed each other so rapidly that there was not time to recover from the last before the assault of the next. Normal is defined as usual, regular, natural: the one and only decade of the twentieth century during which German national life could be described as normal was the first.

Above all, this series of traumas includes what is now called the Holocaust, which uniquely and permanently colors both German self-perception and the perception of Germans by others. Anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and genocide are anything but unique. What set the Holocaust apart was the unprecedented application of industrial technology and the factory-based manufacturing process to the extermination of several million human beings. This was neither a sudden, brief, and uncontrollable explosion of rage, nor merely

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the work of a few. Instead, what those who conceived and ordered this extermination called the "Final Solution" was a systematically planned and efficiently executed program to create and operate a new industry solely and explicitly for the purpose of mass murder. Thousands of people were employed in this process: collecting and transporting the victims, storing and putting them to work while in storage, exterminating them, and disposing as productively as possible of any usable remains—for example, fat drained from the cremation process was used to make soap. These thousands worked at such tasks not just for weeks or months, but for several years. Their work in the murder industry was the source of their daily bread.

Even now, with the facts on record, the reality of these events defies understanding and challenges belief. According to the Bible, when God found the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah very grievous, he destroyed the cities of the plain. The Germans, however, have survived. Of all the traumas which have beset them, responsibility for the Holocaust is unique and the worst. It is, understandably, as little spoken of as possible. But it remains an indelible stain.

Could the Holocaust have been perpetrated by any people other than the Germans? The question is obvious, but not the answer. There is nothing in the earlier German past which clearly and inexorably points to such an outcome. The history of the Germans in Europe does to some significant extent differ from that of their neighbors—particularly in regard to the long absence of a German nation-state —but in most fundamental respects the Germans seemed more or less like their neighbors. What appears to have happened is that in 1933, the Germans—frustrated, impoverished, and demoralized—turned to a leader capable of infecting them with his own madness. That madness was institutionalized into a ruthlessly repressive totalitarian system. In the twentieth century, such collective national intoxication with an ideology and a leader, institutionalized by totalitarianism, has not in fact been a uniquely German phenomenon. There are obvious parallels with Mussolini's Italy, Stalin's Soviet Union, Mao Zedong's China, and Pol Pot's Cambodia. In this context, the unique obscenity of the Holocaust could be attributed primarily to the unrivaled evil incarnate in Adolf Hitler and the moral perverts whom he assembled to serve him. The special Germanic ingredient in the Holocaust could, then, be re-

duced to proverbial national traits, such as obedience, efficiency, discipline, and orderliness. Such traits can often prove to be a virtue. In the service of evil, however, they become a vice. Doubtless no other people could have perpetrated the Holocaust in precisely the form it took. Yet, given a leader as evil as Hitler and ruthless totalitarianism, not only Germans might collectively participate in organized obscenity on a large scale.

Does the Holocaust doom the German future? Not necessarily, but it will affect that future, inescapably. Ages ago, Euripides wrote that the gods visit the sins of the fathers upon the children. Even if that means no more than a sense of shame and guilt for the Holocaust, that guilt is now part of the German heritage, though there are many ways to compensate for such a sense. There may be, for instance, an excessive pursuit of national virtue, in the hope that championship of good will overcome past championship of evil. There may be excessive national caution, lest any manifestation of boldness might raise the specter of a return to evil ways. There may be denial, not of facts but of relevance to the present. There may be provocation, based on the claim that if the children are condemned to be prejudged for the guilt of their fathers they might as well imitate or even exceed their fathers' sins. There is almost certain to be excessive national preoccupation with the regard of others, looking always for any hint that accusation for the past is part of present dialogue. In these and other ways, the Holocaust will haunt the German future, and it is sharply and deeply part of the present German condition of trauma.

ILLUSIONS OF NORMALCY

There are those who believed that during four decades of peace and growing prosperity between 1949 and 1989, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) had achieved normalcy. This belief is mistaken, but it is worth discussing because of the tribute it pays to a grand illusion. During those four decades, the Federal Republic consistently felt the presence of that other German state from which it was separated by force; accommodated to the stationing of foreign troops on its soil in substantial numbers, albeit not as an army of occupation per se, but as allied foreign protectors against aggression from the East; tolerated Berlin as a city not only still de jure

under foreign occupation and divided, but serving in its Eastern part as capital of the other German state; and became the most favored client state of the United States. None of this was normal. However, during those same decades, the Federal Republic also became ever more closely intertwined with its neighbors in Western Europe in general, and France in particular; relied for its security on the American nuclear umbrella and the NATO Alliance; functioned effectively as a constitutional democracy; and became one of the most prosperous free-market economies on the face of the globe. Those Germans who lived in the Federal Republic, although still traumatized, thus were sheltered in an environment that could be likened to a most luxurious sanatorium—one in which they could and did feel better every day. And there was no expectation that this status quo would not hold firm indefinitely.

As late as 1988, there was little inkling within the Western Alliance that Soviet power would suddenly disintegrate. The division of Europe and the division of Germany were taken for granted for the foreseeable future. Western Europe had become addicted to the illusion that it could build its community without regard for Central and Eastern Europe, firmly and perhaps forever in the grip of Soviet imperialism. In the Federal Republic, this illusion of the permanence of the status quo was not only shared with Western Europe in general but fostered with special fervor. West Germans enjoyed maximum security with minimum responsibility, plus extraordinary prosperity. The goal of national unification was universally invoked as an unavoidable piety, but with a degree of commitment directly proportional to the perceived likelihood of its impossibility.

The East Germans for their part had little illusion that the GDR was normal. Its durability depended entirely on the ability of the Soviet Union to maintain its existence — a fact incontrovertibly proven by the circumstances of its sudden demise. The East Germans did, however, share the illusion that the Federal Republic represented normalcy. What many appear to have wanted most was to become instant full participants in that normalcy—an illusory aspiration, which reality is denying them with a vengeance. Western Europe and the United States, whose own addiction to the illusion that the division of Europe would last indefinitely led them also to share in the West German illusion of the normalcy of the

Federal Republic, now risk perpetuating an illusion when they view unified Germany as merely a larger version of the familiar, older Federal Republic of Germany.

In fact, the first united German state in nearly fifty years is a new creation. No single action more succinctly symbolizes this novelty than the decision to relocate the German capital to Berlin—no matter how that decision was arrived at nor how it will be implemented. The newness of unified Germany depends on far more than the fact that sixteen million people who had lived apart for forty years were suddenly added to over sixty million who had experienced a drastically different society during this time. What counts far more is, first, the recreation of a single German state and, second, the fact that this state is no longer on the fault line of a Cold War. Germany is, therefore, free—free from dependence on its American patron for security and free to shape its own identity and foreign policy.

It would be difficult to exaggerate the impact on the Germans of the restoration of a unified German national state. While it is not appropriate to make a lengthy detour into German history, it is relevant to recall that, long after France and England had firmly established themselves as nations, Germany remained an aggregate of principalities—kingdoms, dukedoms, autonomous city-states, and the like. Only in 1871—with blood and iron—was the Imperial German state created under Bismarck's authoritarian direction. And—as already noted—that state both inflicted and experienced trauma during almost the whole of its existence, until its destruction in 1945. During most of the nineteenth century, national unity was a German dream—primarily belonging to reformers because conservatives were wedded to the status quo of the separate principalities—dreamed to bring, at last, the Germans with their own state into the family of nations. The years between 1945 and 1989 once again denied that dream; and, while few Germans would agree that Germany was the principal aggressor in 1914, the post-World War II division of Germany was perceived by many Germans as divine punishment for the evils of National Socialism, the Holocaust, and Hitler's war. In this context, unification into a single German state without bloodshed seems a miracle, ordained to mark the end of penance for past sins. One question before the Germans is whether

their newly-united single Germany will fare better than its unhappy predecessor.

THE NATURE OF GERMAN DEMOCRACY

A distinctively German pattern of political democracy has fully taken shape in the Federal Republic, derived primarily from the Basic Law, conceived while what later became the original Federal Republic still consisted of the three Western zones of postwar Allied occupation. This Basic Law serves as a constitution, but contains a provision (ARTICLE 146) providing that a sovereign united Germany is free to adopt a new constitution. Constitutional revision in the wake of unification is under consideration, but no essential revisions of the Basic Law are expected. The Basic Law also owes something to the democratic commitments of the three occupying powers, particularly the United States. While the Basic Law now serves effectively as the constitution of the enlarged Federal Republic, it lacks the hallowed character of the American Constitution, just as Germany herself lacks a historic democratic tradition, such as the British, which grew slowly over centuries. The federal structure, the bicameral legislature, and the Constitutional Court provided for in the Basic Law all show traces of American influence, but they differ significantly from American practice. German federalism is very real. The *Länder* (States) represent the historic tradition of formerly autonomous principalities, although of course most of today's *Länder* constitute aggregations of much smaller earlier entities. The *Länder* also participate directly in the legislation and administration of the federation through one house of the legislature, the *Bundesrat* (Federal Council), which is comprised of appointed members of the *Land* governments. Unlike members of the US Senate, who are directly elected and do not take instruction from their state governments, *Bundesrat* members directly represent their *Land* governments. However, the *Bundesrat* rarely originates legislation and has substantially less power than the US Senate. The fundamental legislative power in the parliamentary system of the Federal Republic is vested in the *Bundestag* (Federal Parliament), which also elects the Federal Chancellor, who heads the federal administration.

While the German federal system thus features elements of both separation of powers and checks and balances, and while the *Länder* retain the residual right to legislate insofar as legislative power is not assigned to the Federation by the Basic Law, it is true, nevertheless, that in practice German federalism displays substantially greater nationwide consistency than is the case in the United States. Not only is there a great deal of concurrent legislation in Germany, meaning that in a great many areas both the Federation and the *Länder* can legislate, and in these cases federal legislative authority has priority, but the bulk of federal legislation is administered by the *Länder* rather than by separate federal agencies. Federation and *Länder* share taxes, and the Basic Law (ARTICLE 107) provides for statutory "reasonable equalization between financially strong and financially weak *Länder.*" Also, there is no tradition of substantially autonomous local government, so German federalism does not feature a strong third level of government beneath the federation and the states. In short, the German federal system protects and preserves state rights, but it is designed more to facilitate than to inhibit effective government.

The US Constitution, more than any other, reflects the underlying conviction that government is a necessary evil, whose authority therefore must be limited as much as possible. The one absolute value to which the US Constitution is committed is the freedom of the individual (and individual property). To preserve that freedom, the role of government is not only limited, but divided and held constantly accountable by election. The German Basic Law, on the other hand, reflects the belief that the state is indispensable and that its power and efficiency are necessary, even though German experience underscores the urgency of confining state authority strictly to the rule of law and making it regularly accountable by election. German democracy, then, like European continental democracy generally, values and supports the authority and power of government, while subordinating that authority and power both to the rule of law and to the will of the people as expressed in free elections. As German democracy has matured in the Federal Republic, the rule of law has evolved more into its most pronounced feature. Key issues are frequently referred to the courts for adjudication, and in reaction concern has been expressed that the *Bundestag* is becoming a debating society rather than a decisive law-giving

parliament. In the press and in academic circles, there is talk of the legalization of the political process. The prevailing characterization of the Federal Republic as a *Rechtsstaat* translates not only as a state under the rule of law, but also conveys the notion of the just state. In this context, Germans appear to look for the just state more in the legal process and in the courts than in the political arena.

There does seem to be a pronounced German inclination toward social justice, defined specifically in terms of social equality. In the ideal German state, degrees of prosperity would not be perceived as a problem, but real penury represents a social injustice which justifies and requires state intervention. A passion for social justice is not usually mentioned in an inventory of German national traits. But such an inventory often includes references to German tendencies to self-righteous assertions of personal rights and virtues under the law and in society, and even greater self-righteous readiness to criticize faults of others in this regard. Could one suppose a connection between an acknowledged German thoroughness, sense of order, and self-righteousness on the one hand, and movements of social reform on the other—perhaps all the way from Luther to Marx? Was it the label "National *Socialism*" which early on gave the Nazi movement some initial plausibility and appeal? However that may be, it does appear that justice for all is one of the highest aspirations of German society, even at the price of some restraints on individual freedom. Where Americans think of "liberty and justice for all," Germans may be more likely to think of "justice and liberty." The democracy of the Federal Republic certainly has given strong past evidence of a commitment to social justice and has worked explicitly and hard to combine market capitalism with a strong and extensive safety net for the less affluent. That safety net presumably made it easier to allow for the large and perceptible gap between the life-styles of the well-to-do and the less well-off in the old Federal Republic.

In the GDR, social justice, whether part of the German national character or not, was part of the ruling orthodoxy. (One of the greatest surprises to this observer after the fall of the Berlin Wall was the genuine shock and anger voiced by many East Germans when the relative luxury in which their leaders had lived became public knowledge—one would have thought they would at least

have had suspicions.) In light of such past orthodoxy, reinforced perhaps by national traits, how likely is it that East Germans will embrace the harsher social inequalities of capitalism? Ever since unification, East Germans have been disappointed that their standard of living could not rise to the West German level more quickly, if indeed not at once. They are still waiting, but with greater awareness that, even when the long wait for parity is finally over, affluence will not be experienced in equal proportion. If they feel dissatisfaction or anger as a result, how, in the long run, will they—given the new democratic opportunities offered by unification—find political expression for their sentiments? For that matter, how, over time, will West Germans express their reaction to the fact that the costs of unification are far larger and longer-lasting than originally acknowledged?

THE PARTY SYSTEM

The party system which had existed in the old Federal Republic is increasingly obsolete. Major changes must unavoidably occur, and quite soon. As long as the Federal Republic was one of two German states, its entire range of political competition occurred within a narrow band, frozen very near center. In terms of the traditional political spectrum, communism on the far Left and neo-fascism on the far Right were outlawed. The center of gravity lay with the Free Democratic Party (FDP)—a minority "liberal" party strongly committed to the market economy—whose support was necessary to enable either the Social Democratic Party (SPD) or the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) to form a coalition government. The SPD's ability to move significantly to the Left was restricted by the need to stay as far as possible away from any resemblance to the Socialist Unity Party (SED) which ruled in the GDR. The ability of the CDU/CSU to move significantly to the Right was inhibited partly by the need for support from the FDP, by memories of the 1930s, and most of all by the moderate centrism of the majority of German voters. The ecologically radical Green movement, as it began to function as a party, could only gain in political influence by working in coalition with the SPD and was thereby compelled to move closer to the political center, even though that movement served to call its raison d'être into question.

In today's Germany, unified and freed of the other constraints imposed by the Cold War, the political spectrum will widen, so as to tolerate greater scope both on the Right and the Left. Indeed, this phenomenon is already in evidence on the Right in the form of the *Republikaner*. The big question, however, is whether the center of political competition in the gradually maturing unified Federal Republic will continue to be occupied by two large parties which can alternate in forming governments, albeit in coalition with one or two smaller partners; whether two large parties will compete by each moving significantly off-center, so as to be more sharply distinguishable from each other; or whether the moderate center of voter sentiment will crumble sufficiently to engender a more fractionated multiparty system, whose existence would inevitably dilute the ability of government to function decisively. The future of parties and party systems in the democracies after the Cold War is, of course, a question throughout Western Europe. In particular, to the extent that the collapse of the Soviet Empire is perceived to undercut the credibility, indeed the viability, of democratic socialism, it remains to be seen on what basis of ideas a party large enough to govern can emerge in opposition to moderate, socially conscious market-economy conservatism. Europe is, after all, not sufficiently Americanized to adopt the more-government Democratic versus less-government Republican traditional political alternation of the United States. At least in the short run, the evolution of changes in European parties and party systems will be much affected by the relative prosperity of European economies. The moderate centrism of voter sentiment in Western Europe during recent decades did not derive exclusively from the Cold War; it was also encouraged by prosperity sufficient to engender majority satisfaction with—and attachment to—the status quo. Protracted absence of prosperity—or at least the visible prospect of prosperity—undercuts the appeal of the status quo, and therefore of conservatism, and thereupon nurtures the appetite for opposition capable of offering opportunity for attractive change. Sooner or later an alternative to liberal conservatism must emerge.

While these general considerations also apply to Germany, the future of the political parties in Germany must include at least two unique considerations. The first is represented by sixteen million new voters who lack previous experience with democratic competi-

tion in politics—with the marginal exception of those elderly few whose memories go back to before 1933. The abrupt absorption of the East Germans into the Federal Republic—swift to the point of indigestibility—has so far given them no alternative but to utilize the preexisting party system which was thrust upon them as part of their new citizenship. As they become more experienced and active participants on the newly unified national scene, however, they must and will inject their voices more distinctively into the political process. This is not to suggest that there will be or ought to be a large single "*Ossi*" party, which would only serve to frustrate the national integration that must be the product of unification in due course. But while there is no call for a major separate *Ossi* political voice, it is also unlikely that former citizens of the GDR will fail to seek significant change in the parties available to them—change facilitated by the fact that the federal nature of the German state does not confine major electoral opportunities exclusively to national elections. On the one hand, some *Ossi* resentment of the disappointing fruits of unification to date may indeed find expression in small, angry splinter parties—the smaller the better for the health of the unified German political system as a whole. On the other hand, the existing parties will need to cater to some extent to the still new voters in the five new *Länder,* at least when significant new voter sentiment becomes more clearly expressed and definable. If, for example, earlier thoughts about an East German yearning for social justice prove to be valid, then such sentiment is likely to find expression in the democratic political process.

The second factor consists of the opportunity—and probable necessity—to accommodate a more pronounced and explicit sense of national identity. The success of unification itself depends on some shared sense of national identity among *Wessis* and *Ossis.* Yet, neither West nor East Germans bring much to the table in this regard. West Germans, who have been consciously—indeed, self-consciously—living down the repellent nationalist excesses of the Third Reich, managed to finesse the issue of national identity by sheltering behind the fact that they represented only a portion of the German people and also by proclaiming their allegiance to the European Community (EC), to which their attachment was indeed pronounced and unfeigned. In time, West Germans were, in addition, able to express an apparently satisfactory degree of national

pride in terms of their economic prowess, the unrivaled excellence of their standard of living and, as mininations often can, the triumphs of their athletes. The East Germans, for their part, were required to demonstrate enthusiastic national commitment to a state which was imposed upon them and to virtues most of them doubted. Now that German politics cannot fail to be explicitly responsive to unified German nationhood, German parties and voters face the unavoidable task of confronting and mastering the delicate subject of national identity. The manner in which different parties respond to the question of national identity may initially prove to be divisive, perhaps to the point of becoming a principal political issue between or among the parties. Some more pronounced political assertion of German national identity is required because it is healthy—or, perhaps better said, because its absence would be unhealthy. Assertive German nationalism, however, would raise obvious problems which would be bound to produce controversy. Thus, the way in which Germans resolve the matter of national identity will play a large role in determining the evolving course of the German political parties and of the workings of German democracy.

GERMAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

Speculation concerning the evolution of German national self-identification begins with recognition of what Germans today do and do not carry with them from the past. Obviously absent from their past is a long, mature, and rather clearly defined tradition of life together in a national state. For centuries before 1871, there were Germans, who knew that they were Germans, and who shared a language and a rich national culture, but not a national state. The so-called Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation remained myth and convenient fiction rather than reality, and in effect served largely to prevent a unified German state from coming into being in the very center of Europe by sustaining a rationale for the preservation of over three hundred separate German principalities. There was a recognizably—even distinctively—German culture, the *Kulturgemeinschaft* or *Kulturstaat*, still so much admired by Madame de Staël in *De l'Allemagne* just barely over two centuries ago. Without a clearly defined national state, Germany was more a state

of mind than an actual fact, a matter of blood and descent rather than national citizenship. It is no accident that to this day German citizenship rests on jus sanguinis, the nationality of the parents, rather than jus soli, the place of birth. There may for long have been "German soil," but it was not legally part of the territory of a German national state.

What is missing, therefore, in the German past is the shared political experience of life together in a common national state. It is tempting to make too much of this, but a German past splintered for so many generations into so many separate, small political establishments left perceptible traces. To this day, for instance, a visitor is apt to notice that Germans tend to make rather sharp comments about differing tribal origins, for example, Bavarians about Prussians, Rhineländers about Saxons. This kind of comment is common in other European countries as well, but among Germans there is often an edge to it so cutting that one may wonder if its sharpness betrays the absence of the greater tolerance bred by centuries of common political citizenship. For a people based in the middle of Europe, the Germans also sometimes seem unexpectedly and profoundly provincial in some of their attitudes. One may wonder whether this provincialism too is the legacy of parochial political life, in the absence of the unifying nation-state. There was no German empire at the time that the Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, French, British, and Swedish empires flowed and ebbed across Europe and over the seas. Germany acquired colonies only between the first unification in 1871 and the end of World War I. If colonialism breeds cosmopolitanism, this has not been part of the German experience. The absence of a German state also delayed the emergence of a national German political class, accustomed to govern on a national and international basis. Without a state, there were no German statesmen to rival the French, British, Spanish, and Austrian national leaders of more than two centuries ago. The Hapsburg Empire was a major national actor on the European scene for centuries while there was no German state.

Only five generations ago, then, German nationalism was a romantic aspiration rather than a fearsome threat. The very recency of its more current reputation should be recognized. Prussia achieved German unification by force of arms and persistent aggression. Political and military German nationalism was obviously perceived

as a threat by Germany's neighbors. Fear of German power was a major factor in 1914, and the crippling of German power was a major objective at Versailles. Then came Hitler, then 1945. A familiar, unhappy story, but an unavoidable reminder that the experience of Germany's political and intellectual leadership with actual nationhood was both brief and erratic. Initially, with only a few distinguished exceptions, leading German intellectuals and political and economic leaders supported German nationhood as a progressive and reforming step away from petty despotisms and toward a modern, free-trade, market economy. Subsequently, they became more appalled by the terrifying excesses of nationalism—except for those who themselves became party to those excesses. Finally, after 1945, the intellectuals in West Germany began to think that they were able during the Cold War to dismiss nationalism as an anachronism. Those in the East either pretended that the GDR was a nation or said nothing. Now, presented unexpectedly with a unified national state again after all, they are confused but often find their confusion difficult to admit. The fact that many of these German intellectual and political leaders have sublimated their confusion by invoking the vision of supranational Europe offers an eerie parallel to their predecessors who, after Napoleon, tried to invoke a supranational pan-Germanism.

One may speculate further as to how and whether this historic and literal German parochialism relates to German xenophobia. Negative reaction to strangers is, of course, not a uniquely German problem. Nevertheless, German xenophobia—directed not only against non-Caucasians but particularly against Jews, Gypsies, Eastern Europeans in general, and to some degree indeed against all non-Germans—appears to be exceptionally strong, deeply felt, and edged with contempt. This xenophobia was not a product of National Socialism—it was already present for the Nazis to exploit—neither was it merely a contemporary expression of resentment against the punitive peace imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. Nor, despite some illusory hopes to the contrary, was xenophobia purged from German society as part of the destruction of the Third Reich.

An effort to find roots for German xenophobia might begin with the thought that "Germanness" was for so long a matter of ethnicity (common blood) and language (common speech) rather than statehood (common citizenship); that so-called bloodlinks and shared

cultural attitudes tied Germans to each other more sharply than could shared citizenship; and that has been and is the case for other peoples long accustomed to common statehood. Next, one might consider that over time feelings of envy developed among Germans of those other neighboring peoples who had achieved national statehood—and whose armies perennially marauded over Germany's soil and population. Such envy would have been very likely to produce feelings of inferiority, which threaten self-esteem. Because Germans continued to lack political statehood to which they might have looked for the restoration of self-esteem, they fell back on the virtues of the blood ties and the shared language and culture which for them was the essence of their sense of national community. Overemphasis on the virtues of their blood and culture could thus be interpreted as a classic manifestation of aggressive-defensive response to deep-seated feelings of inferiority on a national basis. The widely noted German tendency to lecture self-righteously to others as to proper thinking and behavior could also be related to a national sense of cultural and ethnic superiority which developed in compensation for the enduring absence of a German nation-state. Sometimes one does get a sense both of a heavy-heartedness (*Schwermutigkeit*) in the German character, which may be shared with other peoples who live in cool and often dreary northern climates, and of a self-conscious sense of German clumsiness (*Unbeholfenheit*), derived from the fact that German culture does not feature the lightness of wit and spirit which Germans find diverting among other peoples, whose lighter touch they envy even while deploring their lack of seriousness.

With respect to the intensity of German anti-Semitism, even that could perhaps relate to the long existence of hundreds of small German principalities. The presence of Jews in Central and Western Europe in recent times is, without question, related to the evolution of mercantilism and the rise of cities. The development of market economies required bankers, moneylenders, merchants, and traders. In order to profit from growing mercantilism, those in power licensed and indeed sponsored Jews to play those roles which were regarded as un-Christian and unworthy of the nobility, and, of course, beyond the abilities of peasants and servants. While Jews continued to be objects of contempt—identified as a strange and repellent tribe collectively responsible for the death of Christ—they

nevertheless were treated with relatively greater tolerance in proportion to the perception that they were useful, even indispensable. In existing nation-states, the highest social power was in the hands of the national rulers and was most heavily concentrated in those capital cities. As a result, the Jews who served the rulers were primarily visible in the capital cities. Among the Germans, each small principality had its rulers and their seats of power; each in due course acquired its Jews to deal in money and trade; and, therefore, the Jews in each principality were a visible and despised presence to almost all those who came to the growing cities to trade and, ultimately, to borrow. To know Jews in each of the German principalities became almost unavoidable, and in the context not only of who they were but what they did. And what they did was not only un-Christian but increasingly powerful: both rulers and ruled became dependent on the Jewish network of money and trade which extended throughout the German principalities. As the market economy grew, so did the influence of Jewish bankers and traders, thus facilitating the myth of an evil, corrupting Jewish conspiracy to make an indecent profit from the honest labor of Christian folk.

However much on or widely off the mark these thoughts may be as to its causes, the fact of German xenophobia cannot be denied. It erupted into the organized genocide of the Hitler period— directed primarily but not exclusively at Jews. And, despite the awful consequences of that eruption, it is manifest again in the newly unified Germany. In Germany today, however, the expression of xenophobia by violence is against the law. Great multitudes of Germans—the very kind of people who kept quiet under the Nazis—have taken to the streets in protest against xenophobic violence and desecration. The hope must be that the new Germany will, in the long run, outlive the negative legacies of the past and that, in the short run, the rule of law and the democratic process will restrain the manifestations of xenophobia within the bounds of civic decency. The larger question is whether xenophobia can be excluded from German national self-identification. That can only happen if German self-identity is defined less by aggressive-defensive attitudes toward the outside world and more by greater emphasis on the positive virtues of German nationhood. There is also hope

in the realization that xenophobia is not an inbred characteristic but an acquired condition, susceptible to being unlearned.

The most difficult but also quintessential task before the Germans and their intellectual and political leaders today is very simply to manage unified Germany with self-confidence. The basis on which self-confidence can be nurtured and grown is present. For almost five decades, Germans have been neither aggressors nor victims. In sharp contrast to the past, their national unification was attained without force of arms or spilling of blood. In the Federal Republic, a political system has been adopted which provides both democratic process and the rule of law. While this system has initially been imposed in the five new *Länder* without preparation, there is, in principle, no reason why the East German population will not adapt to its use. For five decades, then, the Germans have done nothing wrong (a statement that only makes sense in the context of the many wrongs perceived as resulting from German action in the eight decades from the 1860s to the 1940s). While separated, the two German states proved to be satisfactory neighbors to their respective allies, and their neighbors put no obstacles in the way of their unification. United Germany claims no land from its neighbors and seeks to work in partnership with them. And the national statehood which Germans for so long had lacked, which Germans had earlier gained by aggression and twice lost in bitterness and hatred, was suddenly bestowed upon them virtually without their doing.

National self-confidence has been a problem in the German past: undercut by self-pity during the long era when the Germans lacked a national state of their own; troubled throughout by a deep sense of insecurity reflected in intense preoccupation with external opinion; and distorted into self-assertiveness and self-aggrandizement once unified statehood had been gained at the expense of Germany's neighbors. Must national self-confidence remain a problem in the German future? If so, this would be due less to current reality than to the legacy of past trauma. That legacy persists in at least two respects. In the first instance, there is the question whether a nation burdened with guilt for the Holocaust can ever hope to fully recover national self-confidence. The regime which perpetrated this atrocity was totally destroyed, its actions universally denounced, its surviving leaders tried and convicted of crimes against humanity,

and its former citizens now nearly all aged into death. Today's Germans need not perceive themselves nor be perceived as directly or collectively guilty for past crimes. But what of collective shame and self-conscious awareness that German national self-assertion is bound always to kindle recollection of the darkest hours of German history? Both, in fact, are likely to persist, but not necessarily so as to inhibit national self-confidence which stops short of self-aggrandizement and self-glorification.

A second challenge to the self-confidence of German national self-expression lies in the persisting tensions between citizens of the old Federal Republic and citizens of the five new *Länder*. Four decades of separation have left their scars, and mutual ill will between East and West Germans is perceptibly greater than was the case when the GDR still existed. West Germans initially approached the consequences of unification with some guilt about their state of prosperity as compared to the relative deprivation of the GDR. They were also prepared to be generous. However, as the full extent of economic and social decay in the GDR was revealed and the full cost of social recovery became apparent, what remained of a West German sense of guilt nurtured less charity than resentment. East Germans were perceived as corrupted by the regime that they had had to endure—their work habits eroded by lack of reward and recognition for a job well done; their virtue compromised by accommodating too readily to the regime that oppressed them; and their needs so great as to defy the limits of the possible.

East Germans seem to have dreamed of the opportunity to share in the affluence of the other Germany without absorbing all of its perceived vices: selfishness, Americanized superficiality, and social injustice. When they realized that they had become lesser citizens of a single state committed explicitly to assisting them to adopt the ways of those whom they perceived to be their new masters, they tended to become outraged, internally, and sullen, externally. Their feelings of inferiority, induced by their earlier lack of freedom and material wealth, turned into dislike of those whom they saw as exploiters in the guise of Good Samaritans. And, in their case also, a sense of guilt about putting up with too much, too long nurtured less relief at the advent of freedom than bitterness toward those in the West who were better off, not because they were more deserving but only because fickle fate had been kinder to them. When the

East Germans came to realize how long the process of social equalization would take, they became more embittered and depressed. Indeed, for those older East Germans who view forty years of the GDR as a blighting waste of their lives, and now perceive the remainder of their lives as worthless because social renaissance will flower only after their deaths, a mood of dejection is more than understandable.

It is obviously difficult to engender a strong and healthy sense of national identity from a basis of such lingering internal antipathy. On the other hand, however, perhaps nothing would overcome internal bickering more effectively than a new and increasingly self-confident unifying sense of national identity. The progress of unification will seem less onerous to all Germans when it is clear that the full costs have reached their maximum and that thereafter matters can and will only improve. The binding tie of common national sentiment and self-expression will become ever more desirable and potentially helpful. Germany's self-identity is, however, a matter of as much importance to Germany's neighbors as to the Germans themselves, and must now in particular take account of the struggle for a new European identity as well. What kind of self-confident German sense of national self-identity is consistent with the larger European context?

GERMANY IN EUROPE

Until the end of the Cold War, there was occasional but increasing talk that the heyday of the nation-state was coming to its end. Not only did the stand-off between two nuclear superpowers and their allies severely restrict any single state's autonomy in international affairs, but the international flow of goods and currencies obliterated traditional economic autarchy and tied national currencies and markets inextricably into a larger economic community, which would soon attain global scope. There was also talk that nationalism itself was passé. Such talk was leavened by reminders—long before the disintegration of Yugoslavia—that the yearning for popular self-determination remained strong. In an effort to square this circle, the concept of a "Europe of Regions" was sometimes introduced: a vision of a European superstate, whose building blocks might devolve down to provinces or regions such as Bavaria, Brit-

tany, Catalonia, Wales, Lombardy, etc. Less talk along these general lines has been heard since the collapse of the Soviet superpower and the disintegration of its Warsaw Pact bloc of satellites. The desire of Poles, Hungarians, Rumanians, Bulgarians, and others to manage their own national affairs gave new significance to the concept of the nation-state. What had been Czechoslovakia split into separate Czech and Slovak states, the Baltic states regained their separate autonomy, and the Soviet Union itself dissolved into newly separate nation-states. Indeed, the population of the GDR is the only population of a former Soviet satellite state which became part of another existing state rather than pursuing an autonomous national course.

This post-Cold War revival of the nation-state spared Germans the possible irony of at last peacefully regaining a unified national state just when the whole concept of the nation-state might have been going out of style. At the same time, it has already been noted that attempts by leading Germans to finesse the question of German national self-identity by invoking the vision of a European superstate are futile. These attempts do, however, point to the great dilemma of unified Germany—namely, how best to live with its neighbors. This is the very problem for which no predecessor German state had a satisfactory answer. It is also precisely the problem whose solution will probably constitute the single most influential factor determining the character of German national self-identity. Nations do not entirely determine their own self-image. They are mirrored in the eyes of their neighbors and, while they may accept or reject the validity of the perception of others, they invariably react to external perceptions. Unavoidably then, the Germans will look for positive reinforcement in their neighbors' perception of them. Such positive reinforcement will strengthen the self-confidence of a German national self-image which is attractive to Germans and acceptable to their neighbors; the absence of such external positive reinforcement will have a negative effect on a German national self-image.

The problem of Germany's relations with her neighbors involves two main issues on which the German national interest is unlikely to correspond to the national interests of neighboring states. These divergences relate less to the purpose of German policy than to the size and power of the unified Federal Republic, and therefore ap-

pear unavoidable. Germany's neighbors, though accepting German unification, remain concerned about unified Germany's disproportionate size and power. In making every possible effort to reassure their neighbors, the Germans are likely instead to kindle rather than allay their neighbors' fears. The two main issues involved are the evolution of the European Community and the evolution of Central and Eastern Europe.

The European Community evolved primarily from the core of the linkage between France and the Federal Republic of Germany which began in the 1950s and whose great opening achievement was the European Coal and Steel Community. Because France, before 1871, had been identified as the archenemy of German unification, because that unification was achieved at French expense, and because Franco-German hostility had been a factor in three successive wars, the Franco-German partnership and the EC rooted in that partnership became the single greatest guarantee of the peaceful character of the Federal Republic, not only to its neighbors but also to itself. However, both the Franco-German partnership and the resulting EC evolved on the basis of a smaller Germany—not all that much larger than France, and not grossly disproportionate to the rest of Europe. Unified Germany is quite simply too large for the EC as it now exists. However, a large single Germany outside the EC is totally unacceptable to Germany's neighbors. The Germans understand this, and because their economic welfare sufficiently depends on the EC, they find no attraction in leaving it. On the contrary, Germany will not only cling to the EC with all her might but will also work with relentless diligence to increase the authority of the EC and tighten its bonds as much as possible—all for the purpose of proving to its neighbors that German national self-identity is so inextricably European as to be forever safe. However, every step the Germans take in this direction is likely to be perceived by other EC members as a transparently obvious German power play, designed to amplify and confirm the central power of a Community only so that the oversized Federal Republic can transform the EC and all its members into mere satellites of greater Germany. In fear of German domination, some EC member states will delay or defeat moves toward greater cohesion and authority of the EC. The Germans, aware that their size and power makes them a threat within the EC unless there are procedural and institutional checks,

will press for these checks so as to limit German power. However, these checks will also limit the power of all member states and, therefore, are apt to be perceived by those other members as but another attempt to weaken them so that the German giant can use its power more freely. This potential scenario of epic futility represents only half the problem.

The other half involves the nations of Central and Eastern Europe. This area is of essential importance to Germany, in terms of both its stability and its economic development. Absent stability, the area is likely to produce waves of refugees. Absent economic development, the area cannot become a major market for German goods, and a growing trade with Central and Eastern Europe is the key to German prosperity. Even for the old Federal Republic, the relatively small volume of East European trade made at least a marginal difference. The five new *Länder* began as an economic desert—the currency integration of 1990 priced everything made in the former GDR above the means of countries to the East—and thus with one stroke destroyed the only foreign market for East German goods. The future of the German economy, but especially the revival of economic productivity in the five new *Länder,* depends on finding new markets for German goods in Central and Eastern Europe because there is little hope of sufficiently increasing Germany's share of other world markets to absorb the new excess East German capacity.

Because of the economic importance of Central and Eastern Europe, the Germans cannot avoid doing all in their power to promote stability and economic development in the area. For the other members of the EC, however, Central and Eastern Europe are not as crucially important as they are to Germany. If the Germans argue for inclusion of these states in the EC, they will no doubt be suspected of diluting the EC with added members so as better to control it; of enlisting their economic satellites to further strengthen their power within the Community; and of grabbing the lion's share of these new markets for themselves at the expense of other EC members. However, should Germany pursue her goals in the area outside the EC, the criticism would be even stronger: the Germans would then be accused of establishing their own exclusive client states in Central and Eastern Europe, in violation of their commit-

ments to the Community, and in order to pursue their own unilateral and self-aggrandizing course.

The point here is not to embark on a further excursion into German and European foreign policy, but rather to recognize as clearly as possible that it will prove to be difficult for the Germans to develop a stable and self-confident national self-image in the face of the suspicious doubts of their neighbors. Obviously, much will depend on the ability of the Germans to deal with their neighbors calmly, reasonably, and sensitively. A Germany unified without aggression, governed by a democratic constitution, chastened by a century of trauma, and profoundly interdependent in relations with her neighbors to the West has every chance of rising to this challenge. Enduring distrust among her neighbors, however, can frustrate and negate even the very best of German efforts. Europe has no satisfactory experience with a large, unified German state at its center. Having prevented the existence of a single German state for centuries, and having then suffered the consequences of an aggressive state created and maintained by the force of arms, Western Europe has more recently lived well with one of two German states; but neither the EC nor Europe as a whole has yet had long to live with a large, unified, and peaceful German neighbor. Understandably, then, Europe will for some time regard the new Germany with caution, mixed with suspicion at the least provocation. The risk Europe runs is that excessive and overt suspicion of Germany will create a self-fulfilling prophecy: perceived distrust from her neighbors is likely to undermine Germany's self-confidence; yet, even a tentative Germany—let alone a newly aggressive-defensive one — will exacerbate neighborly suspicions and fears.

In the face of so many difficulties, it would be all too easy to make pessimistic assumptions about the German future. But the fundamental situation is in fact positive. Europe — not only the European Community but all of Europe—has not only peacefully accepted a unified German state, but now cannot function effectively either without it or against it. Germany for her part can only survive in peace and prosperity within Europe, neither without it nor against it. Mutual love between Germany and her neighbors is not necessary. All that is necessary is mutual understanding and trust sufficient to sustain effective and increasing mutual interaction and partnership — and that level of mutual understanding already

exists. To permit this mutual understanding to degenerate would have such obviously disastrous consequences as to guarantee that Germans and their neighbors have every reason to remain committed to each other.

As the Germans recover from more than a century of trauma, the challenge they face is also the finest opportunity in their history: to live among their neighbors in the heart of Europe as a people peacefully united in a German nation-state, seeking nothing more nor less than common peace and prosperity. As the trauma of unification gives way to recovery, a new German leadership generation should emerge, capable — intellectually and politically— of enabling the Germans to rise above past torments: at long last to live, neither as the victim of Europe's rivalries nor as Europe's curse, but as the key to the fugue of European harmony.