

GERMANY CELEBRATING TWO EVENTS

It seems that the celebrations for the re-unification of Germany have overshadowed another event of equal significance, not only in the history of Germany, but also in the history of the world.

In fact, fifty years have already lapsed since the formation of Federal Germany, where the Federal Republic of Germany was born on May 23, 1949. On this same date came the issuance of Germany's basic law "The German Constitution".

During these years, Germany has covered vast steps, since its emergence from the debris of World War II till its becoming the strongest EU country, economically.

Today, Germany stands on well-established foundations of democracy and is a rich and reliable economic partner. At the same time, it is a Western state and an active member in the International Community, coming right after USA in size of assistance offered to developing countries.

In my opinion, the basic law of Germany is one of the most exalting constitutions for human values, where it contains 146 articles, in which the first article till the nineteenth are all concerned with the basic rights of citizens, including humanity, dignity, equality, freedom of expression and freedom to move.

In the preamble of Item I, it is stipulated: **"Human dignity is neither to be violated nor touched. Its reverence and protection are an obligation of the public authority"**.

Throughout its fifty-year old experience of shifting to a democratic society, Germany has offered an exemplary model. This operation has defined the features of today's Germany.

One of the most important features is that Germany is a multinational society, with the highest rate of acceptance of immigrants and asylum seekers.

To cite former German President Roman Herzog, **“Our country is, first and foremost, a free and democratic country, governed by the law. It is a country that grants citizens their rights and protects their dignity”**.

He then continues to talk of challenges facing freedom and democracy, primarily the continuous need to create an economic wealth, while maintaining justice in distributing such wealth, this being the ultimate goal.

Social Market Economies:

The former President adds that the economic success of Germany is a success of its social market economies, where people are to reap fruits of development.

These are to be fairly distributed, or else the socio-democratic system would be negatively tilted. In this context, the social market is that in which economic competitiveness is compatible with social equilibrium, as both are two faces of one coin.

This also applies to the German unity. The question that continuously arises is whether the re-unification process has succeeded in a fair distribution of such fruits, or was the pre-unity promises and ambitious mere dreams?

At present, the German people are facing the famous equation of **too many aspirations usually ending in too many frustrations.**

It is a fact that the German unity has always been foremost in the basic concept of Federal Germany. Consequently, we find the basic law stipulating that **West Germans** have set up a free democracy and an open society, even on behalf of those Germans deprived of participating therein “**i.e. the East Germans**”.

As for obstacles facing the unity, the division of Germany into two separate entities for generations and generations had set these two entities quite apart. What the unity seeks now is to **revive and enhance one of these two entities.**

At present, the question facing Germans is: “**Has the price of unity been exuberant?**”

Challenges:

There are many challenges, the most important of which is that after forty years of separation, it is necessary to create not only similar, but also equal living conditions, for everyone living in Germany.

The second challenge was expressed by Kurt Louk, Board Member of Vibe in Düsseldorf, when he said: “It is necessary for Germany to pay heed to economic productivity, this being the sole means of maintaining prosperity and allowing international competitiveness”.

Undoubtedly, Germany has succeeded in escaping the confinement of a national state to a much wider concept, namely that of Europe and the world, in addition to the European Union and Germany’s role in it.

At present, Germany is heading the G-8, which convened lately in Cologne. The G-8 is formed of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK & USA, with Russia joining in recently.

In this Summit, Germany's stance and policy were clear-cut. Germany submitted some proposals and initiatives that aim at alleviating the sufferance of developing countries and helping them enhance their potentials.

Another German request was to pay heed to social and environmental policies. In order to achieve this, German proposals included allowing flexible labour within EU states and opening the borders in front of commodities, industries and investments.

More investment was to be made in human development and in organizing up-to-date education and training.

Transferring the German Parliament (Bundestag) from Bonn to Berlin comes to emphasize the German role in Europe and the German unity. This transfer entails the transfer of ministries and state agencies, which is a step that crowns the German unity.

In a moving speech of German Counsellor Gerhard Schroeder, while delivering the key of the parliament to Speaker Thieres, he said: **"Moving to Berlin is a trip back in time in Germany's history, to the headquarters of two dictating regimes that have incurred great pain upon the German people and Europe"**.

However, it is a mistake to compare the Reichstag to the old German Reich, or to look upon Berlin as a symbol of Prussian centralization. The Federal German regime has proven its credibility and solidity in Germany.

We can rest assured that there is no more threat to the democratic march in Germany.

To that, Speaker Thierres answered, adding: **“This place is history itself, and from now on, we shall not allow ourselves to step beyond history”**.

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