

A NEW NATION

by David Binder

Societies, like individuals, carry their birthmarks and their birth defects along with them as they grow. West Germany, conceived in 1949 out of the ashes and rubble of the last great war, bore the defect of being only part of the German whole, even though it claimed to represent the entire German nation.

True, the Federal Republic of Germany became a homeland for most of the 9 million Germans—East Prussians, Silesians, Pomeranians, Sudetenlanders—driven westward after their expulsion from Poland, Czechoslovakia, and elsewhere in the wake of World War II. Similarly, until the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the new nation absorbed some 3 million Saxons, Thuringians, Mecklenburgers, and Brandenburgers from what had begun as the Soviet occupation zone. During the 1970s, West Germany took in hundreds of thousands of *Volksdeutsche* who had been kept behind, or had lingered, in the Soviet Union and Poland. To a considerable degree, then, West Germany's birth defect has been healed. The Federal Republic, with its 61 million people, is the acknowledged bourn of most that is German.

The chief effect of the great postwar treks and population shifts, especially in urban centers, was the broader Germanization of places that had previously been not un-German but primarily Hessian or Swabian or Bavarian in character.

A medium-sized provincial town like Giessen (pop. 75,500) may serve as an example. Located in Upper Hesse just beyond the old Roman *limes*, Giessen before the war had been the home of some heavy industry, a reputable little university, some socialists, some anti-Semites, and an overwhelming majority of Lutheran Protestants. After the war, it became a German melting pot, thanks mainly to a large refugee camp raised on its southern outskirts. Many of the new settlers were Roman Catholics from Silesia, far to the east; by the mid-1950s, Giessen was one-fifth Catholic. Its reputation as the heart of "Red Hesse" rapidly disappeared.

The newcomers, unfamiliar with local customs and values, did not mix well. First generation expellees were frequently made to feel unwelcome. In the early postwar years, there was an oft-told anecdote about a boastful German refugee from the east, in this case a dachshund. "I'm small now," the little dog said, "but back home in the east I was a German shepherd."

The story is long since obsolete. The majority of the new settlers, having lost even more in the war than those West German natives who had been bombed out of their homes, set to work with redoubled energy to build their lives anew. Former expellees and refugees, including the writer Günter Grass, the politician Willy Brandt, and the businessman Otto Friedrich, have climbed to the heights of West Germany society.

Still, the truncation of what had once been Germany has left a kind of residual trauma in many Germans, compounded by the split between West Germany and East Germany (the German Democratic Republic). While it would be extremely difficult to find a German willing to take up arms to recover the lands lost to the Russians, Poles, or Czechs, it would also be difficult to find a middle-aged German who would deny the historic "Germanness" of Breslau or Danzig or Königsberg.

This may explain the agony many West Germans underwent in 1972 when a package of treaties—to ratify the loss of the eastern territories and acknowledge the sovereignty of East Germany—came before West Germany's parliament, the Bundestag. "Stop this gruesome game!" was the headline in one newspaper. Opposition was so strong that a no-confidence vote



Margaret Bourke-White, Life Magazine ©Time Inc.

Nürnberg, 1945. Germans who remember World War II are today a minority. Two-thirds of West Germany's population was born after V-E Day.

in the Bundestag nearly toppled the government of Chancellor Willy Brandt. Yet a thin parliamentary majority ultimately accepted the "normalization" treaties with Warsaw and Moscow and, in the next (1972) popular election, Brandt received a resounding endorsement. In a larger sense, the West Germans sought thus to *redefine* what belonged to Germany.

The narrowness of this geographic definition is almost breathtaking when compared to the reach of German claims in recent and not so recent times—encompassing chunks of Alsace and Lorraine, Switzerland, Belgium, Denmark, Austria, and Italy, not to mention the vast lands to the east. Today, Germans are content to vacation in these regions, not to invade them.

Too Big and Too Small

Nor does there seem to be even a hint of the *revanche* syndrome, so widespread in the Weimar era, on which Hitler flourished—even though Germany suffered much greater territorial losses in the Second World War than in the First and paid a blood tribute of 6.5 million lives, three times the German toll in the first global conflict. This can probably be attributed to the postwar East-West division of the surviving nation, which continues to be the main focus of German national interest.

In any event, the West Germans seem to have a better sense of proportion and perspective about their relative size and weight on the international scene than they did between 1900 and 1945, despite the fact that West Germany, during the early 1960s, became the dominant economic power in Europe. That sense of proportion was concisely defined in 1967 by Herbert Wehner, the great strategist of the Social Democratic Party. "Germany has a critical size," Wehner observed. "It is too big to play no role in the balance of powers and too small to keep the powers around it in balance."

Admittedly, the current Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, banking on West Germany's stability and strength, has been inclined to test the Wehner premise on occasion, notably by pursuing special bilateral relationships with France and Poland on the one hand and with the Soviet Union on the other. Yet few West Germans today seem willing or even able to consider Germany's situation in isolation from that of her neighbors, a tendency that

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is reinforced by the nation's senior membership in the Common Market and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

This willingness to view the present and future from an essentially European perspective is something new in German life. It has been nurtured by West Germans' proclivity for foreign travel and by the country's absorption of huge numbers of foreigners, some 4 million since the war, mostly from other European countries. Having begun life as a refuge for other Germans, the Federal Republic now finds itself becoming a haven for thousands of persecuted people from around the world: Turks, Pakistanis, Afghans, and, recently, Soviet Jews. In 1979, 51,000 people applied for political asylum in West Germany; in 1980, the figure was expected to be double that.

In addition to permanent residents, millions of others, mostly from the impoverished southern reaches of Europe, have spent time in West Germany as temporary workers, or *Gastarbeiter*, collecting garbage, cleaning streets, manning assembly lines, and generally performing tasks shunned by the Germans themselves. There are currently 1.7 million *Gastarbeiter* in West Germany, most of them Turks, Yugoslavs, Italians, and Greeks. (Their numbers declined from the 1973 peak of 2.4 million as a result of the economic belt-tightening occasioned by the rise of oil prices.) The *Gastarbeiter* also account for a share of West Germany's "current accounts" deficit by sending billions of dollars out of the country to their families (\$11 billion in 1979).

Contending with Garlic

German society has never been much of a melting pot—not, at least, since the barbarian invasions of the third through the fifth centuries. The recent influx of foreigners has, to some degree, helped to deepen understanding of alien cultures among a people that had been inculcated with radical xenophobia. But a certain backlash was inevitable in a crowded country where newcomers tend to congregate in ghetto-like isolation. Turks now make up one-third of the population of West Berlin's Kreuzberg borough, clustered in the old working-class district's southern section with its dark and crowded *fin de siècle* inner courtyards. There are 18 mosques in West Berlin.

As in England, and increasingly in the United States, the growing number of foreign workers has prompted demands for curbs on immigration. "It isn't easy," Chancellor Schmidt told a crowd in Ludwigshafen during last October's election campaign, "for Germans who live in an apartment house and who don't like the smell of garlic to have to put up with it and even to

have a lamb slaughtered in the hallway." Such remarks are tempered by a recognition that *Gastarbeiter*, if not "here to stay," are to some degree an economic necessity. Their presence, if only in a negative sense, may at least contribute to a clearer definition of what is "German."

While it is customary to refer to East Germany as the country that put up the Wall, West Germany is a country of private walls, high fences, and double locks. The average West German carries as many keys as an American does credit cards. He keeps his fences mended, his hedges trimmed back from the sidewalk, lest a passer-by sue for a rip in his clothing, and his doorstep free of clutter, lest the postman trip and break a leg. An automobile (and 67 percent of West Germany's households own one) is considered a mobile castle, and fie on the other motorist who even grazes its bumper.

West Germans cherish the security of their walled castles above most other qualities of their lives. This would seem to contradict the promise of an open society inherent in West Germany's democratic 1949 constitution, but it undoubtedly represents a reaction to the chaos of the war and the uncertainty of the early postwar years, when black marketing, inflation, and political kidnapping were rife.

In the late 1960s and early '70s, the younger generation rebelled violently against this tradition of security-consciousness, forming thousands of communes (some of which still exist) in such places as Berlin, Hamburg, and Frankfurt. The *Studentenrevolte* was a harbinger of social and political change, including a shift away from the conservative rule of the long-dominant Christian Union Party coalition (led by Konrad Adenauer, Ludwig Erhard, and Franz Josef Strauss) and toward the more innovative coalition of Social and Free Democrats (led by Willy Brandt and Walter Scheel). The Social Democrats even capitalized on the shift for a time with a slogan calling on Germans to "dare more democracy."

However, the truly revolutionary urge remained confined to a small number of radicalized bourgeois youths, some of whom⁴ formed outright terrorist groups, such as the Red Army Faction led by Ulrike Meinhof and Andreas Baader. Between 1970 and 1980, terrorists killed 56 people (including 14 policemen) and injured 161. Altogether, 25 terrorists were killed and 16 injured in confrontations involving 425 cases of arson or bombings and 60 robberies.*

*Terrorism is not confined to the Left. A neo-nazi group was apparently responsible for an explosion in a crowded Munich beer hall during the 1980 Oktoberfest. Twelve people were killed; 213 injured.

CAN PROSPERITY LAST?

Total industrial production in the truncated Federal Republic of Germany today is 50 percent greater than it was in *all* of Germany before World War II. The country's GNP per capita is considerably higher than America's. Fueled by the Korean War boom, West Germany ran up its first trade surplus in 1952; since then, writes economist Wolfgang Hager, "against all textbook wisdom, there has not been a single year with a trade deficit."

The West Germans achieved their *Wirtschaftswunder* thanks in part to good luck and U.S. aid (some \$2 billion under the Marshall Plan alone). They also made a virtue of necessity and threw themselves into the export business. From Bismarck through Hitler, Germany's economic growth had been spurred primarily by domestic demand. But after the war, with domestic markets halved by territorial losses, and with millions of refugees seeking work, West Germany had no choice but to harness its reviving industrial potential to a world economy that was growing faster than its own.

A rough postwar consensus emerged after 1949 among business, labor, and Konrad Adenauer's new government. Bonn fostered a "structured" free-market environment (with tax incentives to promote reinvestment and exports). Labor and business leaders warily groped toward an uneasy concordat, eventually embodied in law, that guaranteed a role for unions in corporate decision-making ("codetermination") and thereby bought three decades of labor peace. The blue-collar rank-and-file worked harder than they "had to." Indeed, as historian Hans Gatzke has noted, "the most important element in Germany's economic recovery was the industry and self-discipline of its people, eager to slave and save in order to pull themselves out of the economic abyss."

All of this, combined with the chronic undervaluation of the mark (which made German goods especially attractive abroad), established the Federal Republic as a worldwide merchant.

West Germany, however, faces a new set of circumstances in the 1980s. Its economy, in a sense, has "matured." The mark has been steadily revalued upward, and there is greater competition from Japan, the United States, and Western Europe in foreign trade. Labor unions increasingly deplore the presence of foreign *Gastarbeiter* at a time of high unemployment, while some business executives now seek imaginative ways to by-pass the "codetermination" statutes. Bonn sees a need for "export substitution"—finding new *domestic* markets for German goods. The transition from heavy manufacturing to an American-style "service economy" still lies ahead. Energy costs, here as elsewhere, keep rising.

In short, the next thirty years of prosperity may not come as easily as the last thirty.

WEST GERMANY



- Land (state) boundary
- ★ Allied military headquarters
- ▲ Nuclear power plants in operation or under construction

Source: British Embassy; Aubrey Diem, *Western Europe: A Geographical Analysis*, New York: Wiley, 1979; French Embassy; U.S. Central Intelligence Agency; U.S. Department of Defense; West German Embassy.

These repeated terrorist incidents revived fundamentally conservative instincts among the majority of West Germans, instincts reinforced by stiff legislation aimed at curbing "radicals." As with other national issues, such as reliance on nuclear energy, the West Germans were quick to cast the debate over terrorism in ideological terms of Left versus Right.

Vying for "Germanness"

Conceivably, Germany is the most ideological of all nations. It is no coincidence that the principal thinkers of 19th-century socialism—Marx, Lassalle, Engels, Bebel—were Germans. However, the roots of ideological contest, so alien to Anglo-Saxon tradition, go further back in German history—to the 16th-century Peasant Wars, Reformation, and Counter Reformation. The conflicts between German Catholics and German Protestants were so devastating that, in retrospect, one must ask whether it was bad luck that the Germans were ever converted to Christianity.

Even today, confessional lines are sharper in Germany than they are in any other country. This has led, for instance, to such grotesque excesses as the selection of television anchormen and commentators not by any criterion of merit but by their allegiance to Christian or socialist parties. Similarly, the schools of the ten *Länder*, or federal states, have curricula determined often by the party that controls the state government. A child schooled in Bayern (Bavaria) might thus find strangely different conditions upon moving to a school in Bremen.

The ideological contest is replayed on another scale in the rivalry between West and East Germany, each of which seeks to portray itself as the home of the free—the one under the banner of welfare-state market capitalism, the other under the banner of communism. (Here the Federal Republic has a distinct advantage, since some 75 percent of East Germany's population of 17 million regularly watches West German television, posing problems for the communist leadership.) On a more mundane level, East and West Germany vie to outdo each other in preserving "Germanness," whether by erecting museums or by emphasizing traditional styles. There was a time not long ago when West Germans fancied going to dine in East Berlin, to get away from the *Gastarbeiter* waiters of the West. "If you want a real German meal served by a real German waiter in a dress coat, you have to go to East Berlin," a West German told me.

That urge to revive dormant German tradition has been especially strong in recent years among the middle-aged bourgeois-

sie: in the refurbishing of old family portraits; the display of tin soldier collections; the acquisition of Biedermeier furniture; the popularity of folk festivals; the (abortive) attempt to restore the 18th-century Great Tattoo (*Grosse Zapfenstreich*) of military drum and fife in the West German Army.

It has also been reflected very widely in careful restoration and preservation of architectural treasures (and even of whole towns, such as Nördlingen and Rothenburg) dating as far back as the Middle Ages. Modern commercial concerns have begun designing their new establishments in a style that accommodates itself to Neoclassical or Renaissance buildings in their vicinity. Much of this has occurred in the context of regional pride, which tends to underscore the intensely provincial character of much West German life.

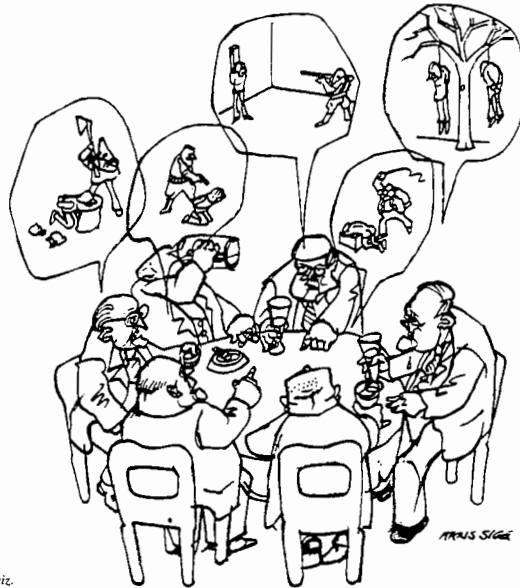
It was the express intention of the American, British, and French occupation powers to foster decentralization in postwar Germany. Thus, police administration and education were made the responsibility of the 10 *Länder* plus West Berlin. But it was the establishment of the federal capital in the small university city of Bonn (population then: about 100,000) and the denial of seat-of-government status to Berlin that effectively provincialized all of West Germany.

Henceforth, Frankfurt (an imperial German capital in medieval times), Munich, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Cologne, and Hannover would vie for national attention, but none had the strength to command allegiance as a successor capital. By the same token, the larger cities developed supraregional newspapers, such as *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Welt*, and *Zeit*, yet none has acquired a commanding lead as the main national daily or weekly. (West Germany does, however, have several national news magazines of wide circulation, such as *Stern* and *Der Spiegel*.)

The Seventeenth Drop

During the 1970s, provincialism was also evident in "voter initiatives" on both township and state ballots to address controversial local issues. Often local lobbying groups focused on environmental problems: a hazardous waste dump; a building developer's bid for park or forest land; a proposed nuclear power station. The enthusiasm and commitment of some of these regional groups spawned an ecological movement on a national scale in the latter part of the decade. The Green Party, founded in 1980 as a coalition of environmentalists, opponents of nuclear energy, and people disturbed generally about the

The radicalism of the 1960s lingers on among West Germany's young. In this 1980 cartoon, middle-aged burghers are discussing imaginative ways of dealing with the "youth problem."



By Hans Sigg for Nebelspalter, Schweiz.

encroachments of a highly industrialized society, polled 1.5 percent of the vote in the October 5, 1980, federal elections. (This was well below the 5 percent minimum required for entry into the Bundestag.)

The willingness of individual Germans to take matters into their own hands, to challenge authority, to stand up for rights that they feel are threatened represents a new phenomenon in German society. It reflects the penetration of the democratic spirit to the grassroots. To be sure, the impulse to preserve one's rights often takes the form of going to court. There is an especially strong litigious streak in the West Germans.

Frequently, West Germans file suits over the pettiest imagined infractions of the law: an insult muttered in a tavern; a gesture by a motorist such as tapping the brow to impute empty-headedness in another driver; a householder's failure to remove winter ice from his sidewalk. A certain righteousness accompanies this litigious spirit, rooted perhaps in the ideological contests that have long played a prominent role in the German consciousness. The urge to be right and to be proven right is still very strong.

Once, in a youth hostel, I sat opposite a German boy who was consuming a liter of Beaujolais by himself. When he had finished, I told him with a touch of malice that according to legend

there were still 16 drops left in the bottle. The boy proceeded to upend the bottle and to count. The first dozen drops came fairly swiftly and the sixteenth only after some minutes, but then he shook and twirled the bottle until a seventeenth drop fell from the rim. "You were wrong!" he exulted.

The great leveling effect of the last world war, literally and figuratively, has made itself felt throughout the social structure of West Germany. True, a remnant of the old class stratification lingers on, as does a remnant of the old wealth in industrial and banking circles. People named Flick and Thyssen and the heirs of Hohenzollerns and Bismarcks continue to enjoy a certain social prominence. Workers continue to drink beer, raise rabbits or pigeons, and go bowling. The bourgeoisie continues to drink wine, attend concerts, and take walks on Sunday. Students at the smaller universities have revived the customs of dueling (some 2,500 students out of a university population of 1 million belong to dueling fraternities) and drinking in unison.

Banking on the Future

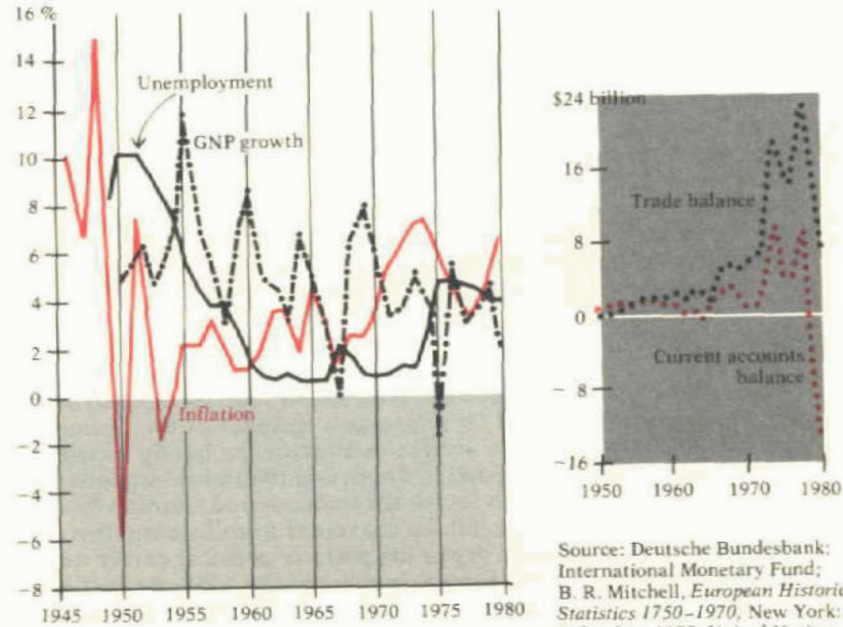
Yet it would be impossible to characterize West Germany as a class-ridden society. The great majority of the citizenry shows no signs of cultivating a class consciousness. Rather, the sharpest social distinctions have tended to be between Germans with a higher education and Germans who completed their schooling at the secondary level. A German with only 10 or 12 years of schooling is likely to have his career in an enterprise or in the civil service strictly curtailed.

Still, the values of the lower-income groups remain fundamentally the same as those of the more affluent: security, property ownership, and a sense of personal prosperity. Elaborate programs of welfare benefits, unemployment compensation, health insurance, and pensions have all added to the sense of well-being and stability. At the same time, these social security programs, which in the main have enjoyed the support of all political parties, created a considerable hedge against inordinate German fears of inflation (which now runs at 5.5 percent a year, the highest since 1965).*

The memory of the economic and political ruin brought on by Germany's inflation during the 1920s is still strong. It helps explain why West Germans are willing to contribute, on the av-

* Unemployment compensation, for instance, amounts to 68 percent of one's pay; social security payments range from \$300 to \$1,000 a month, depending on longevity in a job and wage rates. Health insurance usually covers 80 percent of treatment costs, hospital costs are almost fully covered, and a worker may receive up to 6 weeks pay while on sick leave.

AFTER THE ECONOMIC "MIRACLE," SOME PROBLEMS



THE GERMANS AS CONSUMERS: A 1977 COMPARISON

	WEST GERMANY	FRANCE	GREAT BRITAIN	ITALY	NETHERLANDS	SPAIN	SWEDEN	SWITZERLAND
GNP per capita (in thousands of dollars)	\$10.9	6.3	5.1	3.7	9.6	2.8	8.8	14.8
Health-care costs (% of all consumer expenditures)	1.3%	11.0	1.4	10.0	12.0	5.0	4.0	9.3
Balance of tourism (receipts minus expenditures in billions of dollars)	\$-7.00	+0.46	+1.88	+3.87	-1.34	+3.47	-0.80	+0.83
Alcohol consumption (qts./day per capita)	0.52 qts.	0.44	0.37	0.32	0.28	0.34	0.21	0.34
Men's toiletries (annual spending per adult male)	\$17.71	10.26	6.46	7.35	14.57	4.01	12.55	17.32
Pocket calculators (% of households owning)	49%	33	45	15	20	12	35	26
Toys and games (annual growth in expenditures per household)	6.6%	24.7	24.7	21.2	12.0	39.7	22.1	16.8

Source: *Consumer Europe 1979-80* and *European Marketing Data and Statistics*, 16th ed., both published by London: Euromonitor Publications, 1979.

THE MASTER STRATEGIST

In his native land, he has been praised and damned like few men in this century: as a "renegade" by communists; an "old Bolshevik" by right-wingers; a "primordial rock" by admirers. But, unlike Konrad Adenauer or Willy Brandt, Herbert Wehner, the 75-year-old parliamentary whip of West Germany's dominant Social Democratic Party (SPD), is virtually unknown in the English-speaking world. Yet Wehner has had an extraordinary impact on the evolution of German politics and society since 1945.



© by Backes; Rothco Cartoons.

His career spans—and reflects—50 turbulent years of German history. During the 1920s and '30s, he was a member of the German Communist Party. Called to service in Moscow, he barely escaped Stalin's purges. He was arrested in Sweden in 1942 while organizing a secret mission to Berlin to revive the underground German Communist apparatus; while in jail, he converted from communism to socialism. In 1946, Wehner began his postwar political career as a protégé of socialist leader Kurt Schumacher. By 1957, he had attained the deputy chairmanship of the Social Democratic Party, a post he held until 1973.

A superb organizer and brilliant political strategist, Wehner is generally credited in Germany with three achievements. First, he provided the impetus for the Social Democratic Party's 1959 swing away from Marxist doctrine and toward acceptance of the Federal Republic as it was—allied to the West and committed to NATO. Second, he prepared the SPD for a short-lived coalition with its archrival, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), paving the way for the various coalition governments that have ruled West Germany since 1966.

Finally, Wehner, the godfather of West Germany's *Ostpolitik*, has kept up the pressure, publicly and privately, to keep alive the issue of Germany's continuing East-West partition—and to find ways to ameliorate the plight of separated families.

"For the Germans and probably for Europe too," he has said, "it would be best if the Germans lived in a united democratic state, and could organize their relations to the rest of world. But that does not depend solely on our will, for the day when this unity comes will be determined by the [Great] Powers. *Whether* it comes and if it comes at all is something we alone can determine."

—D.B.

erage, more than 50 percent of their earnings to the payment of (progressive) income taxes and the maintenance of the various social security and medical insurance programs, as well as to set aside regular amounts for savings. Despite a growing indulgence in luxury goods and services, from expensive soaps to vacations in Thailand, the German tradition of thrift is still very powerful. Savings are encouraged by high interest rates for such basic investments as housing. West Germans have accumulated savings worth \$4,000 per capita, almost 10 times the rate of Americans. (However, balance-of-payments deficits of nearly \$15 billion began to chew up investment capital in 1980.)

While there are people who live poorly in West Germany (*Gastarbeiter*, for the most part), it would be difficult to find a German who is poorly housed. The barracks life of the early postwar years has practically vanished, but there is a shortage of *new* housing, created in part by real estate speculation in crowded metropolitan areas, in part by laggard public housing construction. Rents for small apartments in the big cities have risen to \$600 a month and more. Young people have taken to "squatting" in vacant dwellings designated for destruction (and, eventually, replacement), causing violent clashes with the authorities in Berlin, Frankfurt, and Hamburg.

Can Comity Last?

Still, it would appear that their general, new-found comfort makes the Germans easier to live with, less marked by the envy, fear, and hatred so prevalent in the interwar years. The sense of comity, or perhaps the desire for comity, has meant that blue-collar workers have frequently, though not always, heeded union calls *not* to strike; it has meant that entrepreneurs and bankers feel comfortable with the leadership of the Social Democratic Party. The idea of cooperation between social sectors was actually institutionalized in 1951 in the coal and steel industries in the practice of "codetermination"—appointing worker representatives to sit on the governing boards of the coal and steel industries—and, in the late 1960s, in the practice of concerted action, devised by Economics Minister Karl Schiller, which brought industry, trade union, and government economic leaders together periodically to create an acceptable range for nonbinding wage and price guidelines.

In Germany, the effect of such developments has been to eliminate, or at least modify, potential sources of acute social tension and, conversely, to create a sense of common social purpose. What is not entirely clear is the extent to which a "com-

mon purpose" depends on the *Wirtschaftswunder*, the economic miracle, West Germany's three decades of steady economic growth. How firmly will this social consensus hold up during the 1980s if production continues to decline and unemployment and inflation continue to creep upward?

A Fatherland without Fathers

That could be a problem, but in my view, the real tensions in West German society lie elsewhere, in the realm of the psyche. To begin with, there was the failure in the early years of the Federal Republic to come fully to grips with the immediate nazi past, a failure that was practically ordained by the Western Allied occupation powers. The cause was the Cold War, commencing with brutal force in Germany less than three years after the end of World War II in the form of a Soviet blockade of Berlin in 1948. The Western powers swiftly abandoned their plans and programs for "reeducation" of the Germans and virtually terminated their "de-nazification" efforts in favor of integrating West Germany into the common effort against the communists.

Annemarie Renger, a Social Democrat who later became President of the Bundestag, recalled those early postwar years: "Suddenly with the blockade, we saw we didn't have to change and could stay the way we were. We pursued our own personal interests, with a bad conscience that we had gotten off so easily." In effect, the national memory was short-circuited.

From this act of mental amputation, West German novelists such as Heinrich Böll and film-makers, including Rainer Fassbinder, Volker Schlöndorff, and Alexander Kluge, derived much of their material. They sought to fill in the gaps opened by the sudden transformation of their countrymen from occupied enemies to prized allies. One should keep in mind, of course, that the nazi experience has not been totally sublimated, or buried, as the militarist era has been in Japan. Rather, there have been sporadic revivals of interest and attention—centered around a new French film about concentration camps, Joachim Fest's biography of Hitler, or an American TV serial (*Holocaust*).

While writers and film-makers have attempted to recreate a kind of continuity in German life, and are often richly subsidized and rewarded by the federal government or private foundations, most of their work seems to have a remote or provincial quality. For instance, little of the political life of West Germany is reflected in literature except as caricature. This has not been a matter of deficient craftsmanship or lack of originality, but

rather an incapacity to create a major work on the order, say, of a Thomas Mann or a Gotthold Ephraim Lessing.

A second and related source of alienation and tension has been the diminution not only of a hierarchical social order but also of customs of authority and obedience. The concept of hierarchy was removed in a formal sense by the adoption of the Federal Basic Law in 1949, the third article of which declared all human beings to be equal before the law. But authority, principally in the form of rule by fathers and (male) teachers, had already been greatly undermined during six years of war when most of the fathers, and teachers, were at the front—many never to return, many to languish another five years in prison or in forced labor camps. In some respects, Germany in those years was a matriarchy, and the strength of the nation lay in its women rather than in its men. (In 1978, well over half of the

LANDS LOST BY GERMANY IN TWO WORLD WARS



Source: Hans-Adolf Jacobsen and Hans Dollinger, eds., *Deutschland: Hundert Jahre Deutsche Geschichte*, Munich: Verlag Kurt Desch, 1973; Hubertus Prinz zu Löwenstein, *Deutsche Geschichte*, Munich-Berlin: Herbig, 1976; William R. Shepherd, *Shepherd's Historical Atlas*, 9th ed., New York: Barnes & Noble, 1973.

Federal Republic's 469,741 teachers were women.) It was, well into the 1950s, a fatherland without fathers, also because the German men in those years were preoccupied with rebuilding their economic lives.

The effort by the men to reassert traditional concepts of order and authority during the 1950s and '60s, the period the West Germans called the Restoration, contributed to the Student Revolt that began in 1967. That was, above all, a rebellion against outworn and potentially repressive concepts of conformity, against a sense of being watched or reprimanded for signs of disorderliness, and against a feeling of confinement in a country where the population density is 639 persons per square mile, 10 times the density in the United States.

Hothouse Democracy

Presumably, the same instincts lie behind the almost hectic urge to travel abroad by the millions (contributing to West Germany's balance-of-payments problem), and to emigrate at a rate of 50,000 a year, as if to offset the arrival of foreigners seeking political asylum in West Germany. In this respect alone, West Germany has become a very mobile society. Even its young drug addicts in outpatient rehabilitation programs can afford to visit the United States on their welfare funds.

One senses that the spirit of adventure remains strong among the Germans despite all the constraints, pleasures, and comforts West German society has created. Now and then, it bursts out: a mountain climber, Reinhold Messner, conquering hitherto unattainable peaks in the Himalayas; a wingwalker, Jaromis Wagner, crossing the Atlantic; a daring rescue of hostages in Somalia in 1977.

For the more sedentary burghers, there are thousands of "cliques," the groups of friends from the workplace, the vacation spot, or the profession, who meet with alarming regularity to celebrate their togetherness with wine or beer or schnapps. It is probably a replication of the old guild traditions or the almost moribund custom of the *Stammtisch* (regular table) in old taverns where fraternity brothers used to meet.

It is an axiom that the Germans have demonstrated the ability to make all political systems function, from feudalism to constitutional monarchy, from fascism to communism to the democracy of the Federal Republic. The German problem has been to flesh out these walking skeletons of theory and infuse them with the human spirit. The democracy of West Germany has tested and proven the fundamental strength of the 1949 consti-

tution. An official tendency merely to inform the public or to lecture it from on high has been replaced by the notion of democratic discussion. Even the West German press, though given to preaching on the one hand or denunciation on the other (following a habit of nihilism that goes back to the 1920s), has become more tolerant of opposing views. The idea of promoting discussion without declaring a winner or crushing a loser was introduced in 1952 by Werner Höfer, a radio-television journalist whose program, *Internationaler Frühschoppen*, is the longest running and most popular TV show in the country.

In a few years (1993), the Federal Republic will have surpassed the Germany of the Hohenzollern Kaisers in maintaining a German state and system of government in peace at home and abroad. The West Germans have made democracy work, and work well. One of the quaint experiences of recent times is for Americans or Britons to be lectured to by Germans on the theory and practice of democracy. Germans have always been eager students and even more eager schoolmasters.

Still—and here I take a deep breath—the lingering impression of West Germany is that of a hothouse, with a connection to the west, a connection to the east, and a dependency on a modicum of economic sunshine. There are NATO and the European Community on the one hand, Ostpolitik commitments and benefits on the other, and the pendulum effect of political and cultural trends between East and West Germany. Would this plant called democracy survive if it were dug up and replanted in the soil of a reunited Germany? Or will the West Germans, intensely preoccupied with themselves, and cross-pollinated socially and economically, subtly alter the breed before that time comes, if it ever does? I continue to hold my breath.