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Germany at the Frontier

Timothy Garton Ash

It was "historic," to be sure, but exciting it was not, this first free all-German election in nearly sixty years. Indeed, it was a considerable national achievement to make such an important election campaign so consummately boring. I say this with only slight irony. For there is something truly remarkable in the matter-of-fact normality with which Germany has settled down to being a united democratic state.

A victory on December 2 for the existing coalition of Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and Free Democrats (FDP) was, in the last weeks of the campaign, taken to be a foregone conclusion. The only outstanding issues were the precise numbers, and hence the new balance inside the governing coalition, and the fate of the smaller parties. In the event, the Christian Democratic party would fragment under the impact of unification—the ghost of the Weimar Republic was painfully revived to walk the ramparts just one more time—proved thoroughly unfounded. On the contrary, there was an overall consolidation of the existing party landscape.

Following a ruling by the constitutional court, the 5 percent hurdle was applied separately to the region of the former GDR and to that of the former West Germany—loosely but universally called simply "East" and "West"—although only for this one election. As a result, the coalition in the East of the Greens and the Alliance '90—which includes some of the people who actually started the "October revolution" of 1989—got into the new Bundestag, as did the seventeen candidates of the so-called Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS)—the successor to the ruling Communist party—which polled 11 percent of the vote in the former GDR. But to judge by present trends both these parties would seem likely to disappear from the Bundestag in the next federal election in 1994. Meanwhile the Greens in the West, who had even more problems than the Social Democrats in accepting unification, and whose ecological themes had been successfully taken up by the established parties ("We are all Greens now"), failed to reach the 5 percent hurdle and therefore did not enter the Bundestag.

Consequently, the first democratically elected parliament of the new Germany is dominated by the four long-established parties, the CDU and the Bavarian CSU, to which it is permanently, if formally, married, together with the FDP, and the SPD, whose title now once again accurately reflects its position; for its D has always stood for Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands). The CSU is in a slightly weaker position than after the last election, partly because it got only (only) 52 percent of the vote in Bavaria, but mainly because it did not manage to establish itself in the East (that is, geographically to Bavaria's north). Earlier in the year it seemed possible that Saxony and Thuringia, at least, might give a significant vote to a CSU sister party, the DStU, but in the event virtually all those votes went to Chancellor Kohl's CDU. The CDU and FDP, by contrast, did even better in the East than in the West.

The Free Democrats, with an overall 11 percent of the vote, got the best result of all. On top of their regular voters, a curious combination of business and intelligentsia, they apparently won many floating or new voters convinced by the argument that the Christian Democrats should not be given an absolute majority and/or by the personal appeal of the veteran foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher. Contrary to a widespread perception abroad, Genscher rather than Kohl is Germany's longer even contemplate their old game of threatening to abandon the present partner in order to form a coalition with the other side. They have nowhere else to go. The results of the strange, ritualized Bonn cockpit known as "coalition negotiations" will be inevitable in this policy, and of course for individual careers, but for the outside world one can reckon with the same basic mixture as before. "King Genscher"...
wants such authority for the much more narrowly defined UN peace-keeping forces: blue helmets only. In a few years' time this small step for Bonn may become a huge one for mankind, and for the immediate future it is unlikely to make much practical difference. Reaction to the Gulf crisis has shown once again that German public and published opinion are extremely reluctant to the armed force used anywhere in any circumstances, and Kuwait is a far-away country about which the German viewer or reader learns little. (One must feel a sense of regret that India's ambassador to that country, who, on the day of German unification found himself a private citizen—and therefore a hostage of Saddam Hussein.)

Horowitz's position, in contrast, is Bonn's commitment to further steps toward political, monetary, and economic union in the European Community. It is true that a few people on the margins of German politics will ask: "Do we really need the EC any more?" And there is an important sense in which Germany "needs Europe" less now than it did a few years ago. But the process of reunification got under way then, and it did not take until the last fifty years to make it happen. It is not the formation of the nation that is the cause, but the cause of the nation. In the meantime, the EEC has proved remarkably rich, and when the transition in Poland fails the collapse of the Soviet Union continues.

The federal government is in principle committed to offer visa-free access to Germany for Poles as well as for present-day German Christmas-time consumption; memories of older German-Russian ties; fear of the consequences of a collapse of the Soviet Union; and desire to do something for the future.

Last year, ordinary East Germans tried to swim the river to the east, in order to get to West Germany via the West German embassy in Warsaw (going east in order to go west). Now the frontier guards catch Poles, Romanians, and even Indochinese and Pakistanis trying to get in to the new Germany from the east. At the moment, the eastern frontier of Germany looks remarkably tranquil, but if the transition in Poland fails the collapse of the Soviet Union continues.

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1.

Once upon a time, and a very bad time it was, there was a famous platform in West Berlin where distinguished visitors would be taken to stand at the Wall. American presidents from Kennedy to Reagan stood on that platform looking out over the no-man's-land between two concrete walls. They told that this, the Potzdamer Platz, was once Berlin's busiest square, its Piccadilly Circus. Their hosts pointed out a grassy mound in the middle of no man's land: the remains of Hitler's bunker. Armed guards watched on the other side, or rode up and down the death strip on their army motorcycles. It was the image of the cold war.

On the morning of Sunday, November 12, I walked through the wall and across that no-man's land with a crowd of East Berliners, a watchtower to our left, Hitler's bunker to our right. Bewildered border guards waved us through. (As recently as February they had allegedly shot a dead man trying to escape.) On the far side, vertical segments of the wall stood at ease wherever the crane had dumped them, their multicolored graffiti facing east for the first time. East Berliners applauded as we came through, and a man handed out free city plans. Then I turned around and walked back again, past more bewildered border guards and customs officers. I met a notice of a tall man in an unfamiliar green uniform. It was General Haddocks, the US commander in Berlin.

By nightfall, West Berliners had dismantled the famous platform, like an unneeded stage prop. Europe's Mousetrap, had ended its eighty-year run. Clear the stage for a new show.

Everyone has seen the pictures of joyful celebration in West Berlin, the vast crowds stopping the traffic on the Kurfürstendamm, Sektor corners popping, perfect strangers watching perfect strangers: the greatest street party in the history of the world. Yes, it was like that. But it was not only like that, nor was that, for me, the most moving part. Most of the estimated two million (one estimate was three million) were not direct westeners, but living refugees from East Berlin, the workers who had flooded into West Berlin over the weekend just walked the streets in quiet family groups, often with small children in strollers. They queued up at banks to collect their $100 "greeting money" (about $55) which has long been offered to visiting East Germans by the West German government, and then they went, very cautiously, home. Generally they bought one or two small items, perhaps some fresh fruit, a Western newspaper, and toys for the children. Then, clapping their shopping bags, they walked quietly back through the streets and the gray deserted streets of East Berlin, home.

It is very difficult to describe the quality of this experience because what they actually did was so stunningly ordinary. In effect, they just took the money and went. They hurried across the Hackeewy or the Hackeewy to the Piccadilly Circus, and went shopping in the West End. Berliners walked the streets of Berlin. What could be more normal? And yet, for East Berliners, it was an incredible event. It was like a real villain was HIV, said one. A note stuck to a remnant of the Wall read "Sadim is dead, Europe lives." And the man who counted twenty-eight years and nineteen-one days since the building of the Wall. On that day, in August 1961, his parents had wanted to go to a late night Western in a West Berlin cinema. But their eleven-year-old son had been too tired. In the early hours (they woke to the sound of tanks. He had never been to West Berlin from that day. In this. A taxi driver asked me, with a smile, "How much is the ferry to England?" The day before yesterday the question would have been unthinkable.

Everyone, but everyone, on the streets of East Berlin has just been, or is just going, to West Berlin. A breathless, demijacketed couple stop me to ask, "Is this the way out?" They have come from the East. "Our hearts are going bitter-sweet," they say, in broad Saxon dialect. People opening for themselves. For it was only the pressure of their huge; peaceful demonstrations that compelled the party leadership to take this step. You see, it shows Lenin was wrong," observed one worker. "Lenin said a revolution could only succeed with violence. But this was a peaceful revolution." And even the Communist party's Central Committee acknowledged at the beginning of its hastily drafted Action Program that "a revolutionary people's movement has set in motion a process of profound upheavals."

Why did it happen? And why so quickly? No one had anticipated it. The opposition leaders in East Berlin in the early July, and they were still pessimistic. With hindsight—a little help from Alexei Korotkew—when perhaps a little wiser. At the very least, one can list in some order factors that brought the coup of discontent to overflowing. In the beginning was not, as most commentators suggest, Gorbachev. In the beginning a wall itself: the Wall and the system it represented, and preserved, geographically, the Wall did not. In around East Berlin, it was at its very center. Psychologically, it ran through every heart, a difficult even for people from other East European countries to appreciate the full psychological burden it imposed. As East Berlin doctor wrote a book describing the real sickness—and of course the suicides—that resulted. He called it "The Wall's Sicknes.

2.

Ordinary people doing very ordinary things (shopping), the Berliners nonetheless immediately grasped the historical dimensions of the event. "Of course the real villain was Honecker," said one. A note stuck to a remnant of the Wall read "Sadim is dead, Europe lives." And the man who counted twenty-eight years and nineteen-one days since the building of the Wall. Suddenly he motioned to a man over his shoulder in a Hamilton jacketed couple. stop me to ask, "Is this the way out?" They have come from the East. "Our hearts are going bitter-sweet," they say, in broad Saxon dialect. People opening for themselves. For it was only the pressure of their huge; peaceful demonstrations that compelled the party leadership to take this step. You see, it shows Lenin was wrong," observed one worker. "Lenin said a revolution could only succeed with violence. But this was a peaceful revolution." And even the Communist party's Central Committee acknowledged at the beginning of its hastily drafted Action Program that "a revolutionary people's movement has set in motion a process of profound upheavals."

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There was thus always, even at the beginning of the 1980s, when I lived in East Berlin, a large shot of special bitterness at the bottom of the cup. In a sense, the mystery was always why the people of East Germany did not revolt. The second causal factor, both in time and importance, was Gorbachev. The "Gorbachev effect" was stronger in East Germany than anywhere else in Eastern Europe: because the East German state was more closely oriented toward—and could therefore be depoliticized of—the Soviet Union than any other. It is not for nothing that a 1974 amendment to the constitution proclaimed "The German Democratic Republic is a forever and irrevocably allied with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." East Germany's young people had for years been told that "to learn from the Soviet Union is to learn how to win" (von der Saatjugend, besten hassen, sich gegen den Feind). So they did! For several years now we have seen East Germans turning the name of Gorbachev, and the Soviet example, against their rulers.

And then, of course, Gorbachev personally gave the last push—during his visit to mark the fortieth anniversary of the GDR on October 7—with his carefully calculated utterance that "life itself punishes those who delay," the leaked news that he had told Honecker to move to socialist norms would not be a set for internal repression, and against

The German Revolution

Timothy Garton Ash

Photograph © Terry O'Neill/Even

Ein Deutsches Volk, Ein Deutsches Land

A part of the demonstration in Leipzig against the East German Communist party (SED) on November 13.

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Anz, People, One People, One Nation

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becomes a Piccadilly Circus again, but there is already a fantastic plan to build a huge department store—a Kaufhaus des Osten—with entrances from both sides. But the mental geography of both half-cities has changed overnight. What was the edge has become the center. And practical convergence proceeds apace. When the wall was breached at Potsdamer Platz, the West Berlin mayor was there to meet his East Berlin counterpart with a handshake. Bus services will now cross the Wall. Where previously a West Berlin underground line ran through ghostly, sealed stations in East Berlin, the doors now open and East Berliners leap aboard. There is a hot line being set up between the two police chiefs. East and West Berlin cooperation—put one point actually in order—to restrain the crowds at the new border crossings. There will be problems enough here. The warmth and generosity of the West Berliners' welcome were spectacular. Complete strangers were invited home. "I was really received like a brother," one youth told me—and whether he was telling the truth or with sheer excitement I could not tell. Probably both. The old, pathos-laden phrase about "our brothers and sisters in the East" acquired a new reality. But for how long? Already by the end of the weekend there were complaints about the East Berliners causing traffic jams and the stink from the two-stroke engine of their little Trabant cars. What if they keep coming? At the moment, some of those who had previously run away are thinking of going back. But what if that trend is reversed? And what if you get thousands of East Berliners coming over to do (legal or illegal) part-time jobs, taking work away from West Berliners? And then look at it from the other side. What on earth will an open border do to the East German economy? Won't there soon be a growing world of black-market dealing, as there was before the Wall was built? As I write, I'm told the jewelers' shops in one East Berlin suburb have been cleaned out. Won't the strong currency drive out the weak?

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majority in East Germany should resist the temptation of getting closer together with West Germany — this seems, at the moment, as likely as the East German mark long surviving free competition with the West German mark. Indeed, the two things are closely related: the currency question and the national question. On the subsequent march around the Ring boulevard I noticed a banner declaring: “for a convertible currency ... Confederation BRD” (that is, Federal Republic [of] Germany, Democratic Republic). Big D stands for Deutschland — and Deutschmark. The man holding this banner was a Party member. Which party would he vote for in a free election, I asked him. “Certainly not our own.”

Despite the explicit wishes of the present fledging opposition in East Germany, and the explicit or implicit desires of many in West Germany, the logic of events — and the wishes of the majority in East Germany — has therefore begun to pull both halves together at remarkable speed.

Here, at the latest, the German story becomes a European story, with fundamental implications for the West. An East German foreign trade minister has already said that an application to join the European Community could not be ruled out. Yet even intermediate steps of association pose major problems — as European leaders discussed at an emergency summit in Paris just nine days after the opening of the Wall. The United States, Britain, and France remain occupying powers in Berlin. Their representatives had direct contacts with the Russians over the weekend of the Wall opening. (They speak on the telephone, in German.) The American ambassador, Vernon Walters, went over to have lunch with his Soviet counterpart in East Germany.

The West German and West Berlin governments recognize — albeit sometimes grudgingly — that this four-power occupation rights must now be finished.” His colleague, Günter Gaus, calls for a conference on Germany among the four occupying powers, opening the way to a new Central European Confederation. (Guess who would dominate that?) And then there is the biggest question of all. If you were Mr. Gorbachev, and you saw East Germany falling into the West German embrace, what would you do? Would you cling for dear life to your military presence, with the residual possibilities of control that would offer? Or would you go for a bigger prize — NATO?

A crude offer like the one Stalin made in March 1952 — neutralization in return for reunification — would almost certainly be rejected by West Germany. But a more subtle package, under the sign of “cooperative security,” suggesting the removal of all nuclear weapons and Soviet and American troops from a region called “Central Europe” — this, I believe, could rapidly win powerful support in West Germany, and might soon be accepted by the main opposition party, the Social Democrats. And in December 1990 there is going to be a general election.

As the demolition of that famous platform on Potsdamer Platz followed swiftly on the opening of the Wall, so larger Western landmarks may soon follow. Eastern ones, into history.
Coming of Age, Without the Old Ideology

By STEPHEN KINZER Special to The New York Times

BERLIN, June 10 — in the old East Germany, no tradition was more widely observed than the Jugendweihe, the youths' answer to religious confirmation.

More than 95 percent of East German youths went through the ceremony when they reached the age of 14. It symbolized not only the passage from childhood into maturity, but also a commitment to anti-capitalism. The book that each participant received, a history of the workers' and anti-fascist movements in Germany mixed with adoring biographies of Communist leaders, was on almost every East German bookshelf.

When East Germany ceased to exist in 1990, the Jugendweihe, or youth inauguration, was one of many traditions that were expected to fade quickly into oblivion, and seemed to be fading in 1990 and 1991. The Communist Government had used it to enforce ideological conformity, making it difficult for nonparticipants to enter good schools or obtain good jobs, and westerners expected easterners to leave it behind as they embraced their new freedom.

Just the opposite has turned out to be the case. This spring, nearly 80,000 14-year-olds in eastern Germany are voluntarily taking part in a redesigned version of the Jugendweihe. In eastern Berlin alone, 10,000 young people have signed up, nearly 50 percent of its 14-year-olds.

These days, instead of pledging "to work and struggle for the great and noble cause of socialism," the young people promise to live wholesome lives and respect the rights of others. The book they receive at the solemn ceremony does not glorify any ideology, but rather describes Germany's natural beauty.

Psychologists and anthropologists maintain that many young people reaching puberty need some kind of ceremony to integrate themselves into the adult world that they are no longer children, and that they must now assume responsibility for their own lives. This need is especially acute in eastern Germany, where unification has abruptly cut people loose from the moorings that bound them to one another and to society for more than 40 years.

Organizers of the reformed Jugendweihe say they hope that their work will help forge a generation of solid citizens who will reject the temptation to join far-right groups or other anti-social movements. Based on the evidence of a ceremony at a school auditorium in eastern Berlin on a recent Saturday morning, they may be succeeding.

Seventy-seven nervous boys and girls arrived early for their big day.

A tradition that was expected to fade is reviving.

Proud parents adjusted their children's clothing and wiped real or imagined spots off their faces.

Inside, the program began with an air of solemn dignity.

"Today is an important event in your life," said Werner Riedel, who heads the private association that now sponsors Jugendweihe celebrations in eastern Germany. "Today you finish that long and peaceful part of your life that we call childhood. You are becoming young men and women. Yes, you're big now. Your knowledge and your choices deserve to be taken seriously."

"At 14, you can't write letters to Santa Claus and expect your parents to grant your every wish," he continued. "You have to do your own thinking about how to fulfill yourselves. If you want to be strong tomorrow, you have to begin taking responsibility for yourself today."

Werner Riedel, center, congratulating German teenagers at a nonreligious coming-of-age ceremony in eastern Berlin last month. The Jugendweihe ceremony was used by the Communist Government in East Germany to enforce ideological conformity and is being revived to promote good citizenship.

"You have to reject violence, racism and anti-foreigner feelings. You have to respect the environment, and not treat our Mother Earth as if we have a second or third one in our pocket. You have to read good books, go to the theater and the cinema, to galleries and museums. ... For the girls, I wish you nice boys, and for the boys, I wish you nice girls — but please, there's no hurry."

After finishing, Mr. Riedel called the name of each participant. They came to the stage in groups of about 20. Each was given a book, a red rose, a firm handshake and a few words of congratulation. In the audience, flashbulbs popped and cameras whirred. After an hour of poetry, music and dance, the ceremony was over. Another group of young people was arriving for the day's second Jugendweihe, many of whom are repulsed by the tone of the ceremony as anti-Christian, but toned down their criticism. Roman Catholic bishops still denounce it. Organizers of the modernized Jugendweihe, many of whom are resolutions anti-Communists, say the ceremony does not reflect nostalgia for the vanished East Germany.

"We're trying to give kids a sense of self-worth in a society that often doesn't take them into account," Mr. Riedel said in an interview. "I like to think that we're making a contribution to building a better Germany."
potentially a greater threat to NATO’s own territory than ground force invasion.

NATO already engaged in Bosnia: a headquarters element on loan to UNPROFOR; enforcing sanctions in the Adriatic and the no-fly zone over Bosnia; commitment to use air power in response to strangulation of safe areas; and planning to implement a peace settlement. Summit decisions build on this experience.

Evolving Role of Germany Since Reunification

Q: How do you assess the results within Germany of reunification?
A. The German people long dreamed of reunification. Its achievement has expanded the reach and benefits of democracy.
   Internal adjustments have been more expensive and difficult than many expected. But reassuring economic growth and institution-building are underway.

Q: Are Germany’s new political and economic weight and desire to extend EU membership to new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe destabilizing for the EU? For bilateral German relations with France?
A. No. Germany’s EU partners agree that potential instability in the East must be addressed and that Germany’s role is indispensable.
   Close Franco-German relations are a top priority for both countries.

Q: What is Germany doing to promote security and stability in Europe?
A. Germany is making a large and growing contribution to these objectives.
   Economy/Trade. One of the world’s top three economies, Germany helped achieve last year’s trade-expanding GATT accord and will -- as its own economic recovery gathers speed, spur the EU-wide rebound from recession.
   Assistance. Germany has provided the most humanitarian and technical assistance to Russia and NIS countries of any donor and -- like the U.S. -- is a major supporter of democracy-building and market-economy reforms in CEE.
   Security. Germany worked closely with us to launch the Partnership for Peace at the NATO Summit in January and plans to host one of the first PFP activities later this year. Germany has actively assisted efforts of the EU, NATO and the
UN to end the war in Bosnia and alleviate its humanitarian toll by providing relief, accepting refugees, monitoring sanctions, and helping enforce the No-Fly Zone.

Q: Should Germany do more to support international peacekeeping and "out-of-NATO-area" military missions?

A. Unified Germany’s international status and influence bring new responsibilities.
   - Americans appreciate the sensitivity of these issues and applaud the political and legal consideration of them now underway in Germany.
   - Germany has made valuable contributions to international peacekeeping and humanitarian missions in Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, and Somalia.

Q: If Germany is expected to play a larger global role and assume its costs, should it not have a permanent seat on the UN Security Council? And the veto power?

A. The U.S. favors expansion of the Council to include permanent membership for Germany and Japan and a limited number of additional seats.
   - We have not taken a position on whether new permanent members should have the veto or how additional seats should be apportioned.

Q: If Germany is such an important and responsible international partner, why was Chancellor Kohl not invited to the D-Day events?

A. Those commemorations honored the forces who liberated Europe and brought peace.
   - Our postwar friendship with a democratic Germany and its vital role in the expansion of a democratic, market-oriented Europe are some of the greatest legacies of the Allied victory in World War II.

U.S.-German Relations

Q: What is the state of bilateral relations?

A. Germany is a major partner of the U.S. on virtually all issues of global importance. We work closely together bilaterally and within the UN, NATO, G-7, and CSCE.
   - I have already cited important cooperation on concluding the GATT accord, trying to end the conflict in Bosnia, and adapting Western
institutions to promote the integration of a wider, democratic Europe.

Other common purposes where we value Germany's role include: support for nuclear safety worldwide and for dismantlement of nuclear weapons in the NIS; financial contributions to the Middle East Peace Process and active participation in its multilateral working groups; and leadership on environmental and population policies.

Historical and cultural links unite our two countries:

- Many Americans trace their ancestry to German-speaking roots;
- America was the model for Germany's early attempt (1848) to build a united parliamentary government;
- Berlin airlift;
- Germany has been a member of NATO since 1955 and for years Europe's largest troop contributor;
- Leading art galleries in Cologne and Munich cooperate closely with those in New York;
- Huge numbers of Americans and Germans visit, study, and perform in one another's countries annually.

Q: How serious are disagreements between the U.S. and Germany on policy toward Iran?

A. We both strongly oppose Iran's support for terrorism, efforts to acquire WMD, efforts to obstruct the Middle East peace process through violence, and dismal human rights record.

The U.S. has some concern that Germany's dialogue with Iran combined with favorable financial treatment may encourage Iran to think it can improve relations with the West without changing its behavior.

Q: Your rapport with Helmut Kohl is well known. What if the government changes in October?

A. I would not expect our excellent bilateral relations to change whatever party or parties are in power in Bonn.

Q: Would inclusion of the Greens in a future governing coalition trouble Washington?
Q: A. - The composition of the German government is for the German people to decide.

Q: Ex-communists did fairly well in the European Parliament elections in eastern Germany, getting nearly 5% of the vote. What does their persistent appeal signify to you?

A. - The PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) inherited a strong grass roots organization, fielded candidates for many local offices, and got out the vote.

Q: Is the lawsuit by U.S. Holocaust survivor Hugo Princz an irritant?

A. - Mr. Princz has a legitimate and compelling claim to appropriate compensation from Germany.

- I am disappointed at the lack of progress to resolve his case, which has attracted widespread public and Congressional support in the U.S.

Q: Do you expect satisfaction for American claimants who want their property in former East Germany restituted but are now forced to accept inadequate compensation?

A. - A number of U.S. citizens who seek such restitution risk being treated unfairly under the recent property claims settlement agreement between the U.S. and Germany.

- We are asking the German government's cooperation to help resolve this problem.

Q: Can the U.S. confidently assume Germany will maintain the security of and public access to original material in the Berlin Document Center?

A. - Yes. We have had a long-standing agreement with Germany to transfer control of the Document Center, once Germany provided us with a microfilm copy of each document. We now have those copies.

- The State and Justice Departments and the National Archives can borrow originals for official purposes.

- Broader public access to the records through the U.S. National Archives will now be possible.

- The German government has provided its assurance that public access to originals will be in accordance with the same standards we exercised.

Q: Do you think Germany should pay more for the cost of maintaining U.S. forces there? And pay for improvements the U.S. made to bases being returned?
We have proposed that Germany forego $240 million in taxes, rents, and fees that the U.S. military is asked to pay.

We also recognize and value Germany's important contributions to the common defense apart from defraying the stationing costs of U.S. troops, including:

- Paying 27% of NATO's common funded programs (the U.S. pays 28%);
- Providing financial and logistical support for NATO forces in Germany;
- Building housing in Russia and Ukraine for Russian forces withdrawing from eastern Germany;
- Providing significant economic and technical assistance to Russia and CEE.

Our bilateral agreements call for Germany to reimburse the U.S. for the value of improvements we have made to returned German installations.

We have proposed a framework for spreading out reimbursements over several years and applying them to construction and maintenance priorities.
Freedom and Its Discontents

Fritz Stern

THE TRAVAILS OF THE NEW GERMANY

In 1983 the president of the Federal Republic, Richard von Weizsäcker, published a collection of essays under the title German History Has Not Stopped. Even he could not have predicted the pace of progress since then. And as the process of unification has unfolded, one can see the drama of German history continue as well. The economic consequences of unity are becoming apparent; the moral and psychological consequences are harder to grasp and may prove longer lasting. It is these that this article addresses.

While the two states of postwar Germany existed, Germans could believe in the unity of their nation, of a people with a common language, a common past, even a common fate. Now unified within one state, the deep divisions among Germans are more visible. No doubt there is truth in Freud's words about "the narcissism of small differences" that divides neighborhoods and family members, and yet in 1989 there was an expectation that Germans would understand Germans. In the first flush of enthusiasm, people forgot the estrangements that had grown so strong over 40 years, as West Germans came to regard the French or the Tuscans or the Dutch as closer, and perhaps more attractive, to them than the East Germans. For their part, East Germans lived with a prescribed if gradually attenuated hostility to the Federal Republic of Germany (F.R.G.), and with a nonprescribed envy and resentment of its freedom and prosperity, witnessed

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The fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989
nightly on their television screens.

Visitors to East Germany, including this author, sensed the estrangement. And in the Federal Republic, for all the ritualistic invocations of German solidarity, for all the many individuals who did genuinely care about their fellow Germans in the East, one sensed an enormous, unacknowledged indifference to them. Sudden commonality, sudden huge demands, did not instantly transform indifference to openhearted solicitude.

**DIFFERENT KINDS OF FREEDOM**

**Both Germanies gained** greater, if sharply different, kinds of freedom after unification—and with that freedom came new uncertainties and discontents. In the East it was the freedom from the knock at the door, freedom to travel, release from a regimented, intimidating, false existence, freedom to examine one’s life. But almost immediately 17 million East Germans discovered that freedom also meant freedom to face an uncertain future, freedom to lose a job, to lose support nets, however inadequate they may have been.

For 40 years, most East Germans had accommodated to life in a world of public lies and private doubts. Totalitarian regimes mobilize people into passive participation in politics. After 12 years of Nazi rule and 40 years of communist rule in the German Democratic Republic (G.D.R.), they may have survived psychologically by practicing denial, by wishing not to see.

After 1989 avoiding reality became impossible, given the economic dislocations of transforming a dysfunctional, decaying command economy into a market economy—as if there was but one type of market economy. The closing of state-run enterprises led to mounting unemployment. Moreover, economic affairs were only part of what had been prescribed under the old command economy. So much of life had been lived in the public realm. So much of it had been ordered from above or came by inherited routine. Suddenly the East Germans, released from public control, had to learn to make their own choices, think their own thoughts, find their own truths. They were indeed privatized at a time when the associational life of a civil society was being but slowly introduced.
Market economies presuppose legal structures, a system of private and public law—a legal code that has to be taught, learned and gradually assimilated. But the art of evasion also flourishes in market economies—as the 1980s so vividly illustrate. Western enthusiasts for the free market in the former G.D.R. often ignored the social costs of the transformation. Worse, the abrupt introduction of new forms of economic life also created what sociologists and Marxists have long identified with modern capitalism: alienation, anomie, insecurity. For the East Germans, the move from the rigid world of communist rule to the demands of a mobile society was hard. The very notion of planning for a market economy had an ironic ring to it. A new dependency developed. Much of life in the new eastern Länder of the united Germany came to be organized by Westerners who were practiced in taking decisions, in making things work and assessing the risks of the market, and who had the skills and the funds to take charge. East Germans had been taught to live and work by plans that bore little relation to reality; they had learned to suffer and endure but not to take responsibility or to live by trial and error.

East Germans hoped that the end of communism would bring instant rehabilitation as well as instant improvement in their living standard. But soon they began to think they were being “colonized”—a word commonly used that was infuriating to Western ears. Defeated, humiliated, more object than subject, many East Germans expressed their disappointment in terms of self-pity and resentment. Was there no end to their being victimized? In the early years of occupation, the Russians had dismantled and taken what was left of German industrial plants in their zone. A current estimate is that the Russians extracted some 54 billion Deutsche marks in reparations—all this while the Western zones and later the Federal Republic received Marshall Plan aid. Of course the balance sheet is far more complicated: West Germany also benefited from the huge influx of refugees from the Soviet zone and of Germans expelled by Poles and Czechs, and on the other hand, Bonn did make restitution payments to Israel and gradually gave support to the G.D.R. But East Germans believed, with some justification, that they had paid disproportionately for Hitler’s war.
After 1990 both East and West Germans had to consider their separate and joint pasts. Former G.D.R. citizens had to address questions that have beset other countries at other times in the twentieth century: questions of collaboration and collusion, of culpability and trustworthiness. Which of them were so compromised that they could no longer be teachers or judges, civil servants or plant managers, professors or members of renowned academies? Who was to make these judgments, and on what basis?

West Germans, hardly at peace with their own past, seemed ready to make their judgments about Easterners. From the moment of unification I was concerned that the West Germans would be far more cheerfully, self-righteously assiduous in punishing suspected collaborators with the communist regime than their forbears had been in dealing with the servants of the Nazi regime. The very popularity of that regime had made de-Nazification difficult. Even now, West Germans with an undetected compromised past continue to flourish. Earlier this year a prominent West German physician was forced to resign from a major post in an international organization because it was revealed that he had participated in the Nazis’ euthanasia program.

The Nazi past divides West Germans still, as shown by the controversy surrounding President Reagan’s visit to Bitburg in 1985, by the so-called historians’ debate, and by the decades it has taken to document the complicity of the German army in the atrocities on the Eastern front. To this day many Germans, in and out of uniform, choose to believe in the Wehrmacht’s innocence. National Socialism never needed a wall; there was never a threat of a mass exodus. By comparison, millions of East Germans voted with their feet. Under the Nazis an indeterminate number of Germans had gone into “inner emigration,” tried to remain insulated, to purchase peace at the price of silence. West Germans who were confounded by this past—and divided among themselves about it—were now called upon to judge fellow Germans who had lived for a further 40 years under a totalitarian regime initially held in place by foreign bayonets.

Most East Germans knew that their leaders, piously mouthing slogans of peace, had believed in violence and had no mercy. What they
could not have known, because the tape was released only last February, was that in 1982 Erich Mielke, head of the Stasi, the state security police, had told his closest colleagues that to save the lives of millions one might have to kill a bandit: "All this drivel about not executing and no death sentences, all crap, comrades."

The tone does remind one of Nazi evil. In the post-Stalinist era East German leaders, like leaders throughout the Soviet bloc, sought to replace torture with other kinds of intimidation, including the abomination of psychiatric wards. Party leaders ordered alleged enemies of the regime to be tortured, incarcerated or shot; they organized espionage and initiated or facilitated international terrorism. But these same leaders after 1970, and especially in the 1980s, garnered official recognition by other states. Chancellor Helmut Kohl received them in Bonn; Franz Joseph Strauss visited them and arranged for the G.D.R. to receive a one billion Deutsche mark credit. West German Social Democrats collaborated with functionaries of the East German Communist Party to hammer out a joint paper defining areas of agreement and disagreement. Today the former East German leader, Erich Honecker, is free in Chile, and only a few frontier guards are in prison, while tens of thousands of teachers and other East German civil servants have been suspended or dismissed.

As the communist regime crumbled, East Germans, left in their crowded, drab, decaying dwellings, saw pictures of how the nomenklatura had lived in insulated comfort and read about the perquisites that ranged from special medical care to Swiss bank accounts. Had they really not noticed that the much-touted egalitarianism of the first German socialist state had been traduced daily, visibly and invisibly? The apparatchiks had their own Volvos, their children had privileged access to education, and all of them could shop in the Intershops, where Western goods could be bought for Western currency. The revelations of the extent of these special benefits—petty by Western standards—enraged many East Germans. They felt betrayed. They remembered the leaders' endless invocations that, unlike the rapacious capitalist West, the G.D.R. was an egalitarian society where austerity...
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and sacrifice provided a psychological guarantee of a better future. But they must have had at least an inkling that their leaders had not practiced the virtues of delayed gratification that they preached.

The resultant outburst sprang from what I think was an ambivalence about deprivation. They minded it, of course, but they may have felt that austerity was virtuous—in old Germanic terms, ennobling. To have stark proof that their leaders had mocked this notion was offensive. In this largely Lutheran country, was this a distant echo of Martin Luther’s attacks on a Roman hierarchy that preached poverty but lived in corrupt luxury?

THE STASI LEGACY

The East Germans were made to realize something far worse. Their insidious, malevolent regime had managed to entrap vast numbers of them in collusion and corruption. The state security police had organized an unprecedented web of surveillance. In its final days, the Stasi consisted of 97,000 full-time employees—with perhaps as many as 140,000 unofficial collaborators, most of whom had acknowledged their commitment in writing. Only the higher ranks of society, such as professors or members of elite academies, were allowed to register their agreement orally. In addition, membership in the Communist Party rose to two million people, who were particularly vulnerable to Stasi demands. All this machinery for 17 million Germans—while the Gestapo, helped by countless voluntary informers, at the end of the Nazi regime had only 13,000 members for 80 million Germans. The Stasi files—nearly 100 miles of them—offered poisonous proof of a poisoned society.

The Stasi were the eyes and ears of a regime deeply distrustful of its own people. Born of distrust, the Stasi became an agent of distrust. In a world without laws or enforceable rights, a person searches for the like-minded, for another person to talk to, if need be in some outside place where surveillance is more difficult. West German observers thought that East Germans had managed to have closer, more trusting relationships. Some East Germans probably did have a particular affinity for trust and friendship. They invested in them as rare human goods at a time of moral scarcity. Imagine then the shock,
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the retroactive dissolution of trust, when one discovered one’s friend had been an informer; husbands had informed on their wives, wives on husbands, parents on children, friends on friends. Even now, as more information is divulged, the web of suspicion spreads ever wider.

During the 1970s, when the East German regime gradually replaced physical terror with calculated intimidation, the Stasi, like other secret police, learned to play with fiendish aptitude on people’s vulnerabilities, operating an ever more elaborate system of carrots and sticks. The rewards for being an unofficial collaborator varied—advancement in a career, travel to the West; the sticks were more formidable, often involving the punishment of children for the alleged sins of their parents. The Stasi also resorted to more lethal methods, such as efforts to bring about “personal destabilization,” including undermining marriages—a whole array of Iago-like villainies aimed at destroying trust among friends and potential critics.

Stasi revelations have threatened some of the most promising political careers in the new Ländere of the united Germany. Two examples may suffice: Lothar de Mazière, the first vice chancellor of the unified Germany, resigned when it was said that he had had Stasi contacts; and insinuations continue to be made against the only socialist minister president in the new Länder, Manfred Stolpe of Brandenburg. Stolpe had worked in and with the Protestant churches and had helped them to help victims of the regime. He had regular contacts with the Stasi—how else to aid people entrapped by them? Knowledgable defenders of Stolpe and others similarly accused insist that any responsible person who tried to help people who had fallen afoul of the regime had to deal with the Stasi. But critics claim that even talking to Stasi officials was to take the first steps on a slippery slope. Others, myself included, might argue that in a tyrannical system only absolute immobility can protect one from the dangers of that slope. Once upon a time the Stasi oppressed a people. Its legacy has been to demoralize them and perhaps to deprive them of the few good political leaders they might have had.

Opposition to the G.D.R. regime was feeble compared to that elsewhere in the Soviet bloc. After the one great outburst of June 17, 1953, when East German workers took to the streets to defy their ever more demanding and repressive regime and were crushed by Soviet tanks,
there was apparent conformity. Not in East Germany the repeated uprisings or the great alliance of workers and intellectuals as in Poland's Solidarity Party, or in the Hungarian rebellion of 1956, or in the Czechoslovak Spring of 1968. It has often been said that Germans are somewhat untutored in civic courage. They have the word but not the all-essential practice. Albert Hirschman once wrote of moral resources, including civic spirit and trust: "These are resources whose supply may well increase rather than decrease through use... like the ability to speak a foreign language or to play the piano, these moral resources are likely to become depleted and to atrophy if not used."

The Ulbricht-Honecker regime, mixing German traditions with Soviet models, had time to promote a separate cultural life in the G.D.R. They wanted to create athletes of the spirit, writers and artists who could dazzle the outside world and satisfy at least some aspirations of their own people. As the East German molecular biologist and admirable citizen-thinker Jens Reich makes clear in a new book, the regime sought to implicate the entire intelligentsia—technicians as well as poets—and to a devastating degree it was successful. For many reasons the samizdat literature that flourished in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Russia did not exist in the G.D.R. In the early years of the regime, writers like Robert Havemann were imprisoned and gifted irritants like Wolf Biermann were expelled. This last decision prompted East German writers to protest for the first time. But by and large the limits of state tolerance for dissent were rarely, if ever, tested.

Gradually the demands for socialist realism were relaxed. Other kinds of art were allowed. The novelist Christa Wolf was able to depict life in the G.D.R. with some degree of candor. Writers joustted with censors, and parodists ventured the occasional mischief, as when the writer Heiner Müller said, "We are the most progressive state ever: 95 percent of the people are against it, such a thing has never happened before," or when he sang, "The Stasi is my Eckermann." Now come the revelations that these writers, too, were once part of the Stasi net. In the late 1950s and early 1960s Christa Wolf was an unofficial informant, unbeknownst even to her husband. Decades lat-
er she described at length how she too came under Stasi surveillance. As the most prominent of East German writers, she has been denounced and defended. She illustrates how easy it was under that regime to move from being accomplice and perpetrator to victim, and how difficult it is to judge the conduct of people enmeshed in a system with so many visible and invisible tentacles.

There is at present a great controversy about the conduct of East German authors and the intelligentsia. Some West German critics express outrage, and there is a danger that in time the work of these writers might be altogether forgotten. This would be a distortion and a loss. Some of them were guarded witnesses to life under dreadful conditions. Now, in the unified Germany, West Germans who were spared anything like these terrors have assumed a leading role in decision-making, in dismissals and recruitments throughout the eastern Länder. Their work is officially subsumed under the term Abwicklung. This sanitized bureaucratic term, once used by the Nazis, suggests legal procedures or business liquidations. It bespeaks distance and condescension; it is unattuned to tact or compassion.

The question of judgment is inherently difficult. In the case of many of the accusations against former East German citizens, one must ask: How reliable are the Stasi files, and how often were they slanted by inferiors trying to curry favor with their superiors? Finally, as Jens Reich has implicitly warned, the Stasi could easily become a scapegoat for the G.D.R. regime. The greater villains were the party and state functionaries; the Stasi were not autonomous villains, and some of their collaborators may have had mixed or honorable motives. Only the clearest picture of life in the G.D.R. can help to render humane judgments. There may be good reason to sympathize with those West Germans of an impeccable past who say of all these leaks and revelations: “Enough”—an “enough” that has been much heard in the countries of Eastern Europe.

**LIVING WITH HISTORY**

In the years to come Germans of both East and West will continue to find it difficult to deal with the history of the 40 years of the G.D.R. and F.R.G., two entities that lasted almost as long as the Bis-
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marckian Reich. Polemical, divisive arguments have already begun about who supported whom and when, who promoted unification and who opposed it. Right-wing Germans or newborn nationalists are already accusing the old Federal Republic’s left of national neglect, of having slighted the goal of national unity, of having collaborated with the Communist Party or of having been “soft” on East German criminals or collaborators. In time, after the calumnies and the memories are extinguished or transformed, later generations may “bracket out” the G.D.R.’s history—as Germans call such a deletion—while finding that it remains hard to expunge the Nazi past. As President Weizsäcker has said, the G.D.R. neither started a war nor committed genocide. It may gradually fade from historical consciousness, be dismissed as a Soviet satellite, an alien excrescence of something called the Cold War. West Germans’ earlier indifference to the G.D.R. will facilitate so convenient a lapse of memory. But the G.D.R. in all its ambiguity needs to be remembered and in some way integrated into the history of Germany and Europe in our century.

The beginnings of the G.D.R. are most likely to be forgotten, the time immediately after the war when in the Soviet zone of occupation a so-called socialist state was gradually established, expropriating the large estate owners and nationalizing what was left of German industry. In the baggage train of the conquering Red Army arrived Moscow-trained German communists—many of whom had been tortured in Nazi camps—determined to forge a union between socialists and communists and create what they called a great antifascist bloc, a bulwark against a revived German fascist-type nationalism. True socialists, remembering how at the end of the Weimar Republic communists had in fact aided the rise of Nazism, defied communist pleas and demands; men like Gustav Dahrendorf and Kurt Schumacher never had any doubts about the true nature of communism. A few socialists in the Soviet zone believed that the Communist Party was genuinely antifascist, that it would radically purge all former Nazis and would recruit its own cadre, mostly of young, untrained people from the unpropertied classes. The claim that the German Democratic Republic, formally established in 1949, would become the first socialist state in German history, that by its extrusion of Nazis and dismantling of capitalism it was cleansing German soil of Nazi
poison, that out of devastation it was building up an egalitarian society—all had a certain appeal, particularly for writers and intellectuals. Bertolt Brecht, long the lyricist of a proletarian culture, happily left his American exile, with its capitalist culture and McCarthyite hysteria, to win honors and his own theater in East Berlin. Lesser writers followed. Thomas Mann accepted an honor from the new state—though he decided to settle in Switzerland, spiritually equidistant from both Germanies. In the G.D.R., as elsewhere at the time, communists had the inestimable advantage of claiming to be the vanguard of a new culture; judge us by some distant future, they said, not by the bleak present. Intellectuals, once committed to the faith, found it hard to break with it, to confess to themselves their error.

In the last few months an old German word has reappeared over and over again in books and articles. Although there is no English or French analogue, Lebenslügen roughly means the lie that is life-giving, the lie that is essential to a particular life, the lie that a person or a people may know to be false but without which a person or state would perish. The G.D.R. was saddled with one Lebenslügen from the start: the fundamental insistence that the Soviet Union was at once liberator and fraternal master and model. The East Germans sensed the travesty of truth. They knew that the Red Army had raped and looted. They knew that the Soviets had despoiled their country, and they sensed as well that their rulers, at least in the beginning, were servile instruments of Soviet masters. One of the many East German witticisms—the one commodity in which they outperformed the West Germans—insisted that the Russians were indeed brothers with whom one had indissoluble fraternal bonds: friends one chooses, brothers are unalterably inflicted. Gradually the antifascist principle, the G.D.R.’s sole threadbare claim to legitimacy, lost its credibility as well: to call the Berlin Wall the great antifascist wall was too grim an absurdity.

The Soviets and the G.D.R.’s rulers needed each other. For the former, East Germany was the frontier state, the most important defense post with the greatest arsenal of weapons. For the rulers of the G.D.R., the Soviet presence constituted the ultimate reserve army against their own people. The Federal Republic, its own legitimacy accepted by its people, had tied itself to the West, but these attach-
ments enhanced security and prosperity and corresponded to the wishes of most of its people. In the 1980s the East German regime, encouraged by the Federal Republic’s ever more enterprising Ostpolitik, sought to gain some greater room for maneuver, some independence from Moscow. Characteristically, Honecker’s greatest moment of independence came at the end, when he banned Soviet publications carrying Gorbachev’s liberalizing message. To the end, Honecker remained a German Leninist—German because there was a tinge of sentimentality to his inhumanity. He and his closest advisers, most of them ardent believers in the powers of repression, ignored younger members of the nomenklatura who understood the need for reform in East Germany. Their day came too late. The G.D.R. was founded on deception, on various Lebenslügen, and its end was hastened by the self-deception of its aged leaders.

The G.D.R. leaves an ambiguous legacy, as does the Federal Republic; the difference is that the institutions of the old F.R.G. have not ended but are in the process of having to adopt to different conditions. The old political culture of the Federal Republic is being tested and, in part, measured by Eastern ideals. In the historic rivalry between communism and social democracy, the former by its very collapse has scored a major triumph. Many people, especially on the political right, rejoice in confounding communism and socialism, interpreting the dismal failure of the one as irredeemably discrediting the other as well. The historic task of democratic socialism has been to correct the most grievous, ruthless qualities of what Jacques Delors once called “capitalisme sauvage.” It is doubtful that this task will ever be totally completed.

The G.D.R. is dead, and some East Germans already have their nostalgic moments. Disappointed in the present, prompted by a selective memory, they ask: “Was everything wrong in the last 40 years?” And they tend to erase from memory the hopelessness of the old regime and remember that at some level of subsistence, however drab and uniform, even ordinary citizens could count on the essentials of life: housing, however wretched, food, however meager, medical care, however inferior and indifferent. They remember that in the old G.D.R. there was no crime, no drugs, no pornography. The communist rulers of the G.D.R. could have echoed President Nixon’s
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boast: “We have taken crime off the streets.” The government had assumed a monopoly on crime.

Citizens remember the much vaunted Kinderkrippen, a grandiose term for child-care centers to which working parents could send their children. The memory of the Kinderkrippen evokes the G.D.R.’s traditional concern for family life, for women’s rights, including the non-traditional right of abortion, for social welfare—all this in contrast to the cold life in unified Germany, where the cash nexus rules all. These Kinderkrippen have become a kind of symbol for the better side of G.D.R. life. People forget that these benefits were palliatives for deeper pain. The Kinderkrippen were the decorous part of a controlled society that violated the home it pretended to protect.

MORE DIVIDED THAN BEFORE

On some deep psychological level the unified Germany is more divided than before; the physical wall has been internalized. Where once had been the untroubled hope that at some future date the division of the country, unnaturally maintained, would be healed, there are now painful inequalities of power, wealth, experience and assertiveness. The living standard of East Germans is still much lower than that of West Germans; wages are lower and unemployment is at least three times higher. Economic inequalities heighten psychic discontent: East Germans are given to self-pity, West Germans to arrogance and exasperation. Some West Germans themselves complain of Western self-righteousness. Both sides deserve understanding. There are many Germans who demand solidarity not in words but in deeds, but their pleas are lost on pusillanimous politicians who, in confusion, think mostly of the next election.

In March 1993 the Bonn parliament finally approved a solidarity pact that has brought some predictability into the economic picture. It provides for new taxes to fund specified payments to the new Länder. Approximately seven percent of GNP will be transferred to the East over the next decade—roughly one trillion Deutsche marks. In July even the European Community agreed, reluctantly, to provide 27.5 billion Deutsche marks over the next six years to the new Länder out of its regional assistance funds. The strains are clear: Germany as a whole
is in a deep recession, with continued negative growth; according to many observers, it is the most serious recession since the founding of the Federal Republic. Hence the great unease pervading both parts of Germany. Still, the solidarity pact affords real chances for the new Länder, as Kurt Biedenkopf, minister president of Saxony, made clear in a speech to the Saxon parliament in mid-March—a candid speech that exemplified the possibilities of democratic leadership.

The old Federal Republic has also gained greater freedom in 1989, but a very different kind of freedom from the East Germans'. Unification has fulfilled the old national dream and attenuated—even on some level removed—Germany's dependency on its Western allies. From the beginning of the Federal Republic, it needed Allied protection, most clearly in the ever vulnerable city of Berlin. For 40 years this dependency dictated the parameters of choice. Now questions about German national interest and purpose reemerge in full force. In the ongoing debate there are some who demand greater German assertiveness, who have grown tired of being held hostage to the memory of the Nazi past. That sentiment is so strong that Jürgen Habermas has warned against yet another Lebenslügen for Germany, the Lebenslügen, as he puts it, "of us being a normal nation." How understandable the wish of so many Germans to be liberated of the burden of the past, to "relativize" Nazi crimes, to seek a retrospective moral equality. How understandable, and probably how unattainable.

It is one of the tragic ironies of the 1989 revolutions that they coincided with deepening crises in the West. The newly liberated countries reached out for a market economy at a time of worldwide recession. They sought to embrace democracy when the democratic countries had plunged into scandals of corruption and a general paralysis of leadership. They looked to Europe just as the hopes of Europe 1992 faded in the post-Maastricht malaise and when the term "democratic deficit" seemed to have resonance beyond the internal arrangements of the European Community.

Germany's unanticipated unification, with its staggering demands, came at a time when the old Federal Republic was already experiencing mutually reinforcing pressures. The West German economy—in the past the guarantor of West German democracy—was slowing down. The capitalist world was not at its most dynamic, or at what
Joseph Schumpeter defined at its most destructively creative, when East Germans clamored for a free market and the many gurus of the market economy urged instant transformation. West Germans, including leading politicians, were not immune to the greed and corruption of the Reaganite 1980s. Faith in the political system was shaken. Put differently, the twin miracles of Bonn’s beginnings, the economic miracle and the political miracle—that is, the emergence after the devastation of the Nazi years of unprecedented political leadership—had come to an end. Germany faces its gravest crisis since the end of World War II.

A new and ultra-right-wing party, the Republicans, has scored impressive victories. It is doubtful that the massive increase in asylum seekers between 1987 and 1992—an increase of some 800 percent—is solely or even primarily responsible for the dissatisfaction that this party exploits. People in all parts of Germany feel an imbalance between the economic and moral requirements of the newly unified state and their political response. There has hardly been a time in which the political classes were held in such low esteem—as is true in the rest of Europe. The present uncertainties prompted Marion Countess Dónhoff, Helmut Schmidt and a few like-minded citizens to issue a manifesto in November 1992 under the title “Because The Country Must Change.” Or consider Jens Reich’s fears of future unrest “when I observe our dance around the golden calf, called property, prosperity, consumerism . . . which we hold sacrosanct. Even now I see the coming disgust and the helpless failure of the putative victors. Late socialism clung to the illusion of eternal growth and progress. We should not succumb to it under a different guise.”

The eruption of xenophobic violence, the killing of Turkish women and children, has horrified the world. Hundreds of skinheads are supported by thousands of nationalist, perhaps even neo-Nazi, sympathizers, while millions of Germans organize silent marches to protest this ugliness, a demonstrative solidarity never before seen in Germany. To some, the very silence of these marches, however impressive in themselves, is disturbing. Germans need speech, thought and moral authority, charged questions about asylum seekers
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and fiscal measures that would grapple with the needed transfer payments to the east. All these need public argument. Over and over again in the last few months Chancellor Kohl has been admonished to "tell the truth."

In all parts of Germany there is a palpable deficit of trust—trust in leaders, trust in almost all aspects of life. The English philosopher John Dunn has spoken of trust as the core element of democracy. And while trust is in short supply in all countries, its steady decline in Germany is alarming. Degrees of trust cannot be quantified, unlike the interest rates of the Bundesbank—yet the two are linked. The Deutsche mark remains the symbol and instrument of Germany's economic stability, and the unarticulated incantation could be "In the Deutsche mark we trust." In a decade or so that same Deutsche mark will—by the painful transfer of some thousand billion Deutsche marks—transform the new Länder, especially Saxony, into the most modern region of Europe; the moral-psychological recovery and unity will take much longer.

I say this with a certain sadness, sadness that the promise of 1989, or what I thought of as Germany's second chance in this century, has been trapped in pain and disappointment. Once again Germany's history did not have to be like this; there was nothing inevitable about it. More truth, better leadership and greater tolerance would have made a difference. Even now the pessimists see a political system without leadership—and see a repeat of Weimar. The optimists see the possibility of rejuvenation and reciprocal learning, of which there has been too little.

To seek freedom in defiance of the state is not part of the German political tradition, as it is of the English, Dutch, French and American traditions. And yet twice in the last half century Germans defied a tyrannical state: on July 20, 1944, a few Germans tried to overthrow Hitler—they failed, and the two Germanies have had a difficult time assimilating or celebrating their memory; and in the fall of 1989, hundreds of thousands of East Germans successfully defied their regime, admittedly at a time when neighboring countries had already thrown off the communist yoke; it was nonetheless a momentous achievement in German history. Their leaders have already sunk into oblivion, and the memory of those great days has faded. People refer to
these events as *die Wende*, the turn, thus transforming what had been dramatic and heroic into something prosaic and bureaucratic. For all the disappointments that have followed, we should celebrate not merely the collapse of the Berlin Wall, but the men and women who by their demand for a better and freer life made that collapse one of the great moments in their history and ours.

The revolutions of 1989—however darkened in the meantime by the return of barbarism in many parts of the world—have given us an opportunity to live in trust and truth, to validate the hopes of Vaclav Havel.