

# THE GERMAN UNITY IN DIVERSITY

"SEVEN YEARS OF RE-UNIFICATION"

By

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German Chancellors are associated with the certain policies which they drew up and implemented during their tenure. Erhard was associated with "Socialist Market Economic", Adenauer with "Integration to European Atlantic Community", Brandt with "Ostpolitik", Kohl will be remembered for "German Reunification".

In November 1989, the Berlin wall was dismantled in full view of millions who watched the spectacle on television. The world was awed and moved. On October 3rd, 1990 reunification occurred with broad consent of Germans in both East and West.

What people do not realise is the fact that the reunification was always the goal of the Federal Republic of Germany. The basic law (the constitution) declared that the West Germans built a free democracy and an open society "also on behalf of those Germans who were prevented from participation".

How did the reunification come about? Unity could not have come had the East Germans not wanted it. In the first phase of the November revolution of 1989 in German Democratic Republic, no one spoke of reunification. Civil rights leaders in East Germany demanded radical democratisation. Only after the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989 did the citizens of East Germany chant "Germany united fatherland" and "We are one people".

Since the beginning of 1990, there was no longer any doubt that, due to the decline of the East German economy, there was no hope of stabilisation of the GDR as an autonomous state. Only the prompt unification with the Federal Republic would save the country. Consequently national unity was achieved by means of an agreement under article 23 of the Basic Law.

When the euphoria of unification died away, problems began to appear. Only after national consolidation did many Germans realise the extent to which the two Germanys had grown apart during forty years of separation. Some West Germans felt that East Germans were taking them back to the world of the 1950's. The West Germans became in many ways European and Cosmopolitan, while the East citizens remained Germans in the strident sense.

At the same time the East Germans felt that the rest Germans were overpowering superior unsympathetic and even presumptuous.

One of the first problems was that came to be called the inherited loss of four decades of the GDR. East German business was collapsing, buildings were decaying, ravages of environment and moral destruction.

Rifts in the German social fabric became visible. This led chancellor Kohl to produce the Solidarity Pact in March 1993, a joint agreement between the Federal and State Authorities. That pact was important in safeguarding the unity.

If we examine the reunification process we find that it was realised through the accession of the new "Länder" to the Federal Republic. This meant that the constitutional political, legal and economic system of the West were instantly adopted by the East. That was natural since two thirds of the country's population lived in the West and the much greater part of the country's national product was created there. Besides the West enjoyed a free democracy and open society as opposed to a centralised, authoritarian system.

That was in contrast with the East, as well as qualifications and performance standards. A skilled middle class did not exist in the East and free enterprise, the pillar of West's economy, was not known. As a result, East Germans could not compete with their West colleagues. As a rule, the more political was a person's post before re-unification, the lower would be his or her suitability for a similar employment in the unified Germany. This was apt to produce dissatisfaction.

After reunification, the workers who lost their jobs bore the main burden of the radical social changes. Dismissals and closing of businesses were due to a lack of profitability and the serious loss of East European markets. There seems to be worry by the East Germans about the problems, while the West Germans fear the high cost of unity. A public opinion poll taken in April 1993, asked people to answer the question "Do you believe that West German and East German feel solidarity with one another, that they feel together like Germans or rather like West or East with opposing interests?"

Only 22% of West Germans and 11% of East Germans answered that they felt together like Germans.

There is now a general feeling for the need for psychological unification. There is no doubt that the joy of reunification overshadowed the problems. People remember the words of Kohl, the architect of re-unification, in autumn 1990 that within a few years the new "Länder" would become flourishing landscapes. He did not, however, say that the path to unity would be expensive, arduous and long.

To sum up Germany today confronts two challenges: First it has to speed up the inner psychological unification which means working on the re-building of the German nation; second the Europeanisation and Westernising the legacy of Kohl, must continue. The first task, according to a German writer, demands material and moral effort from the West Germans. The second task will demand more of the East Germans. The gap between East Germans and West Germans must be closed. Kohl believes that building up the East comes before expansion in the West. Kohl, as head of the Government has achieved unity. He inspires a basic trust, which has been repeatedly reflected in election results. It is this trust that will allow the people to bear the price of unity and to look for a promising future.