

Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-NINE • NUMBER SIX • JUNE 1990

One-and-a-half Cheers for German Unification

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WRITING in the *International Herald Tribune*, a German Jewish journalist poured it all out. A "unified Germany," this son of Holocaust survivors warned, "may grow into everything the world abhorred in the Germany of the early part of the century: a powerful country never content to accept limits on its political or economic strength, a self-centered society . . . whose rulers remain happily oblivious to foreigners' concerns." The new Germany might resemble the "bizarre monarchy that was the Reich around the turn of the century." World War I followed, and then the doomed Weimar Republic, paving the "way for the rise of the Nazi party [and for a] government that made mass murder a main goal of its agenda." Soon, we might be watching the replay. "The peaceful and moderately dull Federal Republic of Germany . . . is leaving the stage. Its replacement, a rich and mighty entity, . . . may become a strange and eerie place—perhaps even the source of a new wave of darkness spreading over the earth."

This is the archetypal horror scenario that has haunted observers around the world since the Berlin Wall fell last November—Jews and non-Jews, Americans, Frenchmen, Britons, Russians, even Germans themselves. Nor is it so strange that people should be oppressed by such dark visions of Germany *rediviva*. Though Auschwitz and Hitler are now forty-five years in the past, our memory still is haunted by both—and the 55 million dead of the war. No event in human history has been "larger" than World War II; no evil has been greater than that inflicted by Nazi Germany on itself and on the rest of the world. Was not Germany's unification in 1871 the root of it all? And are we not about to witness the remake today? Certainly by reasoning backward, we are quick to discover a tidy chain of historical necessity which leads from German unification to global disaster.

The story begins on January 18, 1871, when the modern German empire was proclaimed at Ver-

sailles. On that fateful day, Prussia doubled its victory over France by conquering Germany, as it were. Willing or not, a bunch of ancient kingdoms, principalities, duchies, and cities was swept into the Second Reich by Bismarck's Prussia. Its very name spelled an ominous challenge to the European order. The First Reich had been the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation (962–1806), which saw itself as heir to Rome and thus to much of Europe. Replacing the old Reich's pretensions with real strength, the Wilhelminian Empire quickly turned into the powerhouse of Europe. Dynamic and restless, ebullient but unsure of itself, the new Reich shouldered its way to the table of the Great Powers when the chips were already well-distributed. And so, Germany was bound to threaten all the established players and, in turn, to be threatened by them.

Bad timing was compounded by the curse of geography. Plunked down in the middle of Europe, the Reich was stuck with a highly vulnerable position. Saddled with long, "unnatural" frontiers and surrounded by heavyweight rivals, the new Germany easily fell for a twin temptation. At home, democracy (moving forward fitfully in Britain and France) was sacrificed to the imperatives of national power, and nationalism, the heady cry of "us against them," was proffered as a substitute for liberty and equality. The second temptation, fed by an accelerating cycle of paranoia and aggressiveness, was in the cult of the strategic offensive. If each and all were begrudging Germany its "place in the sun," if the Reich was beset by France in the West, by Russia in the East, and by Britain from across the sea, why not break the stranglehold once and for all? World War I was triggered by a terrorist murder in Sarajevo, but in truth it represented Germany's ruthless attempt to solve its endemic security problem by reaching for all-out hegemony.

Failure led to defeat, revolution, and the doomed democratic experiment of the Weimar Republic—and a mere twenty years later to the vastly more brutal and bloody second try. The aftermath of the Third Reich is still with us. German and East European Jewry was annihilated. Europe's frontiers were redrawn. Soviet armies encamped in the heart of Europe, and they are beginning to withdraw only now, almost half a

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century after marching all the way to the Elbe River. Eastern Europe has regained its freedom, but it will take decades to clear away the rubble left behind by Nazi and then Soviet imperialism. Western Europe recovered long ago, but who could have predicted such a happy outcome while surveying the moribund continent on V-E Day?

And now, on the threshold of "Germany, united fatherland," it is feared that the vicious cycle of unification and catastrophe will begin anew. Cartoonists and columnists in America, France, and Britain have been inordinately fond of the image of the Fourth Reich, thus dragging the past 120 years of German history forward into the future. To be sure, the analogy is seductive not only to the pundits and pencil wielders. For all of us feel—indeed, *know*—that an era is coming to an end.

The era just ending, though flawed by ideological and physical partition, has given us the comfort of almost immutable stability. A resurgent West Germany was safely harnessed to the West, and the power of Germany as a whole was nicely neutralized in two countervailing alliances. For some forty years, postwar Germany dared not—and could not—use its economic muscle and geographic advantage in the kind of contest that had brought grief to Europe and the world during the Second Thirty Years' War. But now the European game is changing, and a soon-to-be reunited Germany again will be the number-one player. Will "a new wave of darkness" spread forth from Germany once more?

I

TEMPTING as the historical analogies may be, they are almost completely wrong. Anybody reasoning forward from past disaster will be hard put to make the indictment stick. Search and dig as he may, he will scarcely find the social, political, or economic ingredients in contemporary Germany that poisoned the Wilhelminian Empire and the Weimar Republic. For starters, just look at the vignettes of the very recent past—since the Berlin Wall was breached on November 9 of last year.

Though American anchormen, descending in droves on Germany on that occasion, breathlessly announced that Bonn's parliamentarians had risen to intone *Deutschland über alles*, they got their lyrics wrong. In fact, the Bundestag deputies were singing *Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit* ("Unity, Justice, Freedom"), and not the tainted words of the pre-1945 national anthem which the world has come to see as the very epitome of German national hubris.* Even more telling was the song of the young people dancing atop the Berlin Wall that night: *So ein Tag, so wunderschön wie heute* ("What a Day, What a Beautiful Day"). That is the traditional ditty of German soccer fans cele-

brating the victory of their team; played at a leisurely three-quarter beat, the tune does not quite make it as a rabble-rouser. Amid popping champagne corks, the emotions were those of a family reunion—not the bloody-minded reflexes of unshackled nationalism. People got drunk on booze, not on *Volk* and *Vaterland*.

In West Germany, nobody was thronging through the streets of Frankfurt, Munich, or Hamburg to clamor for *Anschluss*. Indeed, *nobody* was marching—except those East Germans who streamed through the Wall with the incredulous wonderment that might befall inmates suddenly left in charge of the jailhouse. Not *Deutschland* raised their heartbeats, but kiwis and bananas, those symbols of untasted luxury which they carted home by the bushel. In March, during the first free election in East Germany in fifty-seven years, almost half the electorate cast their ballots for the conservative Alliance for Germany, surrogates of Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU). And they shunted aside the Social Democrats (SPD) for a simple, powerful reason.

While the SPD wanted to go slow, the Chancellor and his cohorts in Bonn stood for quick monetary and economic union. And in the minds of East Germans, that message read not *Deutschland über alles* but *Deutschemark über alles*. Kohl was the "White Knight" from across the Elbe, extending a friendly takeover offer that would turn sinking Prusso-socialism into a subsidiary of fabulously rich Bonn, Inc. East-marks, fetching at one point only ten West German pfennigs on the black market, would be converted one-for-one into the real thing. To the Saxons and Thuringians, unity evoked not the glory of a reconstituted fatherland but above all the shortest of shortcuts to West German capitalism.

II

THERE may be a larger point in this that transcends the two Germanys: nationalism isn't what it used to be—not in the democratic-industrial segment of the world that stretches from Berkeley to Berlin. Compare 1990 to 1890. How easy it was then to mobilize entire nations around shibboleths like "the white man's burden," "Remember the *Maine*," and "*Gott strafe England*" ("May God Punish England"). Millions went to their deaths in 1914 because their *patrie*, *Vaterland*, or *rodina* so demanded. From 1789 to 1945, European history was written by nations in arms, and nationalism was the murderous energy that drove and sustained them.

Today one has to travel farther afield to observe that blood-fueled engine in action—to Africa and Asia. Thirty thousand Frenchmen were enough to

* The melody of *Deutschland über alles*, by the way, was composed by Joseph Haydn, and it extolled not the German *Volk* but the kindly Austrian Emperor Franz.

conquer Algeria in 1830, twenty times as many could not hold it in 1962. Six million tons of explosives were dropped on Vietnam, three times more than on Nazi Germany, yet Ho Chi Minh's armies prevailed over the United States. Not Westerners but Arabs, be it in Lebanon or against Israel, today act out their tribal fantasies and obsessions with collective mayhem. Human-wave attacks, *de rigueur* for Frenchmen and Germans in the trenches of Flanders, have now become a specialty of Iranians—who thought very little of using their own children as living mine-sweepers.

Conquest and carnage in the name of nation or faith, then, are no longer a Western pastime; they have been extruded to the Third World, including the southern reaches of the Soviet empire. Perhaps nationalist frenzy will stage a comeback where nationality has been suppressed for so long—in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Russia. But in the Euro-Atlantic world, which will soon encompass all of Germany, World War II may have been the last gasp of the “violent and poetical excitement to arms,” as Tocqueville called it. What we witness today between Nottingham and Naples is a pale copy of the real thing.

The nation-state is alive and well, but in the West the paranoia and hatred that used to whip nations into collective hysteria have wilted, exposing a toothless kind of national consciousness. The contemporary mutation makes for colorful celebrations of Bastille Day or the Fourth of July and, quadriennially, of Olympic victories. Occasionally nationalism still unites a society behind a Falklands-type expedition, and a more private version has sent soccer hoodlums on a rampage in stadiums around Europe (though the underlying emotion probably was boredom rather than chauvinism). Yet otherwise, Western nationalism has gone the way of Rosie the Riveter and Captain America.

WHY do yesterday's volcanoes appear to be extinct—in Germany as elsewhere? One reason, though disappearing into the mist of history, is the memory of two world wars. Seventy million dead add up to a powerful taboo. A more enduring reason is nuclear weapons. In the brooding shadow of the atom, national hubris not only invokes the price of national suicide, but, more important, the price is known beforehand. The Kaiser's soldiers left Berlin on August 3, 1914 with the jubilant pledge: “We'll be back for Christmas.” Today, they understand that they might not have a city to which to return.

Similarly, the Germans did not know on September 1, 1939 what their country would look like on May 8, 1945; today, in a world of nuclear weapons, they and everybody else can foresee the consequences with horrifying precision. The paralyzing effect of nuclear weapons may also explain why peace is not just the possession of the well-settled Western democracies, but a blessing be-

stowed on *all* nations, democratic or not, as long as they live in the realm of the “balance of terror.” Conversely, the Third World can indulge in collective bloodshed because, beyond the nuclear arena, that luxury does not come with an existential price tag attached.

A third answer is rooted in the nature of contemporary Western society, which no longer seems to harbor the historical sources of jingoism. To “busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels” was Henry IV's deathbed advice to his son and successor. With that counsel, Shakespeare captured an essential condition of chauvinism: intractable internal conflict that makes rulers and elites resort to the diversion of flag-waving. The heyday of Western nationalism, *circa* 1840-1940, also happens to span a century of economic revolution and wrenching political adaptation—and there is more than coincidence in this correlation. Throughout the West, the onslaught of secularization, industrialization, and urbanization—in short, “modernity”—wreaked havoc on societies given to traditional authority, ancient loyalties, and sedate change. The price of modernity was conflict: between workers and owners, Protestants and Catholics, city and country, rulers and ruled.

The “hidden hand of the market” drove peasants off the land and cobblers off the bench, robbing them of their roots and sweeping them into the maws of urban alienation. Fortunes were made and lost in cycles of boom and bust which would draw the multitudes into the production process only to cast them out again at the next downturn. Battered by vast anonymous forces, no society in the West enjoyed a surfeit of individual happiness and political harmony. But in Bismarckian Germany, something else happened—or more precisely, did not happen.

In France, Britain, and the United States uprooted peasants and downtrodden proletarians ultimately became *citizens* for whom the miseries of modernity were blunted by the blessings of democracy. As the franchise trickled down, previously excluded groups gained power and a sense of mastery over their own fates; their voices and their votes mattered. Not so in Bismarckian Germany where economic expansion and democracy went off in opposite directions. “Enrich yourselves, but leave the driving to us,” was the message of the ancien régime that ruled the Second Reich. The economic revolution did not unleash a political one; as wealth increased by leaps and bounds, power remained concentrated in the hands of the few.

The mighty Reich was a class- and conflict-ridden society, mortgaged to a bourgeoisie that had sold away its birthright to the old aristocracy. Nationalism was the savior of that tottering construction, the cement that held it all together. For nationalism is that wondrous “political good” which is never scarce and which bestows psychic equality on rich and poor, on masters and servants

alike. Chauvinism, moreover, came easy to a nation that had only recently joined the ranks of the Great Powers, provoking the other players merely by dint of its existence. In a threatening world, the appeal to discipline, duty, and fatherland did not require much mendacity; it was a message any German could understand.

The Weimar Republic was a replay in a far more noxious setting. The Second Reich, after all, was born in national triumph; the Weimar Republic was the product of national disaster. Bismarck and successors presided over an expanding economy; Weimar Germany was a basket case kept alive by infusions of (mainly) American loans. In the late 19th century, Berlin was the diplomatic master of Europe; Germany after World War I was a political outcast, forever humbled by the victors who had imposed a punitive peace in Versailles. There was democracy, to be sure, but the experiment was tainted from the very beginning by the shame of defeat and the toll of economic failure. Perhaps the Germans still might have made it, in spite of the hyperinflation of 1923 that turned society upside-down. But then the Depression hit. It sharpened ancient class conflicts while disaster after disaster, denying any respite, left only room for delusion and paranoia.

Into that void of rationality and faith stepped, as if made to order by a Satanic god, the pseudo-messianic figure of Hitler. The Fuehrer promised deliverance, rebirth, and salvation—with a message that more and more Germans were only too willing to swallow. Democracy? That was the alien faith of the victors. Freedom? That was but the privilege of the "plutocrats" and the "parasites" who, in cahoots with the "politicians," were sucking the lifeblood out of the honest working man. For people in the grip of economic agony, submission to *Volk* and Fuehrer spelled instant, reassuring equality which the cruel hand of the market would never yield. And Hitler offered them more than just equality. Whether rich or poor, high-born or humble, any German was now a member of the master-race destined to vanquish the enemy within (the Jews) and the enemy without (Russian Bolsheviks and Western capitalists) who, together, had conspired to enslave the German nation.

III

THE moral of this tale is a simple one. By no stretch of the imagination is the Federal Republic, though to be fused soon with its East German brother, a precursor of the Fourth Reich. How do we know? Germans today are inordinately fond of telling themselves and others: "We have learned our historical lesson," meaning: "We were bad then, but we are good now, and therefore you should trust us."

Such incantations, though earnestly uttered, are beside the point. We do not bestow a clean bill

of health on an ex-junkie just on his say-so. We look for more tangible proof: does he hold down a job, does he avoid bad company, do his life circumstances keep him from temptation? The real point is that, *objectively*, contemporary West Germany bears little resemblance to the Bismarckian Empire or the Weimar Republic; nor does the Federal Republic live in the same world that its predecessors occupied. In its essential features, it is like any advanced Western society, moving no longer along the *Sonderweg*, the path of separate development, that set previous incarnations of Germany apart from Britain, France, and the United States.

To begin with, democracy works in West Germany, whereas it was absent in the Second Reich (1871-1919) and doomed in the First Republic (1919-33). And it works not because the new German is "good," while his grandparents were "bad," but because the objective conditions are, for once, benign. Like its Weimar precursor, the Federal Republic was born in defeat, dismemberment, and humiliation. Yet this time two debilitating ingredients were mercifully absent: economic catastrophe and a real sense of renewed war.

The difference between 1919 and 1945 was the cold war, which soon turned a pariah into an indispensable ally. Instead of reparations, there was Marshall Plan aid. Instead of competitive devaluations and beggar-thy-neighbor tariffs, there was free trade and monetary expansion in the context of GATT, the World Bank, and the IMF, institutions built and managed by the United States. Trade outlets lost in the East were doubled and tripled by the Common Market in the West, fueling steady, export-led growth. Paradoxically, even dismemberment and partition proved a boon, feeding, until the Wall was built in 1961, twelve million refugees into a booming economy where labor was soon becoming a scarce commodity.

Unlike the Weimar Republic, the Bonn Republic could *enjoy* the economic consequences of peace; and, as a result, democracy flourished. But just as important, the politics were also right. The great loser of World War I, Weimar Germany, could never clear the accounts. It remained the object of suspicion and the victim of foreign imposition. Not so the Federal Republic. Soon the outcast was handed membership in a Western community that delivered shelter and a role. Instead of French intervention, there was Franco-German friendship. Instead of endemic insecurity, there was NATO and a junior partnership with the United States. For once, Germany was not alone but firmly embedded in the West. And because West German—and European—security was guaranteed by a mighty superpower, the Federal Republic was blessed twice: it could not threaten others—and it could not be threatened by them. To exaggerate a bit, West German democracy was the sturdy child of the cold war and an American-sponsored Western community.

Safety and prosperity prepared the grounds where the seeds of civility, democracy, and, yes, "Westernization" could take root after 1945—as they could not after 1919. In the beginning, there were just the letters of a constitution patterned largely after the American model. But as time went on, a political miracle unfolded that was even more impressive than its vaunted economic twin. Maybe Germans are very *gründlich* (thoroughly efficient) at anything they do, be it totalitarianism or democracy. But the fact is that they excelled in the democratic game in ways none dared predict on the day the Nazi nightmare was crushed by American and Russian tanks.

As time went on, Western democracy—rejected after 1871 and 1919 and torn to shreds after 1933—came to rest on a stronger foundation than just obeisance to the loaded guns of the victors. Here are some of the way-stations. In the 1950's, the extremist parties of the Right and the Left, new Nazis and old Communists, fell into oblivion one by one.* Even the party of the Eastern refugees (BHE), beholden to revisionist and nationalist rhetoric, withered away as its members found a place and prosperity in the newly rich Federal Republic.†

In the early 1960's, the democratic constitutional mechanism passed its first critical test in a battle between the freedom of the press and the powers of the executive. Following the orders of Defense Minister Franz-Josef Strauss, the police occupied the building of the *Spiegel* magazine, arresting key editors on the charge of treason in connection with a story on the armed forces. Strauss was later exonerated by the courts, but in the meantime, he had been forced to resign for reasons that recall Richard Nixon's fall: trying to cover up his role in the affair, he had lied to parliament. For a society that had only recently come to live by the rule of law and the separation of powers, that outcome augured well for the future.

About once every decade after the war, civilian supremacy was tested by individual members of the military establishment (though never as brutally as in the encounter during the Korean War between General Douglas MacArthur and President Harry Truman). In each case, the civilian authorities prevailed—and the generals resigned. The 1970's witnessed the rise of terrorism, complete with spectacular murders of business leaders. Predictably, there was a cry for harsher laws and greater police powers. In the end, though, civil rights were not curtailed, apart from the ugly *Extremistenbeschluss* that barred radicals from the civil service—be they lowly railroad workers or high defense officials. The Constitutional Court, at first the weakest of the three branches, successfully took a page out of *Marbury v. Madison*, asserting its powers against the executive and establishing its right not just to interpret but to make the law according to constitutional principle. This is a far cry from Weimar, where the

judiciary would often serve rather than check the powers that be.

MORE and more, Bonn turned out to be anything but Weimar. Yet in the 1960's, memories of the 1930's suddenly returned with a vengeance. In mid-decade, the Federal Republic experienced its first serious recession. Half-a-million people were out of work, and that correlated ominously with the rise of the neo-Nazi National Democratic party (NPD). So Bonn was like Weimar after all? The specter, however, soon dissipated, and today, the NPD garners less than 1 percent at the polls. If Bonn *were* Weimar, it should be getting a great deal more. Throughout much of the 1980's, unemployment has hovered around two million (about 8 percent of the workforce), yet the neo-Nazis are on the verge of extinction.

What then of the cynically mislabeled Republikaners, a bunch of populists, nationalists, and xenophobes who started making headlines last year? They gained their first parliamentary seats in the West Berlin regional assembly in January 1989, and they soared to worrisome prominence in the elections to the European parliament five months later (7.2 percent nationwide). Yet today they languish below 3 percent in the opinion polls, and in the most recent state elections, in high-unemployment Saarland, a rustbelt region, they fetched only 3.3 percent.

The reason may be an old one in the annals of electoral politics. A protest vote does not a party make, and sheer resentment, in which the Republikaners try to trade, does not make for stable voting allegiances—at least not in a basically well-settled society. Unlike Weimar Germany, the Federal Republic is not afflicted with personal misery and collective humiliation—at worst only with sheer boredom. After a while, the novelty of an "anti-party" party wears off, and the flock returns to the established organizations which, by then, have stolen the anti-party's thunder by promising cheap housing and job programs. Unemployment, even of the permanent kind, does not thrust its victims into the lumpenproletariat—thanks to a lavish welfare net extended by the government.

The larger point is that the modern Western welfare state—in Germany as elsewhere—has plenty of defenses against the revolt of the losers. In the 1920's, an impoverished young German might have joined the Storm Troopers for the sake of a fresh brown shirt, three meals a day, and the

* Two parties were expressly outlawed. Founded in 1949, the Socialist Reich party (SRP), a Nazi surrogate, was declared illegal by the Constitutional Court in 1952. The Communists (KPD) suffered the same fate in 1956.

† The fate of the Eastern refugees makes for an instructive contrast with the Arab refugees from the wars against Israel. The Germans from Silesia, Pomerania, Bohemia, etc. were rigorously integrated into the Federal Republic so as to blunt the edge of revisionism. In order to keep revanchism alive, the Palestinian refugees were deliberately interned in camps around Israel by Arab regimes.

social status conferred by a shiny pair of jackboots. Today, his out-of-work grandchild gets two-thirds of his last after-tax income from the unemployment office, and he does not even have to pick it up; it is deposited in his bank account. More important, he does not have to attend a mass rally in order to relieve his boredom. Instead he can pop a video into his machine, or spend his welfare check in sunny, cheap Mallorca. In short, the nature of contemporary Western society is such that even the disadvantaged can satisfy their personal needs in personal ways; they need not submit to a Fuehrer or collective. And that cuts down the business opportunities of Pied Pipers.

Those who fear a "new wave of darkness" simply overlook how much Germany today is part of the Western mainstream. The Republikaner resemble Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front in France more than they do the SA or NSDAP of yore. They resent high housing prices, cultural permissiveness, the high-tech plant next door that offers no employment to the unskilled, and the influx of foreigners, even those "foreigners" who are East Germans or German ethnics coming in from Russia, Romania, or Poland. Adding the extremes of the Right and Left in Germany today, one arrives at an electoral potential of 10, or at the outside 15, percent, most of which is enveloped by the traditional parties. But that is no different from France, Britain, or Italy.

Anti-Semitism? *Measured* anti-Semitism is less in the Federal Republic than in some other Western countries.* But these figures must be taken with a grain of salt. First, anti-Semitism in Germany is still imbued with a powerful taboo—so powerful that respondents will undoubtedly conceal it from the professional pulse-takers. Second, there are scarcely any Jews left to hate in Germany. The Jewish community encompasses about 30,000 registered members, and there may be another 10,000 who do not proclaim their religious affiliation. That is a far cry from the 600,000 German Jews before the war. A more profound reason for the lack of visible anti-Semitism is the invisibility of the targets. Jews in West Germany do not occupy the prominent positions their expelled or slaughtered co-religionists held in the prewar period: as bankers, journalists, scientists, and academics.

Nonetheless, the obvious ought not be ignored. Anti-Semitism in the Federal Republic remains a cultural and political no-no, and when it raises its ugly head, it is swiftly slapped down, be it by the authorities or by published opinion.

East Germany, however, was quite different. There, the Communist regime started out in the late 1940's by simply absolving the "Worker and Peasant State" from all crimes; these, after all, had been committed by the "bad" Germans in the reactionary West. Thereafter, the regime faithfully followed every twist and turn of the anti-Semitic line laid down by Moscow—from Stalin's purges

to the bureaucratic repression under Brezhnev, when anti-Semitism took on the convenient but no less vicious guise of anti-Zionism. Today, there are only a few hundred Jews in the GDR.

Yet this ugly tale comes with a semi-happy ending. On April 13, the GDR's parliament asked "the Jews in all the world for forgiveness"—for the "hypocrisy and hostility of official GDR policy against the state of Israel and for the persecution and degradation of Jews in our country even after 1945." Confessing "shame and grief," the East German parliament accepted responsibility for Nazi crimes and pledged material restitution—something the Communist regime had never done.

IV

ON THE verge of reunification, Germany does not look like that "strange and eerie place" so many worried observers decry as the precursor of the Fourth Reich. Indeed, in some respects, the Federal Republic is a more liberal polity than either France or Britain. Power is more diffused in the West German federal system (which will also be extended to the East) than in centralized France, and there is no Official Secrets Act that so hamstring the press in Britain. (Keeping a state secret in Bonn is harder even than in Washington.) Compared with Helmut Kohl, Mrs. Thatcher enjoys almost dictatorial powers, and compared with the "republican monarchy" that is France, the Federal Republic is a political free-for-all. West German democracy, as the past forty years suggest, is not a fly-by-night operation that will vanish at the next economic downturn.

The problem lies elsewhere, and it stems not from the internal workings of the Federal Republic but from the external setting of a reunited Germany. The reassuring career of the Bonn Republic cannot be divorced from the ultra-stable European order installed after 1945—and which is going fast. The postwar order was built in and around Germany, and it had two functions. Explicitly, it was to contain the might of Soviet Russia; implicitly, it was to envelop the energies of a resurgent Germany. In historical terms, the postwar order was "just right": it protected Germany against others and against itself; it pulled the sting of Russian as well as of German power; and it achieved all this not by imposition and discrimination, but by community and integration. Paranoid nationalism cannot fester when

* In a four-country survey, fewer Germans expressed negative stereotypes about Jews than Austrians, Frenchmen, and Americans. Generally, anti-Semitism is higher in Austria than in West Germany. In 1952, 37 percent of a West German sample agreed to the proposition, "It is better for Germany to have no Jews in the country." In 1983, that proportion had declined to 9 percent. For an exhaustive survey of public attitudes, see Renate Köcher, *Deutsche und Juden vier Jahrzehnte danach* (Allensbach: Institut für Demoskopie). Data were collected in 1986.

safety is assured within so cozy a framework. Yet with Russia receding and containing itself, as it were, the whole structure is losing its *raison d'être* and claim to allegiance.

With Russia retracting, Germany will become number one on the continent—willy-nilly and by sheer dint of economic clout and geographic position. Yet at this point, there is nothing to replace the *ancien système* that functioned so ingeniously to keep the dynamic part of Germany both happy and harnessed. To be sure, NATO and the European Community (EC) are still alive, while their Eastern counterparts, the Warsaw Pact and Comecon, are moving into the dustbin of history. On the other hand, if Russia turns inward for any length of time, NATO will not flourish and the EC will not become what its founding fathers envisioned: a West European common market blossoming into political union.

TAKE NATO. Add a united Germany,* factor in a democratic Eastern Europe, and subtract the Soviet threat. What do you get? Something called NATO, but which, successively, will be emptied of its reality. An alliance of democracies, it cannot resist what is gnawing at its sinews already—"competitive disarmament" in search of a "peace dividend." Ground-launched nuclear weapons—short-range missiles and nuclear artillery—will be the first to go. And in all fairness, it is hard to come up with a rationale for such weapons once their intended targets (Russian armies) are gone, leaving in place Czechs, Poles, and Hungarians who have neither the will nor the wherewithal to make a decent enemy. Nuclear weapons in a forward position, however, are not add-on frills but the very embodiment of America's security guarantee to Western Europe—and a brake on the acquisition of national deterrents.

For the core of the alliance is not so much the Washington Treaty of 1949 as NATO's flesh-and-steel arrangements on West German soil. The Federal Republic is home to 250,000 American troops, to 55,000 British and 50,000 French soldiers, and to Belgian, Dutch, and Canadian units. Except for the French, these and almost half-a-million West German troops are all integrated in a multinational command structure that is the essence of NATO. With the Russians withdrawing and the Warsaw Pact withering away, what would these forces do? Whom would they contain, especially once they had been whittled down to token contingents? Would they stand watch on the Elbe River—beyond which there is nothing left to guard? The point of these questions is to cast the cold light of realism on notions according to which NATO will persist while the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact disappear from the equation. An alliance is logically inseparable from the idea of a threat and a foe, and if the latter wanes, so will the former.

Today it is anybody's guess how many Amer-

ican troops will remain in Germany—and who else would take them once the Congress and/or the Germans decided they were no longer needed. The burden of a Great-Power role has never sat well on American shoulders; historically, at least, the task was only assumed when a nasty hegemonist lurked across the water: Kaiser Bill, Adolf Hitler, Hirohito, Joseph Stalin. Gorbachev, for the time being, does not quite fit that profile, and so George McGovern's 1972 campaign cry of "Come home, America" might finally come true. Yet few people realize how crucial America's role in Europe has been—not just as protector but also as pacifier, as the player who not only held off Stalin but also took the edge off the ancient rivalries that had embroiled Britain, France, and Germany in periodic war. With the United States ensconced in the system, there was suddenly a power greater than all of them that could ensure each against the perils of cooperation.

In that respect, NATO-builders Truman and Eisenhower were also the real founding fathers of the European Community. Yet the EC as we know it will not survive the cold war, either. Suitably reformed, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania have at least as much of a claim to entry as had Portugal and Greece. Why keep out Switzerland, Sweden, and Austria once the EC is no longer the economic core of a Western defense organization? One thing is certain. More members equal more heterogeneity which, in turn, will postpone political union *sine die*. With NATO reduced to a symbolic compact, and the EC to a European-wide free-trade zone, what will lend strength and resilience to a post-postwar Europe dominated by Germany?

While proclaiming fealty to NATO, German leaders in Bonn, Berlin, and Dresden already are speculating about "transcending the alliances." The vision is of an "all-European peace order" that would produce "collective security" in the framework of the 35-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).† That approach—effective sanctions by the peace-lovers against the aggressor—was last tried by the League of Nations when fascist Italy grabbed Abyssinia. (Haile Selassie went into exile, and the League went on to its unheralded demise.) "Collective security" is to alliance what a Dodge City posse is to the FBI—a somewhat haphazard attempt to make nations follow duty rather than self-interest.

* The current scheme, favored by Bonn as well as its allies, is to incorporate all of Germany into NATO, but keep NATO troops out of East German territory. Accordingly, the GDR enters into NATO, but NATO does not enter into the GDR.

† The CSCE encompasses all the European nations plus the United States, Canada, and the Soviet Union. It lacks a secretariat and a structure, and it requires unanimity for all decisions. Since 1975, the CSCE has done some useful work on the periphery of classic security policy, e.g., by sponsoring "confidence-building measures" such as limits on military maneuvers and their timely announcement.

Collective security is also the daily fare of the United Nations as it is asked to bring the world's weight to bear on Arabs and Israelis, Iraqis and Iranians, Khmer Rouge and rival Cambodians. It does not work today, as it did not work then, because nations are loath to sacrifice their *sacro egoismo* on the altar of abstract justice. Lofty as it is, the precept of "one for all, and all for one" has a fatal flaw: it requires nations to behave so virtuously as to render the mechanism of "collective security" unnecessary. The system *assumes* stability; it cannot create it.

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IF THE old structures go, an "all-European peace order"—a.k.a. "collective security," where each is tied to all and thus to none—hardly will be able to assume the functions of the old regime. Which leads to the major question. If, as I have argued, the happy career of the Federal Republic was part and parcel of a sturdy postwar order, what will transpire inside the country once a mighty Germany bestrides a European stage that is no longer dominated by the old props and players?

The bet is (even odds, no more) that Germany will *not* become a "strange and eerie place." Once the horrendous costs of rehabilitating the East have been absorbed, the heirs to Wilhelm II, Weimar, and the Wehrmacht probably will use their clout less hesitantly than in the past. Nor will the Germans defer so frequently to allies and neighbors as a reduced demand for security cuts into their need for allegiance and as the burden of guilt feelings is lightened with each passing generation. But a replay of Wilhelm II or Adolf H.? Interstate rivalry in Europe—indeed, in the entire democratic-industrial world—has evolved onto more mercantile levels as the currency of military force has become devalued. Pearl Harbor is no longer bombed, but bought, by the Japanese. The Germans no longer invade the Alsace; they *pay* for choice plots there. And the Alsatian farmers would rather sell out to the *boches* than eke out a miserly living on lands rendered unprofitable by the EC bureaucracy in Brussels.

While the demise of the postwar order will liberate German power above all, a nation's power today is not measured by possession, but by the answer to questions such as: "Who determines parities in the European currency grid?" It so happens that it is the German Bundesbank, which grates hard on French monetary authorities, and

understandably so. But this is still a different contest than was played out with German jackboots on the pavements of Paris fifty years ago. The battle lines are drawn in the balance-of-payments ledgers, and the accounts are settled with ECU's (the EC internal currency), not with blood and iron. The rivalry is acted out in an arena where joint welfare, not this or that province, is the stake—where your losses are not my gains, but where we both win and lose together. The victims of Sony may resent cheap VCR's made in Japan, but who would go to war over the privilege of buying worse-quality goods at higher prices? Americans may brandish military metaphors when it comes to Japan, but in truth they think about improving the educational and management system at home, not about sending the Marines into MITI.

The game of nations in the democratic-industrial world has changed, as have these nations themselves—including Germany. "*Nach Paris!*" today is not the battle cry of a Wehrmacht lieutenant departing Berlin Central in search of booty and glory, but the civilized request of an amorous German student buying a round-trip ticket in order to visit his French girlfriend. In such societies, given to the *individual* pursuit of happiness, the Pied Pipers of nationalism will not attract many followers.

But might not Germany unshackled hanker after nuclear weapons and push for the revision of its Eastern frontiers? That is impossible to exclude, but hard to imagine. The new, more civilized and civilianized game of nations offers the largest payoffs to nations such as Germany and Japan. The game has devalued the military chips, delivering power and prestige to those who can back up their bets with investments and loans. Why then should they forgo their advantage by changing the rules? In the attempt, they would certainly revive the hostile coalitions that proved their undoing in 1945. And one must assume that well-settled democracies are more sensible and sensitive about such risks than were the Hohenzollerns and the Hitlerites.

Soon Germany will be reunited. But the remake will not be shot with a cast of latter-day Erich von Stroheims. The sound track will not be the *Horst-Wessel-Lied*, the fighting song of the Nazis, but a reggae or rhythm-and-blues tune. Cologne and Kansas City, Munich and Marseilles, have been listening to the same beat for a long time; adding Dresden and Leipzig should not ruin that score. At least, we are entitled to hope so.