

# Jews and German unity: a happily dissenting view

by Laurent Murawiec

The number of stupidities written about Germany, the German Revolution, and the process of reunification daunts the imagination. Especially Anglo-Saxon media have been harboring countless fairy tales about the threatening "Fourth Reich," with sundry authoritative witnesses summoned to utter their verdict of "collectively guilty" upon Germans. As has been stated, in *EIR* and elsewhere, more sinister designs lurk behind the tremolos of the self-appointed Cassandras. The best means to stop this irresponsible propaganda is to call to the bar, such witnesses whose reasoned views will contribute to the public enlightenment. We are therefore happy to republish the following article by Prof. Michael Wolffsohn, which also appeared as a Letter to the Editor in the *International Herald Tribune*.

Professor Wolffsohn, an Israeli citizen, taught at the Hochschule der Bundeswehr (University of the German Armed Forces) in Hamburg in 1980-81, and at the Bundeswehr University in Munich in 1980-82, and is again teaching there in the Social Sciences faculty. His publications include *Politik in Israel* (1983), *German-Saudi Arabian Arms Deals* (1985), *Deutsche-Israelische Beziehungen* (German-Jewish Relations, 1986), and *Ewige Schuld? 40 Jahre Deutsche-Jüdische-Israelische Beziehungen* (Eternal Guilt? 40 Years of German-Jewish-Israeli Relations, 1988).

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## Ugly German genes?

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I am a German Jew born in Tel Aviv in 1947. Having grown up in West Germany, I served three years in the Israeli Army and presently teach modern history at the University of the West German Armed Forces—of all places some might say. I would counter: precisely at this place, in order to personify the fundamental change that has taken place in German-Jewish-Israeli relations, which is my major field of research. Yet when I read the recent reactions of some prominent non-German commentators warning of the dire perils of a unified "German superpower" I wonder: Are they referring to the Germany I live in?

To give but two examples: "Auschwitz . . . Holocaust, Nazi" are among the "hidden words" A.M. Rosenthal (*New York Times*, Feb. 4, 1990) states he "cannot find" in discus-

sions on German unification. Fearful of an old-new Germany, Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel claims to hear the triumphant strains of "Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles," the first stanza of the old national anthem. In truth, only the third stanza, "Unity, Justice and Freedom," is sung in Germany today.

Those searching for "hidden words" and claiming to hear echoes of German chauvinism should follow the German media or listen to German politicians and ordinary people. When Germans discuss the potential pitfalls of unification and the "burden of history" they not only clearly invoke the so-called "hidden words" but also link them to an equivocal declaration of intent: "Never again!" Critical publications dealing with the Nazi past are frequently bestsellers in Germany. My own book *Eternal Guilt? 40 Years of German-Jewish-Israeli Relations*, first published in 1988, went into three printings within one year. Except for a handful on the lunatic fringe, Germans pay serious attention to the apprehensions and sensitivities of others, particularly in the Jewish world.

Some observers are shocked to see swastikas on banners in East or West Germany. But they should take a closer look at the texts and contexts. Most of the placards and slogans equate fascism with communism and are thus a manifestation of anti-fascism. A banner carried recently in East Berlin and Leipzig read: "Nazi-Stasi-Gysi." The main inference was that the East German state security police ("Stasi") had used Nazi methods and that Gysi, head of the successor to the communist party, personified continuity.

The existence of anti-Semitism in Germany cannot be denied. On the other hand, the polls have shown a dramatic decrease of anti-Semitic, anti-democratic, and pro-Nazi sentiment in the Federal Republic. Recently, 8% of those polled expressed anti-Semitic attitudes. That's too much, but in 1949 it was 38%. Moreover, the younger the interviewee the less anti-Semitic and anti-democratic the opinion. In comparison with international polls the level of anti-Semitism in Germany is as high (or low) as in any other Western country, including the United States.

"Lots of the fathers are still around," is a recurring reminder. After more than forty years, these "lots" have shrunk to a small demographic minority, unless we are to assume that the majority of today's sons and daughters are mere

clones of their parents and thus equally dangerous. As a Jewish historian I am reminded of the Nuremberg Laws which discriminated against Jews simply because they were Jews. I am also reminded of the legend of Jewish guilt in perpetuity for the crucifixion of Christ. Such arguments amount to political biology—a form of political pollution.

With the exception of the extreme right “Republikaner,” German politicians of all parties and German society as a whole stress the difference between Nazi Germany and the democratic values of the new (West) Germany. These are also the values of the “gentle revolution” of 1989 in East Germany. Germans make this distinction without forgetting or ignoring Auschwitz and the Holocaust. In doing so they find themselves in the best of Jewish company. In 1952 Israel’s first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, said: “He who stares only at the past will be unable to master the present and the future.”

To turn from the past to the future, the key question is: What institutions and safeguards will offer insurance against a revival of German adventurism?

First of all, nobody wants to resurrect the old German nation state. The goal is a “European Germany” rather than a “German Europe” and this is inseparable from the political, economic, and military integration of a European Community. Integration means interdependence and not dominance. A united and federative Germany in a federated Europe will be incapable of dominating the rest of the continent.

The West German constitution contains provisions which have prevented and will continue to prevent anti-democratic forces from taking over the polity. Racist and anti-Semitic parties can be and have been banned. The chief reason why the “Republikaner” have not been outlawed so far is to avoid creating martyrs for the extreme right.

The continued presence of U. S. and other allied troops in Germany is an important guarantee against German unilateralism. Germans have long accepted the principles of military integration and the renunciation of force as a means of settling international disputes.

What about the economic danger allegedly posed by a united Germany? Over the next decade, huge sums will be required to rebuild the East German economy and society. West Germany’s export-driven economy will have to finance this enterprise. As an exporting nation Germany is dependent on the willingness of the outside world to buy German products. This, in turn, depends on more than just the quality of German goods. Economic necessity dictates that the Germans must act prudently, lest they alienate their clients. There is no reason to fear a German economic giant.

Unrealistic and irrational arguments against German unification can only give Germans the impression that no matter what they do it will be wrong, even if what they are doing is creating a Western, humane, and democratic society. Such must not be allowed to become self-fulfilling prophecy.—

*Prof. Michael Wolffsohn*

## How Germany can quickly reunify

With wise forethought, the framers of West Germany’s post-war constitution, the Basic Law, drafted Article 23, which lays the basis for an uncomplicated unification of Germany by means of a simple vote of any German territory which wants to join the Federal Republic of Germany. This would be a far superior route than the holding of a convention to draft a new constitution, as is being demanded by the just-defeated Social Democratic Party (SPD)—a process which would have the effect of postponing reunification into the indefinite future. Indeed, as Chancellor Helmut Kohl has stressed, a new constitutional convention would be a disaster, because today, “the consensus and insights which characterized the fathers of our 1949 constitution no longer exist as they did then, so we also couldn’t proceed from the same fundamental convictions without which the Basic Law would have never come about.” He was referring to such elements as the West German Green party, who flaunt their disdain for the basic cultural values of Western civilization.

Article 23 deals with the territorial extension of the area in which the Basic Law is in effect. It is short and to the point:

*Art. 23.* This Basic Law is henceforth valid in the areas of the states of Baden, Bavaria, Bremen, Greater Berlin, Hamburg, Hesse, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rheinland-Palatinate, Schleswig-Holstein, Württemberg-Baden, and Württemberg-Hohenzollern. In other parts of Germany, it is to be put into effect following their entry [into the Federal Republic].

The framers of the Basic Law wisely left the question open as to which “parts” were to join, while at the same time making clear in the preamble that the Basic Law had been framed on behalf of those Germans “who have been prevented from participating.” Thus, Article 23 sets forth the territorial validity of the Basic Law as it was designed for all Germans, and which, as soon as the yoke of communist dictatorship has been thrown off in one part of Germany, would naturally be extended.

It would therefore not even require a vote in West Germa-