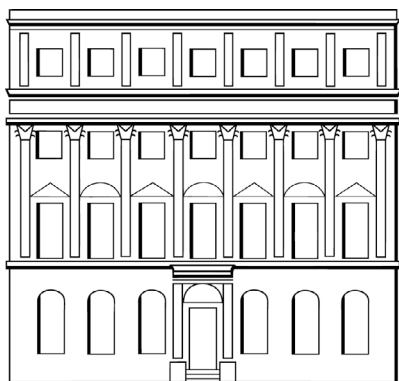


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THE 1982 ANNUAL LECTURE

Germany and the West:
The Ambivalent Relationship

by

GORDON A. CRAIG

Gordon Alexander Craig is J. E. Wallace Sterling Professor of Humanities Emeritus at Stanford University, Honorarprofessor of the Freie Universität Berlin and President of the American Historical Association. His publications include Germany 1866-1945 (Oxford 1978), The Germans (New York 1982) and many other works on German and European history.

Germany and the West: The Ambivalent Relationship

Although the alliance between the German Federal Republic and the West has lasted now for almost thirty-five years and has been characterised by quite extraordinary steadiness and intimacy, it is nevertheless true that periodically shadows of suspicion seem to fall over the Western capitals, and doubts, not always clearly articulated, are expressed about the reliability of their partner. The French, who in the 1920s operated on the assumption that the Germans were "a self-conscious and neurotic nation, and at times bellicose"¹, have not found it easy to abandon that view, and even in the late 1970s their newspapers were much given to articles about *les incertitudes allemandes*. If the English have shown less concern of this kind, the same cannot be said of the Americans. When Konrad Adenauer made his famous journey to Moscow in 1955, there was a quite considerable flap in government circles and in the press, and in 1969, when Willy Brandt inaugurated his *Ostpolitik*, Henry Kissinger wondered whether what "looked to many like a progressive policy of quest for détente could in less scrupulous hands turn into a new form of classic German nationalism"².

The United States has almost as many Germany-watchers as it has Kremlin-watchers, and they are intent upon every nuance of policy and variation of mood. Not so long ago one of the ablest of these, doubtless impelled by a sudden welling up of West German complaints about American policy and speculation about means of providing the Federal Republic with more autonomy in foreign affairs, wrote about what seemed to him to be a German identity crisis and said, "We seem to be witnessing a genuine shift of mood . . . In German politics and consciousness, we may be seeing something like 'a return of the repressed,' a resurgence of national longings and traditions long thought buried"³.

It is, of course, not difficult to account for this kind of nervousness, which must seem to some Germans to be excessive. Beside the thirty-year record of alliance solidarity, there is another long historical one that cannot be entirely forgotten. The fact is that for three hundred years Germany's

relationship to the West – to Western ways of thinking, to Western political institutions, to Western culture – was ambivalent, so much so that its transformation into open hostility was neither difficult nor infrequent, sometimes with tragic results.

I

The roots of the ambivalence are to be found, of course, in the nature of Germany's history and, particularly, in its arrested development, which was the result of the religious wars of the 16th and 17th centuries. Before that time it would have been difficult to make any meaningful distinction between Germany and the West. It was part of a common European development and, indeed, in the forefront of political and economic progress. Between the 10th and 12th centuries, there were indications that the first truly national state in Europe might be emerging in the German lands, a *regnum teutonicorum*, with recognisable homogeneity and self-consciousness, with flourishing trade and the beginnings of urban civilisation, which came earlier to Germany than it did elsewhere. If this had continued, Germany's political development might have resembled in a general way that of France and England, and many problems might have been avoided.

But it did not continue. The involvement of the Hohenstaufen emperors in the tangled affairs of Italy in the 12th century encouraged the ambitions of local princes at the expense of imperial authority, and by the 13th century the fragmentation of the German lands into a collection of independent units under separate rulers was well advanced. Once begun, the process continued, and after the 15th century it was encouraged, first by the lack of interest in German affairs shown by the first Habsburg emperors and then, as I have

intimated, by more than a century of violent religious conflict. By the end of the Thirty Years War, the German states were in a condition of physical collapse and psychological demoralisation, their population diminished by a third and their once prosperous cities reduced to a shadow of themselves. The powers that wrote the peace settlement of 1648 denied Germany access to the sea and confirmed its atomisation. Indeed, it became a basic principle of French policy, and remained so until 1866, that any attempt to relieve its fragmentation would violate what Richelieu had called "the German liberties" and would constitute a breach of international law.

Upon the inhabitants of the German lands, the social and psychological effects of the war and the settlement were profound and protracted. The principal beneficiaries of the physical devastation and the breakdown of social cohesiveness were the princes and the landed aristocracy, who were able to increase their power and wealth at the expense of both the urban merchants and the peasants. The princes, indeed, exploited the prevalent craving for security at any price by making extraordinary claims upon their subjects and expanding their prerogatives to an unprecedented degree, and the subsequent bureaucratisation that was effected in Germany in the 17th and 18th centuries by their agents and officials was not only unopposed but accompanied by a growth of deference to authority that seemed excessive to foreign observers. The Württemberg publisher Karl Friedrich Moser wrote in 1758: "Every nation has its principal motive. In Germany, it is obedience; in England, freedom; in Holland, trade; in France, the honour of the King"⁴.

Nor could the consequences of the peace settlement in isolating Germany from the Western world – so much so that, as late as 1803, when Madame de Stael made her first trip to Germany, she approached it as an exotic land beyond the pale of civilisation⁵ – be without effect upon the attitudes of its inhabitants. If one excepts the citizens of Berlin and Munich, cities with international pretensions, and those of the great commercial centres of Hamburg and Frankfurt am Main, the life of the average German was provincial in the

extreme and, perhaps because of this, was always open to feelings of suspicion and dislike of foreign ways and ideas. This xenophobia, if it is fair to call it that, was particularly strong in the German heartland and the old imperial cities, the communities that Mack Walker has called the "German home towns"⁶. It is interesting to note that in no other part of Germany was the adjective "German" used so heavily as in this middle and differentiated area that stretched from Westphalia to the Danube and from the Rhine to Upper Saxony. Indeed, it often appeared that this usage was deliberately designed to emphasise the superiority of German wine, German song, a German maiden, the German forest, German industry, German valor and German loyalty over their unadorned equivalents. This implied claim to superiority and uniqueness may have been a reflection of a yearning for a lost identity, for the past glories of the old Empire, or an attempt to rationalise present weakness and intimate that it would not last forever. Whatever its reason, it implied a resentment against the outside world and the intellectual movements emanating from it, and this, along with belief in authority and the primacy of communal membership, and resistance to modernity, was the home-town legacy to the Germany of the 19th and 20th centuries.

If we bear in mind the condition of Germany in the century that followed the Peace of Westphalia, we can understand the relative failure there of the great intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment. That Germany was not untouched by it goes without saying, and it is not difficult to think of the great German representatives of the *Aufklärung*: first and foremost Frederick II of Prussia with his rationalisation of the government of his country, his decree of religious toleration, his formulation of the laws of war, and his legal reforms; and, after him, such spokesmen for the human spirit as Immanuel Kant, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Friedrich Nicolai, and Georg Christoph Lichtenberg. But it cannot be said that the influence of these people was pervasive and, insofar as it was felt, it was counteracted by other forces, not least of all by the clinging of local communities to custom and tradition. Even more important was the influence of

religion, always deeply rooted in the German mind and embodied in a learned and active clergy which was – as Wilhelm Dilthey pointed out in his *Life of Schleiermacher*⁷ – strong enough to blunt those ideas of social contract and popular sovereignty that were salient features of the Enlightenment in the West by shifting the emphasis of the movement to questions of morality and individual perfection. If there were no atheists in the German *Aufklärung*, there were no political revolutionaries either. Hajo Holborn was surely justified in writing, “The entire intellectual bent of 18th-century Germany was in the direction of the education and cultivation of the individual. All political demands were secondary, if they were considered at all”⁸.

Finally, the death of Frederick and the coming of the French Revolution effected a decisive change in the intellectual atmosphere and a turning away from the ideas of the *philosophes* as being subversive, atheistical, and dangerously cosmopolitan. To this new mood the vogue of Johann Gottfried Herder’s ideas at the end of the century made an important contribution. In his works *Another Philosophy of History* (1774) and *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1776-1803), Herder rejected Enlightenment views about the ideal man and the ideal society and argued that no person is like any other person and that the communities, or nations, that they form are distinguished by the same individuality. He believed that to belong to a nation was to act in the light of particular goals, values and pictures of the world, and thus to behave, in speech and song, at the table and in bed, in the counting house and in the legislature, differently from other peoples who did the same things. To be a German, for example, was to be part of a distinct culture, to share in a unique experience that was animated by a common spirit or *Volksgeist* that could not be abstracted or defined but represented the individuality of the whole.

These doctrines had a seductive attractiveness to Germans in the world of *Kleinstaaterei* who sometimes feared for their own identity and found assurance in Herder’s postulation of a common Germanness. But there is little doubt that this kind of cultural nationalism was bound, despite Herder’s

own lack of interest in politics, to be distorted into political assertiveness and into the kind of xenophobia that he deplored. Indeed, as Sir Isaiah Berlin has pointed out⁹, he was himself partly responsible for this with his not infrequent exhortations to his countrymen to be German and to protect their values and their language from foreign corruption¹⁰. As the French extended their control over Germany, this perversion of an essentially humanistic doctrine became more extreme, and Herder's views were transformed, in the hands of philosophers like Fichte and Hegel, into a theory of the State as an organic entity with its own life and meaning and the right to claim the total allegiance of its subjects.

Thus, in Germany, the Enlightenment died away without leaving the legacy that it bequeathed to future generations in Great Britain, France and the United States and with the emergence of a romantic political philosophy that could not help but cause mutual incomprehension between Germany and the West. There may be an element of exaggeration in Veblen's statement that "it is as difficult for the commonplace Englishman to understand what the German means by the 'State' as it is for the German to comprehend the English conception of a 'commonwealth'" and in his description of the failure of the English-speaking peoples to perceive that government by the consent of the governed is not a State and that sovereignty is not in the people but in the State as "perhaps the most detestable trait of unreason that taints [them] in the apprehension of intelligent Germans"¹¹. But certainly the relative failure in Germany of the political ideals of the Enlightenment created significant differences of attitude towards freedom and authority.

This is not to say that either Herderian notions of German uniqueness, which assumed exaggerated form in the writings of a lunatic fringe of the Romantic Movement¹², or the cult of State power commanded universal acceptance. It is important to remember that, during the struggle against Napoleon, another school of thought emerged, represented by the Prussian reformers of 1807-13, who maintained that the strength of a nation lay in the energies of its subjects and could be most effectively mobilised by giving them rights to

match their responsibilities. The idea of a constitutional government, responsive to an educated and self-reliant citizenry whose rights were clearly defined and protected became the programme of 19th century liberalism, and its leaders, not unnaturally, looked to the West for models.

II

Despite the violence of anti-French feeling in Prussia during the war of liberation, France retained, or recovered, its attractiveness as a liberal model in western and southern Germany in the years after 1815. Liberal publicists like Karl von Rotteck, professor first of world history and later of jurisprudence and political science at the University of Freiburg, and Friedrich Christoph Schlosser, professor of history at Heidelberg after 1817, were believers in the political ideals of the French Enlightenment and their realisation in the first phase of the Revolution. Although Schlosser had been trained at Göttingen when that university was the centre of English influence in Germany, he was critical of English socio-constitutional arrangements as being conservative and elitist, and both he and Rotteck argued that the political system of the French Restoration, which retained the major reforms of the Revolution, was a more effective example of reason applied to government than the illogical and tradition-bound English system. Since both men were prolific and eloquent writers, their audience was large, particularly among the lower bourgeoisie of Baden and the Rhineland. France was also held up as an object of emulation by Heinrich Heine and Ludwig Börne, and their articles and letters from Paris also reached a wide readership, although they doubtless alienated part of the liberal community by their pronounced democratic convictions. The weakness of the French model to many liberals lay in their recollection

that the French were a volatile and potentially dangerous people and that in their hands constitutional liberty had been known to transform itself into popular license or military dictatorship with startling ease.

Since the British were not prone to such excesses, their example tended to be a more attractive subject for study, particularly after 1832, when the Great Reform Bill gave a greater measure of political responsibility to what Richard Cobden called the middle and industrious classes. Charles McClelland has pointed out that after that time German liberal theorists came increasingly to regard England as a kind of older brother and guide to their own country as it made its way to constitutional liberty¹³. Karl Theodor Welcker, next to Rotteck the leader of South German constitutional theorists, Robert von Mohl, professor of law at Tübingen and Heidelberg, and Friedrich Christoph Dahlmann, historian and political scientist at Kiel, Göttingen and Bonn, all admired in England the liberties of individual subjects, the strength of parliamentary institutions, and the openness to innovation. In their minds, England was what Germany must become, for as Welcker wrote in 1846:

“When one looks upon the totality of English conditions; when one compares that with our dear German ministers, officials, learned pedants, clumsy businessmen; when one contrasts the results for the honor of the fatherland, freedom, and power in terms of all the highest principles of political life, whether for citizens or princes; finally, when one compares England’s steady progress and improvement to our daily regression, again in terms of all those highest principles – then all our governmental wisdom seems almost childish”¹⁴.

The attitudes of liberals less engrossed in constitutional questions was more ambivalent. Friedrich List, perhaps the most advanced economic thinker of his time, admired England’s political system and its economic strength but warned his countrymen that, while attempts to imitate the first

might flatter the islanders, efforts to challenge the second would invite their ruthless competition. Like many liberal politicians and businessmen of the 1840s, List dreamed of a united Germany with a strong industrial base, a flourishing merchant marine, and appropriate naval power, but he was clear-sighted enough to recognise that the British would use their own manufacturing, commercial and naval strength to check those developments as long as they could¹⁵. List's fellow liberals learned to appreciate this in 1848-49, when they discovered that the British were, in fact, indifferent to, or found somewhat comic, their attempts to establish political institutions like England's in Germany, while being at the same time definitely hostile to their plans for national integration.

German attitudes towards the United States were no less mixed. The American Revolution had been greeted in the German lands with enthusiasm, one versifier writing in 1776,

“Und der Mensch war wieder Mensch, der
Edlen Viele pflanzten emsig den Keim der
Wahrheit. Fern an Philadelphias Ufer glühte
Milderer Frühroth”¹⁶,

and the Prussian artist Daniel Chodowiecki celebrating the triumphs of the Americans, from the Boston Tea Party to Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown in a series of brilliant engravings¹⁷. Among ordinary Germans, America was always a subject of greater interest than England, for there had been German communities in America since 1683, and new emigrants and those who returned had much to say about the new world. In his memoirs, Carl Schurz tells of how, when he was a boy, living near Cologne,

“things American were eagerly discussed by my father and uncles. I heard for the first time of that immeasurable country on the other side of the ocean, its great forests, its magnificent rivers and lakes – of that young republic where the people were free, without kings, without counts, without

military service, and, as it was believed in Liblar, without taxes. Everything about America that could be procured was eagerly read, and I saw for the first time, in a penny magazine, the picture of George Washington, whom my father called the noblest of men in all history, because he had commanded large armies in the war for the liberation of his people, and, instead of making himself king, had voluntarily divested himself of power and returned to the plough as a simple farmer. By this example my father explained to me what it was to be a true patriot.

The men in our family circle fairly revelled in the log-cabin romance, which is so full of charm to the European unacquainted with the true conditions of American life; and it wanted but little to induce the men of the family at once to try their fortune in the New World"¹⁸.

Among intellectuals, interest in American affairs was sustained by the activity of the Hamburg scholar Christoph Daniel Ebeling, who eagerly collected materials for his projected work on American geography and history and established an American section in the library of the University of Göttingen, by sympathetic, if somewhat idealised, descriptions of the constitution of the United States by Rotteck, Welcker and Mohl, and by admiring portraits of American leaders by Friedrich von Raumer. Rotteck did not hesitate to write that "the principal demand of a pure theory, to which in Europe historical prescription is so inimical, we see there in enviable fulfillment" – general security for property and person combined with "rational, legalised equality and freedom", and the historian Georg Gottfried Gervinus saw the American constitution as a model to which the dissatisfied, the oppressed, and the progressive elements of all nations aspired¹⁹.

Yet these encomia were from the beginning countered by contrary views. The Romantic writers Heinrich Steffens and Friedrich Schlegel saw in the United States an extreme

example of the worst examples of the Enlightenment, a society that was irreligious and without moral foundation, and the philosopher Hegel regarded it as an atomised country in which the State was reduced to being a mere protector of property²⁰. After a trip to the United States the poet Lenau concluded that its boasted equality was spurious and that Americans were unrefined in manner and preoccupied with the accumulation of material goods²¹; and his fellow artists Heine, Gutzkow and Hoffmann von Fallersleben castigated America's "Spießbürgerei", its "Tarifizierung aller Dinge im Himmel und auf der Erden", and the fact that in its broad expanse

"Kein Vogel darf ein Lied erheben,
Und tot ist alle Poesie"²².

That among the countries of the West the United States was alone in showing sympathy for, and seeking to extend assistance to, the liberal experiment in 1848-49 – which has led Günter Moltmann to describe the German-American relationship at that time as a form of "Atlantische Blockpolitik"²³ – did not in the short run reconcile the divided views held with respect to it, although it may have indicated the existence of a rudimentary socio-ideological consensus that would grow in strength a hundred years later.

III

Meanwhile, the liberal revolution of 1848-49 failed. Historians have been warned against attributing the whole subsequent course of German history to that fact²⁴, and one must be cautious in assessing its consequences. But it seems safe to say that it persuaded many liberals that power was more important than principle (it was more than coincidence that the word *Realpolitik* was coined by a former liberal in the 1850s)²⁵ and made it easier for them to stop looking for

foreign models and to accept a foreign policy that would be based on a studied ambivalence toward all powers²⁶. And in the country as a whole it caused a widespread disenchantment with politics (which may have contributed to the general dearth of parliamentary talent in the years that followed), a strengthening of deference to existing authorities, and a revival of the old Romantic emphasis upon individuality and the uniqueness of Germanness and the necessity of preserving it from contamination by alien influences.

In 1865, Richard Wagner, who had probably more influence upon German thinking in the second half of the 19th century than any other single individual, wrote his essay "What is German?" and argued that its essence was what it was in those days when the German sat "by his warm hearth in his high tower surrounded by the wintry woods and cultivated the memories of his ancestors and formed his own myths of the gods into inexhaustible and varied sagas". "The German is conservative . . . he saves and knows how to use the old. Preserving is more important to him than acquiring. New acquisition has value only insofar as it serves to embellish the old. He wants nothing from outside, but wants to be undisturbed at home". Above all, he wants no political ideas from abroad. With reference to the failed revolution of 1848, Wagner wrote that such events were "wholly un-German. 'Democracy' in Germany is a translated concept . . . The astonishing failure of the noisy revolution of 1848", wrote the man who had been on the barricades in Dresden, "is to be explained by the fact that the true native German saw himself and his name represented by a kind of person who was completely alien to him", by "democratic speculators" trading in French and English futures²⁷.

We can recognise in this disorganised and ill-written piece ideas that were to surface in the works of other neo-Romantic writers in the years after the *Reichsgründung* and were to be expressed with great eloquence and force, during the First World War, by Thomas Mann, a writer who, together with his brother Heinrich, admirably illustrates the German ambivalence towards the West. Heinrich Mann, an admirer of French culture, was the author of a series of brilliant

articles, notably one on Émile Zola, in which he held up to his fellow Germans the French conception of civil liberty and political engagement by the ordinary citizen²⁸. These ideas Thomas Mann utterly repudiated in a wartime book called *Reflections of an Unpolitical Man* in which – supporting his argument with quotations from Wagner, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche – he insisted that there was an unbridgeable gap between Germany and the West, a fundamental incompatibility between a German *Kultur* based upon music, upon ideals that did not have to be put into words, and upon a recognition that life was more important than politics and a Western *Zivilisation* devoted to literature and logic-chopping that eagerly subordinated everything worth living for to political requirements. In passages that could not but be offensive to the memories of those who had taken Western institutions as models and, in 1848, during the constitutional conflict of the 1860s, and in the Imperial *Reichstag* and the Prussian *Landtag*, fought for an extension of parliamentary powers, for ministerial responsibility, and for a reformed suffrage in Prussia, he declared that

“German humanism opposed politicisation from the ground up; in the German concept of *Bildung* the political element is basically missing. After fifty years of the Empire, the words of the young Nietzsche are still valid for cultivated Germans: ‘He who has the *furor philosophicus* within him will have no time for the *furor politicus*’ . . .

I acknowledge that I am deeply convinced that the German people will never be able to love democracy, for the simple reason that they cannot love politics itself, and that the much-abused *Obrigkeitsstaat* is and will remain the form of government that is suitable and appropriate for the German people and basically desired by them . . .

The political spirit as democratic enlightenment and ‘human civilisation’ is not only psychically un-German; it is necessarily politically anti-German, wherever it exists”²⁹.

I suppose it can be said that, to the extent that what Mann said was true, or was believed by a significant number of Germans to be true, it contributed to the disaster that befell Germany in 1914. There is little doubt that the anti-political stance of a large part of the middle class and its lack of energy in seeking to control the agencies of the *Obrigkeitsstaat* allowed the government and the military establishment to comport themselves irresponsibly and in the end with fateful results. And it was in the light of the resultant defeat and collapse of the Empire that the historian and theologian Ernst Troeltsch, in a lecture in 1922 before the *Hochschule für Politik* entitled "The Ideas of Natural Law and Humanity", took up the points made by Mann, with markedly different conclusions.

Troeltsch agreed that the Germans had in their recent history shown an indifference to politics, but he found in this grounds not for satisfaction but rather for earnest inquiry after its causes. In his view, it resulted from the fact that the idea of Natural Law, which in Britain, France and America had inspired the demand for personal liberty and full participation in the control and governance of the State, had never taken root in Germany, largely because of the failure of the Enlightenment, and had been resolutely rejected by the main stream of German philosophical thought. Instead, since the beginning of the 19th century, Germans had inclined to Romantic notions about the supreme importance of the inner development of the individual and of the nation as a unique cultural expression. This had made them indifferent to Western views about the duties of the citizen and the importance of political engagement, and their inward-directedness had induced them to leave the practical realities of existence and the decisions that affected the life and well-being of ordinary people in the control of the State and its agents, who had served them ill in 1914.

To the question, What could be done about this?, Troeltsch had no answer. It would be well, he suggested, for Germans to be more self-critical, and it would be a good thing for them to be less parochial, to study the history of other nations, to think of themselves as being connected with

them and as part of the development of the whole world. But, he admitted sadly, it would take a long time before that effected any appreciable change, and, meanwhile, the problem remained, that German political thinking continued to be impregnated by the feeling, half mystical and half metaphysical, that interpreted the idea of individuality, which in the West had connotations of personal liberty and popular sovereignty, "as meaning the particular embodiment assumed, from time to time, by the Divine Spirit, whether in individual persons or in the super-personal organisations of community life"³⁰.

Troeltsch's lecture was delivered at a time when the German people had embarked upon a serious effort to close the political gap between Germany and the West, an effort that began with Max von Baden's appeal to Woodrow Wilson for an armistice and a peace based upon the Fourteen Points and assumed concrete form with the drafting and acceptance of the Weimar Constitution. But that earnest attempt to make democracy work in Germany failed for a number of complicated reasons, which included the excessive rigor of the Versailles peace terms, the isolationism of the United States, France's suspicion of the objectives of Weimar foreign policy, which was inflamed by the middle course pursued by Rathenau and Stresemann and embodied in the Rapallo and Berlin treaties, and the consequent failure of the French and British governments to agree on an equitable economic and security policy toward the Republic. The resultant frustration gave the radical right and the old conservative establishment an opportunity to play upon modes of thought that the new democracy had not had time to displace, and in 1933 the country gave itself over to the ultimate incarnation of the kind of thinking that Troeltsch had feared. Thomas Mann, who had abandoned the position that he had taken in the *Reflections* and had declared his allegiance to the Republic in two notable addresses in 1922 and 1930, declared bitterly in 1934 that "the National Socialist movement . . . is a prime example of the German spirit's wallowing in the manure of myth", and said that the Germans had rejected the Republic because its ideology, "involving integration into civilisa-

tion", seemed too watered down for their taste and that they had turned, in their "desire for racial uniqueness", to a brutal and barbaric regime which, under the pretence of restoring Germanness, has denatured and dishonoured German culture and was doomed to bankruptcy and defeat³¹.

IV

The war and the occupation effectively de-mythologised the thinking of most Germans and destroyed the attractiveness of the Romantic ideology, and this was responsible in turn for a realistic approach to the problems of state-building on both sides of the iron curtain. In Western Germany, the attempt to build a new democracy enjoyed more whole-hearted support at home and more moral and material assistance from abroad than had been true after 1919, and the country was no less well-served by democratic leaders of conviction and vision. The first Chancellor shared the convictions of Ernst Troeltsch, that every effort should be made to end the self-imposed psychological isolation of his countrymen and to close the gap that existed between them and the West. "In the lands of the German West", Konrad Adenauer said, "there is a natural longing to escape from the confines of national narrowness into the fullness of the European consciousness"³², and he sought to give that desire effective form by making a reconciliation with France a major objective of his policy. His determined collaboration in foreign affairs with the United States and its allies assuaged lingering fears about Germany's reliability and facilitated the return of its sovereignty, and his long tenure of office supplied the continuity and stability necessary to enable the new democratic institutions to take hold.

Adenauer's western orientation was changed in no funda-

mental way when Willy Brandt launched his *Ostpolitik* in 1969, although his initiative aroused considerable suspicion in Washington at the outset³³. In fact, as Josef Joffe has written, in today's Europe the conditions for anything like the Rapallo policy of the 1920s no longer exist, and West Germany's evolution in the last thirty years suggests that the values of freedom and democracy carry more weight with its citizens than the idea of re-unifying the divided nation and that there is general agreement that the alliance with the West is the indispensable guarantee of political independence³⁴.

It would be surprising, nevertheless, if there were not, in the midst of this development, some expression of disquiet and dissent. An instance of this was provided in February 1981 when the retiring chief of the West German mission in East Berlin, Günter Gaus, gave an interview to the newspaper *Die Zeit*, in which, among other things, he expressed his opinion that the country that he was leaving was "more German than the Federal Republic". Pressed by reporters, he went on to illustrate this by saying that "the diminished tempo of industrialisation" had preserved older values, both positive and negative, in the GDR and enabled it to remain "less watered down and less reduced to conformity". In addition, there seemed to him to be a "conscious inclination toward history" there that did not exist in the Federal Republic; more positive attempts were made in the GDR to preserve the cultural legacy, so that, for example, folk songs could be sung without embarrassment, which was not true in the West, because of the ascendancy of American music. Finally, the citizens of the GDR had learned to adapt themselves to being by themselves, and Gaus seemed to imply that their western neighbours had lost that ability and were in danger of forgetting who they were³⁵.

This statement was a comment rather than a programme. Minister Gaus's point that his fellow countrymen had paid a price for overcoming the historical gulf that had existed between Germany and the Western world was, in the total context of his interview, subordinate to his main argument, which was that a return to the Bismarck Reich of 1871 was

not a viable objective of West German policy, that any form of re-unification was remote, and that it would be wise to face up to that fact.

Even so, it would be a mistake for Westerners to dismiss his comparison of the two Germanies and its implications as nothing but a lament for the passing of the values, and indeed the horizons, of the 19th century home towns. Surely they would be better advised to take it as a reminder that, even when one has accepted the verdict of history and made fundamental decisions on that basis, some ambivalence of feeling will remain. The great majority of West Germans today recognise that the year 1945 is the great caesura in their history over which there is no way back into the past. But it would be wholly unnatural if there were none among them who, in moments of irritation over the importunities of their stronger allies or their own dependence upon them, were affected by gusts of nostalgia, just as it would be remarkable if there were not some who, when worried about the dangers of being caught in new confrontations between the superpowers, felt a desire to escape into neutralism or some other form of detachment from block politics. The best way for the West to control this residue of an older ambivalence is to recognise that even in the best of alliances the individual members are likely to be jealous not only of their own interests but also of their own peculiarities and to make due allowance for that.

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