

Gazette

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On German identity

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WEILER IM ALLGÄU, GERMANY

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Dreaming of being exceptional

'Why do German intellectuals have such problems with the unity question?', asked the Canadian author and journalist, Michael Ignatieff, in October 1990 after visiting Berlin. He told of his conversations and commented on them with historical insight. Some people, he concluded, believe that

destiny has given Germany a special, tragic role to play. We cannot and may not become like you, they seem to say to the rest of the world. We are committed to our dream. This dream of German exceptionalism is still being dreamed by some quite unexpected minds. It is the most dangerous myth in contemporary Europe. (Ignatieff, 1990)

Written just one hundred years after William James made the psychological distinction between the self-experienced, the 'I', and the externally viewed aspect, the 'me', Ignatieff's article reads like a confirmation of current concern about 'collective identities' (Frey and Hauser, 1987; Schlesinger, 1987, 1988). A century ago, the topic owed its relevance to the break up of old authoritarian structures. Industrialization mobilized the masses and called individuality into question. Since then the process has accelerated. Today, even Russia is questioning its identity. In 1917 the closed value-system of Tsarism and church orthodoxy was replaced by the equally closed value-system of the party dictatorship and the 'social religion' of communism. Scepticism is now gradually superseding imposed belief. Wherever belief dominates, force is not far away. Religious belief and political superstition are closely related.

It seems that the dream of exceptionalism is not a specifically German

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the flanking powers, the USA and USSR, as well as their various religious affiliations. Here, the spectrum ranges from ancient Armenian Christianity, to the orthodoxy of Byzantine origin, Roman Catholicism and the numerous reformed and protestant confessions.

At the same time, the reordering of the spectrum also raises the question of the other two biblical religions, Judaism and Islam, since each collectivity defines itself through demarcation. The states of both these religions are outside the so-called 'European Community' and outside NATO. Considering the origins of Christianity this seems hardly plausible; however, its plausibility is not in doubt when we consider the permanent collective demarcations against Jews and Muslims. Stories of the Crusades of the eleventh to fourteenth centuries and the Turkish wars are still being taught at school.

Despite Germany's industrialized murder of European Jewry (Rosh and Jäckel, 1990), anti-Semitism rooted in religious anti-Judaism still appears to offer collective compensation for emotional and cognitive deficits (that is, a scapegoat function). This applies to Germany, Austria, Switzerland and France (Strauss, 1990; Bergmann and Erb, 1990) but in particular to the recent outbreaks in Eastern Europe. In Russia, the Ukraine and Poland, anti-Semitism is increasing alongside the revival of Christian confessions. Catholicism has triumphed in Poland. In Russia and the Ukraine, previously suppressed churches are aspiring to power carried along on a tide of 'popular devotion'. Individuals are seeking sanctuary from a general feeling of helplessness after the breakdown of party control. In the Baltic states, differences in faith which had already contributed to distinctions of nationality under Tsarism have also survived the period of relative uniformity.

Germany between East and West

All these developments directly or indirectly affect Germany. Whereas industrial progress in central-Eastern Europe is a one-way flow from West to East, cultural communication in the narrower sense has always been of a dialogical nature, even under Bolshevism. In the 1920s, Berlin was the capital of the Russian intelligentsia outside the Soviet Union. After the Second World War, Munich — not neutral Vienna — assumed a similar role for the whole of Eastern Europe with numerous émigré organizations and American radio stations, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty.

As 'Cold War' institutions these propaganda stations could hardly avoid appealing to the cultural traditions of their target audiences, keeping alive a familiar sense of oneness against the threats and disruptions of the contemporary political situation. Although this propaganda conveyed in the audiences' native languages was blatantly American, Munich still

achievement but rather a general feature of definitional processes. Whoever watched the TV coverage of the Paris meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) four weeks after Ignatieff's article appeared must have been amazed by the incredible number of exceptionalisms. The producers certainly knew their job. The 'Grande Nation' sparkled as host. It made one think of parallels to the Congress of Vienna of 1815 — an event which had concluded a long period of war and rebellion and which, considering the many open questions in Europe at present, nobody even ventured to mention in the Paris context.

Today, each individual case of states, nationalities and religions involves national dreams and dangerous myths. Which of these is the most dangerous to the European future is hard to tell. If the march of impoverished Eastern Europeans towards the West accelerates, then the sweet promises of a 'Common Market' may well prove to be the most dangerous propaganda. Even the 'new Jerusalem' that millions had hoped to discover in America a century ago could not cope with the massive influx of migrants. And what of the hungry Africans and Asians on the march (Nicholson, 1990)?

'The European House'

When we say 'Europe' we still refer to that magnified image of the continent created by the Mercator projection of the world map dated 1569. We view the 'rest of the world' as if through an inverted telescope' (Hardeker, 1989). European identity contains an element of megalomania which, backed up by the geographical distortion of the world, was a determining factor in the missionary colonialist epoch. Such Euromania survives to this day as a relatively constant factor in attitudes towards the non-European world (Schlesinger, 1990). Of the many alliances constructed after the Second World War, NATO illustrates this identity component most clearly, for it includes the extended area of European settlement, the states of North America, and offers a relatively uniform set of elements of identification such as external appearance, cultural tradition — in particular religious affiliation — and, consequently, similar economic attitudes. These common elements facilitate political agreements and military alliances. However, NATO's *raison d'être* and its weakness to date lie in the fact that it has been directed against the Russian-dominated half of Europe. Thus it has included non-European Turkey yet excluded the remaining 'Near East' as the non-European outsider. Recently, the metaphor of the 'European House' has gained popularity and it is a house in which Eastern Europe also desires accommodation. Avoiding this eventuality was precisely the purpose of the post-1947 Cold War. The new catchword addresses the previously estranged states and nations, including

gained in prestige among listeners as the place of origin and became comparable to London with its BBC broadcasts during the Second World War: it offered a continuity of welcome outside contact and thus protection from the deprivations suffered within one's own collectivity.

In the East-West direction there was nothing even remotely similar in effect. The German language broadcasts of Radio Moscow or Radio Tirana, for instance, stood no chance of activating a general desire to migrate eastwards.

We might also note that the assessment of life in West Germany offered by these media failed to address the problems confronting not only people in the Federal Republic in the 'age of nuclear deterrence': namely, existential fears, mistrust, stress, migration anxieties, social ascent and descent, a sense of personal worth, increasing depression and suicide rates (Flethheim, 1987: 187). Until the information gathered by the secret services becomes available we are unlikely to gain a clearer picture of the situation; we may assume, however, that personal relationships between German refugees from Eastern and central Europe (those of 1944-5) and the 12 million post-war expellees have influenced the development of opinions both here in Germany and in their places of origin.

In comparison to the social and economic situation of those who stayed behind, the refugees and expellees drew the winning card. They arrived in the country empty-handed. Their labour and consumer demand made essential contributions towards the transformation of a shattered war economy into a consumer-oriented, capitalistic 'social market economy'. When they visited relatives in their former home countries or were allowed to receive them as guests, they often resembled the 'rich uncle from America', common at the turn of the century in Ireland, Poland or depressed areas of Germany. The D-Mark acquired a mythical image similar to the once legendary 'greenback' dollar.

After the borders were opened, this initially private trend was increasingly politicized by the organized support of German minorities in Silesia and Czechoslovakia. This heightened the donors' self-esteem and reinforced the recipients' belief that 'being German' is a value in itself. The 'value-in-itself' type of thinking had been hammered home by all propagandist means in Prussia since the days of absolutism, where the virtue of service had to make up for the permanent deficit in the state coffers. The German 'national myth' (Johnston, 1990) helped spread this attitude to other German states. The idea that a deed must be of value if material gain is low had its roots in religious belief and monastic practice, and the Lutheran state religion furthered its establishment as a general attitude. This united the internal and external perspectives of individuals within a controlled social network of 'Prussianism' which — after the military victory over Germany in 1866 — was imposed on society in the new 'German Reich' (1871-1945) both politically and militarily.

The dangerous myth of German exceptionalism among the other exceptionalisms criticized by Ignatieff is a myth of virtuousness bearing masochistic elements of self-renunciation and a self concept (Fijipp, 1979) of service for its own sake. The well-known saying, 'to be German is to do something for its own sake', is not as funny as it sounds; moreover it is an identity component of such contrasting figures as the much-criticized intellectuals of 1990, who stood against the overwhelming pressure for unification, the Hitler bomb-plotters of 1944, the SS murderers of 1942 (Wannsee Conference on the 'Final Solution') and the persecuted and persecutors of the 'national uprising' of 1932-3. Unless we comprehend that Nazism appealed to the continuity of such feelings of personal value then we have comprehended nothing. Myth may make people into 'participants' (Cassirer, 1969: 82); but it requires individuals who are ready to participate.

Divided in unity

The Allies confronted the Germans with the question of a division of the state based on different political and economic conditions (Enzensberger, 1990). The actual decision to divide was taken with the currency reform and the integration of the western zones into the dollar bloc (Craig, 1989). The by no means rhetorical question: 'Germany — Bridge or Battleground?' (Warburg, 1947) was thus decided against the bridge option and in favour of confrontation. France also tried in a similar way to win over the Saarland by introducing the French franc. But when the Soviets began to blockade Berlin, which lay under four-power control within their zone, the Americans and the British launched an airlift which created a real bond between themselves and the Germans. Berlin, capital of the Prussian-German Empire (1871-1918), of a short-lived republic which surrendered to Hitler in 1933, the city from which two world wars were begun, became a symbol of anticommunist resistance within the newly created community.

The economic principles prescribed by the victorious powers were put into political practice by the two new states with customary German discipline. The new Western state declared its loyalty to parliamentary democracy, the Eastern state to Marxism-Leninism. Both rapidly excelled as ideal pupils under the auspices of the two major powers, the USA and the USSR.

Militarily the territory had been planned as a potential battleground. The inhabitants had to become morally convinced of their own ability to form alliances. Both the West and East achieved this by gradually granting concessions to the former enemy whilst avoiding a final peace treaty. An unpredictable revival of German national feeling would have jeopardized

the military prospects of both the western powers and the eastern bloc. The rearmament of both states in the service of their dominating powers became imperative. Potential opposition was absorbed by dividing the traditional national dress of honour, the military uniform, between West and East German forces, rather like St Martin giving half of his cloak to the beggar.

The Germans were obedient. From the start, the GDR employed Prussian-Russian tradition (Pross, 1952) whilst the Western republic claimed its authority in the federal tradition prior to the creation of the anachronistic Empire (1871–1918). As a whole, Germany developed into the world's largest arms depot; the GDR became the backbone of the Warsaw Pact and the Federal Republic NATO's antitank bulwark. As such, its capital, Bonn, developed in close connection with the neighbouring cities associated with the European agreements, namely, Brussels and Luxembourg. The GDR defied the four-power agreement, made Berlin its capital and added a further sad chapter to its less than laudible recent history (Wehler, 1969).

As far as the loss of state unity was concerned the GDR forecast its recovery once the final stage of true socialism envisaged by Marxist theory had been reached. Similarly, in a distant, more just world, material living conditions would also have improved. Actual improvements in real terms progressed at a correspondingly slow pace.

On the other hand, the Western state declared itself a provisional construction from the outset and named its constitution simply a 'Basic Law'. Here, unity was not associated with a distant vision of satisfied economic needs. The state's role was seen as that of policing the market and of trying to ensure the immediate and repeated satisfaction of contemporary needs. Since there was no defence expenditure until 1955, demand in the war-ravaged cities was high and American aid (via the Marshall Plan) had stimulated other economic activities; by 1953 the Federal Republic had attained third place in world trade, standing behind the USA and Great Britain. This attracted increasing numbers of East Germans to the West. In the same year, on 17 June, the GDR government suppressed the wage riots of Berlin workers with the help of Russian tanks. The Federal Republic declared the date a public holiday, dubbing it the 'Day of Unity'. This was only struck out of the political liturgy in 1990.

As in all consumer societies, commercial advertising overshadowed political education in the Federal Republic. Political theory demanded 'constitutional patriotism' (Sternberger, 1947), which, despite its undeniable qualities, gained no real mass following and it remained formally ritualized within stable election periods. West German patriotism restricted itself to a consumerist perspective. A present-day adaptation of the Roman maxim *ubi bene ubi patria* might read 'democracy is wherever I happen to feel good'.

In the meantime, the GDR clung to its political dogmatism and, unable to satisfy the unsatiated purchasing power of its industrious inhabitants, it still sang the same old German tune about the reward being in the greater cause. This state's goose-step socialism linked up with non-Marxist concepts of 'Prussianism and socialism' (Spengler, 1920) and 'Workers' rule and Gestalt' (Jünger, 1924) and bound the political representation of various groups in society to the state communist party. The so-called 'bloc parties' were often registered under the same name as those in West Germany, ready to absorb these should Russian efforts to regain influence over the whole of Germany prove successful. As it turned out, the very opposite occurred for economic reasons.

East German politics were basically state-oriented. The West Germans thought in economic terms. Both shared a materialist philosophy: the primacy of the economy. Whilst the GDR administered its deficit, the Federal Republic subsidized purchasing power wherever possible. The latter furthered a pluralism of interests and thus carried out the common aims of both capital and labour (the so-called tariff partners). The standard of living rose beyond all previous records, financed by short-term private and public debt, covered by promissory notes on continuously renewed demand at home and on the world export market.

In the year of reunification, the Federal Republic, by comparison with other European countries, had the highest economic growth rate, the highest wages and the longest holidays for industrial workers: 31 days per year on a fixed five-day working week. A hundred years after the dismissal of Bismarck — that great opponent of both work-free Sundays and the labour movement — this prosperity can be seen as a remarkable sociopolitical achievement. This was particularly so for social democracy which had first formed a united party in 1890, as well as in view of the defeat of the communists who had separated off from mainstream socialism in 1917. Both of these tendencies had become identified with their respective states. The East German communists (Janka, 1989) and the West German social democrats were unsurpassable in their state allegiance. It is quite conceivable that they would even have shot each other as Germans have often done in the past when 'fulfilling their duty'.

The mere suspicion of conspiring with 'the other side' was enough to stigmatize someone or harm their identity both in West and East (Goffman, 1963). Neutralists and pacifists were slandered in both states. 'Go over to the other side!' (to the GDR) was a standard retort to controversial opinions in the Federal Republic, e.g. that the Cold War with the USSR was the ideological result of imperialist rivalry initiated by the Atlantic powers rather than vice versa. Similarly, when in the 1960s the social democrat, Willy Brandt, proposed a new eastern policy based on negotiation, the right branded him a 'traitor to the Fatherland'. Nevertheless, he still became Chancellor thanks to a large majority of younger

Radio and television as components of identity

In February 1948, the exchange of newspapers and periodicals between the Soviet and the western zones of occupation was made illegal. The Germans had eagerly welcomed the initiatives taken by the four military governments (USA, USSR, GB and France) to reshape the press previously steered by the Nazis (1933-45). Reading matter was in great demand. The Soviets utilized this and launched a propagandistic peace offensive designed to secure their influence in all zones and support the weaker communists in the western zones. The Americans responded by prohibiting the import of publications from the Soviet zone (Hurwitz, 1972). The Germans thus lost the press as a forum for common debate and opinion formation. For over forty years the land of Gutenberg and Luther lacked the indispensable national cohesion offered by the printed word. It was even illegal to carry printed matter on the transit routes to and from West Berlin which had been walled off in 1961. Consequently, the people living in Eastern Germany — a population totalling 16 million — lacked access to a free press for almost sixty years, i.e. between Hitler's accession to power on 30 January 1933 and the opening up of the Wall in 1989.

The spoken word on radio and the audio-visual imagery of TV could not replace the printed word. They could, however, synchronize various social processes and keep East Germans informed of selected events in the West. Inter-German competition resulted in a predominantly one-way flow from West to East, with the possible exception of West Berlin where proximity was more immediate than elsewhere. (The communications researcher, Michael Hofmann, who lived directly adjacent to the Wall has related how, once when a (western) Turkish family played rather loud music, his neighbour on the eastern side threateningly called across from his balcony: 'If there's no peace and quiet soon, I'll call the police!')

Radio was technically well-equipped and provided western broadcasters with an excellent means of reaching extensive audiences in the GDR. A dense network of television transmitters was installed in West Berlin and along the GDR border so that the initial ban on directing aerials towards the West soon proved abortive. There were, however, a few areas in the East of the GDR where reception of western TV programmes remained poor or non-existent.

We do not know what individual people gained from western television viewing, but at least they were able to reduce the cognitive dissonances experienced in their environment. The external perspective thus received will have affected their views of their own collectivity. We can expect further insights from GDR audience research data, originally collected for official use only. In the same way as the GDR was incapable of satisfying its people's consumer needs, so too was it unable to compensate for the cognitive and emotional needs stimulated by western media. Desire and fulfilment were worlds apart whereas in the West they appeared identical.

voters. Traditional authoritarian structures started to change when it became clear that the dialectic of restoration was purely a question of power (Pross, 1965).

The children of prosperity rebel

The storm created by the Vietnam War in world politics also swept through West German universities. Here, the reappointment of old Nazi professors after 1950 had re-established former authoritarian structures which no longer corresponded to less rigid social conventions. Most students had been born soon after the war and grown up in the years of the so-called economic miracle. As children, they had often been left to their own devices by socially aspiring parents and they had begun to voice protest against institutional defects in their final school years. They then extended their protest into the arena of world politics (Pross, 1971). New ecological theories gained followers as militant as those of idealistic anarchism. Pluralism as the basis of democracy? Here it was, enacted by more or less talented players.

If we consider this eruption as a 'youth movement' then society's reaction in 1968 vastly exceeded the level of action. A plain-clothes policeman shot dead Benno Ohnesorg, a student who had been watching a demonstration against the Shah of Iran. This created a martyr whose death prescribed the spectacles through which authority was subsequently viewed. Identification with the deceased entailed alienation from the ruling order, which immediately deprived the active minority of its young academic generation and, indirectly, also of the silent majority which soon sought cover.

Opposition and opportunism often overlapped. After the united actions of students and a tiny number of liberal and socialist professors had persuaded the bureaucracy to give universities more leeway, members of the student opposition rushed in to grab the newly created careers with their lifelong contracts. They became civil servants. A small minority of outsiders joined the non-student Red Army Fraction which completely misjudged the economic conditions and engaged in a type of guerrilla warfare against the Federal Republic, strengthening traditional norms more than any group before or since.

This was particularly counterproductive as the original idea had been to explode anachronistic conventions with which the younger generation could not identify. Since then, the former 'revolutionaries' of 1968 have started writing their memoirs, stressing the selflessness of their actions, as did their fathers and their forefathers. What remains undeniable, however, is that German norms and conventions have not recovered from the interlude of 1968-9.

Germany — land of united drivers

The two states founded in 1949 needed new national anthems. *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*, originally the anthem of the Weimar Republic which was terminated by Hitler's Reich, was hardly appropriate. After an abortive attempt to introduce a new hymn, the Western state eventually adopted one verse from the old anthem after all: 'Unity and Law and Freedom . . .'. The GDR laid its claim to the whole of Germany in verses by the communist author, Johannes R. Becher, which were duly set to music: 'Deutschland — einig Vaterland' (Germany — united Fatherland). This line became the slogan of protestors in Leipzig, Dresden and Berlin. It was later picked up by the West German CDU and used by Federal Chancellor Kohl during his campaign for re-election on 2 December 1990.

The urge to play on words and turn 'Vater' (Father) into 'Fahrer' (driver) was irresistible. 'Vaterland' suddenly became 'Fahrerland' in 'Deutschland — einig Fahrerland' (Germany — land of united drivers) which poked fun at the significance of the car in East German dreams of unity. The little 'Trabant', affectionately nicknamed 'Trabi', rose to fame as the vehicle of escape through Hungary and Czechoslovakia. The motorized mass exodus to the Federal Republic ended in a head-on collision with West German car fetishism. The Federal Republic not only consumed as much energy as Britain and France combined, it also boasted the most cars per square kilometre.

'From the very start, the car represented an indispensable component of the sense of personal value in the Federal Republic' (Bastian and Thiel, 1990: 63). It is the only country without speed limits on the motorways. The two craftsmen, Daimler and Benz, who put the first petrol-driven three-wheeler on the road in 1883-5 are national heroes. When West German industry was called upon to invest in the former GDR, Daimler-Benz (now Europe's largest arms producer) was awarded prime territory right in the very heart of Berlin (previously East Berlin). This firm's 'star' logo will shine out over the capital as the true national symbol, relegating the old emblem, the eagle, to the doors of officialdom.

By means of the motor car, the new arrivals are rapidly adapting their image to that of the indigenous Federal Republicans. Here, the car is not simply one status symbol among many, as in other countries: it is *the* definitive status symbol. The West German second-hand car market was quickly cleared out by GDR buyers (*Der Spiegel*, 30 July 1990: 84). Historically this is understandable, as until 1945 the centre of German car production — of all industrial production in fact — lay in Thuringia, Saxony and Berlin. After 1945 less had to be invested and renewed there than in the West where whole new branches of industry had to be created for an integrated economy. To the dismay of other industrial nations the

West Germans quickly made a virtue of necessity — aided by work discipline and modern production facilities. GDR-produced cars could then no longer compare with West German models.

The German motorist's sense of personal value is expressed in a particularly aggressive, dogmatic and merciless style of driving: order must prevail. 'The eternal corporal in the German' (Ossietzky, 1924) takes the wheel. Today, 'the person behind the wheel is not prepared to learn' (Fritscher, 1990). According to newspaper reports, the number of accidents in the new federal states rose enormously as soon as the inhabitants acquired more powerful cars and the tight traffic controls of the old regime were lifted. Yet nobody in Bonn dare tighten up speed limits or increase the tax on petrol which, compared to other European countries, is cheaper only in Greece. Any government attempting to do this would meet resistance from the motoring clubs and from the unions, the powerful champion of the small man in the street. In autumn 1990, thousands of former GDR-citizens were still moving to the better-paid jobs in the Federal Republic where individual scope is becoming more and more restricted. Arguably, this trend is likely to lead to increased rivalry and aggressiveness — with what consequences for fatalities on the roads?

Unity and aspects of division

For centuries, Germany was not even recognizable as a single entity on the map. There were just states, cities, villages where German dialects were spoken. As a classic German author writing on 'German Patriotism' in 1797 stated, there were local patriots in Brandenburg, Saxony, Bavaria, Württemberg, Hamburg, Nuremberg, Frankfurt, etc.

But German patriots who love beyond all else the whole German empire, as their Fatherland . . . where are they? Who can name them, come, who can show them to us? What have they already achieved? And what can still be expected of them? (Wieland, 1797)

What could be expected of them was virtually being shouted from the rooftops a hundred years later (Link and Wülfing, 1991). After Germany's defeat in the First World War, Carl von Ossietzky, the publicist, summed up thus:

For centuries the old empire presented a pitiful picture of disorder and duodecimo despotism. But now it had received a smart dash of strict centralization. The uprising had come at last! Upswing, yes, that's the word. And none was more popular in the Wilhelminian era. A major power and upswing! Even the reddest opposition was pleased to have such an extensive parade ground for its marching columns of workers. (Ossietzky, 1920).

This strict centralization was a result of industrialization coupled with two years of military service. All young men had to 'go to the Prussians', as non-Prussian Germans put it, and in many of the German states Prussian officers gave the orders. Middle-class sons aspired to become officers in the reserve, which brought them closer to upper-class aristocracy. But the decisive factor was the general transfer of military discipline and obedience, military punctuality and control methods into industrial organization. This was achieved when shopfloor and office workers returned to civilian life, bringing with them characteristic aspects of their military drill. Military discipline and its rewards in the workplace helped promote careers in industry and the administration (see Pross, 1989).

The military-industrial complex is an important component of German identity, although its influence in the Federal Republic has gradually been relaxed by a strengthened consumerism. Attitudes are changing. The rewards for 'militant' labour in the GDR exploited the old complex to absurdity (Schmid, 1990; Reich, 1990).

The different course of development in each of the two German republics confirms the old experience that the nature of their external state Germans is decisively influenced by the nature of their external state borders. They define themselves and their psychological identity components according to their political borders. This applies not only to the permanently fluctuating external borders of the past (Demandt, 1990) but also to the inner-German borders. It also explains the survival in an age of mass migration and professional mobilization of that local patriotism to which Wieland referred in his criticism of the French Revolution and its infectious idea of nationalism. Any German may live in Bremen or Saxony but that by no means makes him a local. According to the Lord Mayor of Dresden, 'the Saxons never felt really German throughout their history; they were always more European and Saxon' (Berghofer, 1990: 51).

More or less the same applies to the majority of inhabitants in the various German states. It was precisely because of this that the call for 'unity' became so loud and forceful at a time when the continent believed that the economic future lay in the autarchy of strictly centralized nation states — a basic concept which the French Revolution transferred from absolutism to parliamentarism and which materialized in Germany in the pseudo-constitutionalism of the Empire of 1871.

This is why the unified German state was anti-western and why the Germans felt obliged during the First World War to differentiate between 'heroes and traders' (Sombart, 1915) in keeping with the ideology of their military-industrial complex. The result was that they first destroyed their civil liberty and then their state unity which had always been rather artificial. Western integration of the Federal Republic and eastern integration of the GDR confirm historical experience. It also helps to

explain why German intellectuals had such problems with the question of unity once the western offensive of Soviet diplomacy made it appear possible and the active minorities under the protection of the GDR's Lutheran Church saw a chance to combat oppression. 'The people created their own unity in freedom. . . . The German Nation can offer no previous example to compare with the peaceful revolution in the GDR' (Schütz, 1990). Has the 'belated nation' (Plessner, 1935: 159) finally arrived?

Similarly, the economic and social situation of the 'German nation' is beyond comparison. Autarchy has diminished with the growing economic influence of multinational concerns. Mass consumption dominates political thought from the smallest unit all the way up to world politics. Consequently, German politicians are pressing for a Common Market without borders, one with 320 million members, every fourth one a German citizen; but what kind of a German?

In addition to regional, historical, religious and class differences there are a variety of other anomalies. Alongside the foreign workers brought in during the boom years and the applicants for political asylum there are also foreigners of German origin, 'resettlers'.

In the extreme case we have on the one hand pseudo-Germans, people who have grown up here and speak fluent German but do not have standard citizens' rights and, on the other hand resettlers who are highly unacquainted with language and lifestyle yet are in possession of federal identity papers. This anomaly has led to the macabre and misleading question of what, in the extreme case, is more likely to make a linguistically gifted, decent person a 'German': familiarity with the lifestyle and an intimate knowledge of the language or the mute call of the blood? (Bade, 1990: 757)

With the general shortage of accommodation and the high number of unemployed in the West where, despite increasing prosperity, every tenth person lives on or below the poverty line (500 DM per month), tension is bound to increase. Animosity towards foreigners is being augmented by animosity towards resettlers and migrants from the former GDR who are still moving into the more promising western labour market. They are seen as the cause of anxiety about declining prosperity. The controversy over tax increases to finance unification dominated the election campaign of autumn 1990. One tabloid headline read: 'That's what we've got from unity: more work, less pay' (*Abendzeitung*, 26 November 1990).

One could hardly speak of national enthusiasm, except on the part of Chancellor Kohl. Theo Sommer, Editor-in-Chief of *Die Zeit* wrote that Kohl had been 'saved by German unity' (*Die Zeit*, 23 November 1990: 3).

The Federal Republic, enlarged into a unified state with 80 million inhabitants, will put a strain on European unity. Dominance in 'central Europe' — an old concept (Schultz, 1990) — must be prevented. It remains

to be hoped that the traditional regional patriotism of the Germans and their mercantile spirit (Humann, 1990) will combine to advance the possibility of European integration.

This, however, will still take some time. The world should not be as surprised as the Swedish Chancellor Oxenstierna, of whom the Weimar Privy Councillor, Friedrich Schiller, observed in his *History of the Thirty Years War (1618-48)*: that he was driven to despair by the ponderous nature of the Germans in all their public negotiations.

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Review essay

The Holocaust: historical memories and contemporary identities

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Introduction

Last year, an article in the British newspaper the *Guardian* reported that the topic of the Holocaust would be incorporated into the history syllabus of the country's national curriculum.¹ This move followed a successful lobby of the Education Secretary by a group of MPs following an interim report by a history working party which had recommended that children study the subject only as an 'optional unit'. In light of the vigorous campaign for its inclusion, the working party's final report came out in favour of the study of the Holocaust as an essential component in the teaching of European history. The article went on to report that while Jewish groups and educationists had welcomed the decision, representing as it did a victory over those wary of placing too much emphasis on a

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