

11 Years of German Unity : A Balance Sheet



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Eleven years may not be a long time in the annals of history, but they are long enough to evaluate the German unity. The German unity was unique in the sense that it was achieved at a time when the world was witnessing disintegration and apportioning of countries. And what is more it was realized through peaceful means and without any bloodshed. In autumn 1989 the citizens of East Germany brought about radical political change. The wall had fallen. An event rare in

its single mindedness within Germany's past. It was a legacy of shared history. What had belonged together through language, history and culture came finally together again. The heartlands of German history and German culture were again part of a single state. This cultural legacy, now returned to a unified Germany, is playing a part in the solution of the currently dominant problems of integration. The unity was described as a political miracle, which was received with joy. What would Germans feel except joy when the "Wall" tumbled peacefully.

What happened was a gentle revolution, a revolution which was carried out by people themselves without any imported theory.

Of course the path of the unity was not strewn with roses. It came about after years of division and since it became a fact it has cost a great deal of efforts and money. It was not an easy matter to bring East Germany anywhere near the standard of life or the economy and social conditions of West Germany.

Many sacrifices were needed and enormous efforts were spent to amend the dilapidated infrastructure of eastern cities. Maybe on the occasion of the 11th anniversary of the Unity it would not be amiss to examine the balance sheet of a unified Germany. Going through German publications, one can notice that they no longer talk about East or West Germany, but about Germany. According to statistics the number of people who gained employment in Germany rose by an annual average of 584,000 to a total of 38.53 million.

The economy grew more than any year since 1991. At an annual rate of 3.1% economic growth is almost double that of 1999. Germany remains the largest exporting nation after the USA. Goods worth a total of 541 billion dollars were exported in 1999.

In the year 2000, the country's financial and nonfinancial assets rose in value to 18 trillion Marks. Germany comes 8th in the World Bank's league table of gross per capital income, with 25,350 dollars per head.

With the new citizenship law, 200,000 foreigners were naturalized, with another 143,000 who received German citizenship in the meantime cities in former East Germany are receiving great attention.

Leipzig has again become a venue for an exhibition, a modern fair has been built, and Dresden is again a flourishing cultural center.

Going from the national to the regional we witness an important and leading role of Germany in the European Union. It has the largest number of seats in the European parliament with 99 compared to 72 for Britain and for France equally. Germany is playing an important role in the international arena and has a definite concept of globalization.

In the words of Gunter Pleuger, State Secretary, Federal Foreign Office, globalization presents new challenges as well as great opportunities.

Nonetheless he believes that the globalization process is uneven. The community of nations must, therefore, under take every effort to make globalization a positive development for all peoples. He believes that the United Nations should work to overcome the inequality between rich and poor and to achieve world peace and sustainable development. The first task is to fight poverty. For this Germany initiated a debt initiative, which combines debt relief measures with a strategy to combat poverty.

The International Debt Relief Initiative is helping 22 countries. It has a total of US \$ 42 billion, which will be increased to 70 billion dollars and Germany's contribution adds up to 10 billion Marks.

Besides, Germany plays an important role in the field of environment. Apart from its efforts in the former East,

Germany is playing a leading role in counteracting desertification Projects with a total value of 2.8 billion Marks are currently carried out in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Germany has now assumed its role as a main player of a leading economic and financial impact, not only within the EU, but also globally.

In fact within this framework, Germany has been able to achieve yet another miracle, the rebuilding of the eastern part of Germany. Within the past 3 - 4 years it has become an ideal case study of development.

What West Germany achieved in forty years, unified Germany has emulated in this very short period of time.

It is estimated that the growth rate of the standard life in the Eastern part is almost higher than in the West. According to German reports, some 14,000 businesses and 16,000 properties have been sold to German and foreign buyers for a total of more than DM 40 billion, as well as about 30,000 hectares (74, 100 acres) of arable land and 1 million hectares (2,470,000 acres) were let at lease. A total of 1.5 million jobs and investments totaling a good DM 180 billion have been pledged contractually.

The beginning of 1994 also saw the securing of the biggest individual investment.

The building of a modern oil refinery worth DM 4.3 billion, which is the first such project in Europe as a whole for 20 years.

The new small to medium-sized entrepreneurs naturally had little own capital at first.

But in the context of the solidarity pact between the Federal Government and the leading economic and social forces, western German banks approved generous credits.

Up to the beginning of 1994, the State - Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (Reconstruction Loan Corporation) alone had made available a total of DM 30 billion in credits for about 60,000 investments of above all small to medium-sized enterprises.

The strong demand for labour in the eastern part of Germany is partly also caused by the fact that more than 400,000 eastern German commuters work in western German "border" areas.

A total of 50, 000 eastern German youth have also taken up apprenticeships in western Germany.

On the other hand, more than 100,000 people have moved from West to East.

But life is not just economics and politics. Culture is probably the most enduring element in a country's life. This is what the Federal Republic of Germany realized in the past, giving great importance to cultural relations. In fact external cultural relations were regarded as "the third pillar of foreign policy", earmarking for it in 1992, for instance, DM 1.2 billion, a figure which was higher than the USA, Britain and France have spent.

Recent statistics show that there are 17 million learning the German language all over the world, out of whom 11 millions live in central and eastern Europe. There is what one might call (German Euphoria) in this part of Europe.

I would add, not only in central and eastern Europe but also in the Third World, including, of course, Egypt.

Counteractions between Germany and Egypt have been going on for many years. The four leading political German foundations have been functioning in Egypt in social, economical, educational and technical fields. The most recent field is the use of solar energy, with over 100 projects for raising underground water in the Egyptian desert.

The water is used for irrigation purposes growing oranges, bananas and grapes.

Furthermore, a hotel complex has been built on the bank of the Red Sea and in Ilburghada, which is supplied with solar generated electricity.

The German enormous achievements in fields such as chemistry, physics, engineering, communication and medicine, were then made available as an undrainable resource at the disposal of peace and life as the new battle. One cannot but realize that Germany that was defeated in the war battle 50 years ago, has been a continuous peace battle winner since then. This would still be the most important part of the German balance sheet after 11 years of reunification.

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