Hitler’s Germany was defeated more than two decades ago, but the problem of Germany has not yet ceased to worry the world. Whether a dynamic, robust force, as she was before 1914, or a menace to mankind, as she was under Hitler; whether a decaying corpse, as in the immediate postwar world, or a nation divided, as at present, Germany continues to be an international problem. There is no dissent between East and West that Germany poses a problem; only the source of the problem is moot.

In November, 1965, a public discussion was held in Hamburg with the participation of a French professor, a correspondent of Pravda, and a Czech historian; the panelists were called to answer the question: “Is your country afraid of the Federal Republic of Germany?” The discussion revealed that all three participants were worried about the “German unrest.” Only the reasons for their worry differed. The Soviet and Czech panelists were concerned because West Germany refuses to recognize the “realities” of the postwar situation; the French professor considered the situation poisoned because the Soviet side refuses to show understanding toward the German view which must find it hard to accept the “realities of 1945.”1 No German, representing his country’s public opinion, took part in the discussion; had one participated, his thesis would have been that the Germans, too, were worried, because for them the division of their land is both unnatural and intolerable.

With regard to Germany’s unsolved problem, two inconsistent assumptions oppose each other in world politics: (1) the existing division of Germany is the main source of tension between West

1 See Die Welt, November 22, 1965.
and East in Europe; and (2) the German desire to reunite their country is the principal cause of this tension. If the first assumption is correct and Germany's division is a potential danger to peace, the unification of Germany should be promoted by all means, short of war; in that case, even the Soviets must consider the merger, with all possible safeguards, of East and West Germany to be in their ultimate interest. If the second assumption should prove correct, general interest would demand the rejection of the German quest for unification. This reasoning is based on yet another assumption; namely, that the maintenance of world peace is a postulate which precedes in importance the political aspirations of all peoples, including the Germans themselves.

That the division of Germany into a Federal Republic and a German Democratic Republic may "objectively" be a danger to peace is supported by historical experience; no great and self-conscious nation can be expected to tolerate for long its own involuntary partition. If the Germans were told that their reunification policy, however justified, endangers peace, they could reply that opposition to their desire to unite is the source of the conflict. In such a way, one subjective contention opposes the other.

The problem of the existing "realities" invoked by both sides, realities which are called upon to prove or disprove the right to German unity, is ultimately a problem of values, for these realities are but symbols of the deeper division which cuts the problem. The most outward manifestations of this division are the sets of invoked realities which are intended to oppose one another in the discussion of the problem. Thus, the reality of Germany's single nationhood, now divided, opposes the reality of the East German political entity; the reality of the German desire for reunification can be opposed only by that of a border studded with minefields, barbed wire, and the repugnant vision of the Berlin Wall; the reality of a popularly elected West German government must be weighed against that of the East German regime protected by twenty Soviet divisions.

Whatever value we would accord to those many "realities," the attitude of the Germans should not be omitted from this evaluation. There appears to be a tendency, not for the first time in recent history, to ignore German views and motivations. Failure to assess the reactions and intentions of German leaders and of various segments of the German people has in the past proved to be a tragic mistake which has brought disaster to the entire world.
The awareness that Germany—because of her geographical location, the number and quality of her people, and her economic-military strength or potential—is an indispensable element of political equilibrium in Europe has twice, after two world wars, belatedly been recognized. Stability within her nevralgic area is also a requirement for the stability and security of Europe.

Just as the Germans, alone, are incapable of solving their present problem, so the German problem cannot be solved without or in opposition to the Germans: Herbert Wehner, the German Social Democratic leader, was right in saying that when German unity is to be achieved depends on other powers, whether it will be achieved depends on the Germans themselves.\(^2\)

That the German question demands to be settled is also strongly supported by the argument that every broader European problem is inevitably intertwined with the solution of the German issue. Since the end of the last war, East-West negotiations have moved in a vicious circle: without the solution of the German question, none of the wider European issues could be settled or even brought nearer to settlement; on the other hand, it has been cogently demonstrated that the German problem may be solved satisfactorily only within the frame of a larger European settlement.

There are a host of questions closely linked with the German problem. They include: the future of NATO and of the Warsaw Treaty Organization; the status of East European countries, especially that of Poland and of Czechoslovakia; questions of arms control and disarmament; disengagement in Europe (withdrawal of foreign troops); prevention of nuclear proliferation; European economic and political co-operation; and Atlantic partnership. Without West German participation, any agreement of this type would remain nugatory. On the other hand, no such participation can be expected in arrangements which would solidify the present division of Germany. In fact, the Federal Republic, for lack of other inducements at its disposal, is eager to collect trump cards to be used for the promotion of German unity.

Amputation of a nation always raises both international and internal issues. Division of what used to be united is viewed by the leaders and the people of the truncated nation as an internal question. In West Germany, refugees from East Germany and the former German Eastern Territories significantly contributed to the

\(^2\)Speech of June 19, 1966, before the West Prussian refugee organization as reported by the SPD Auslandsbrief, dated June 24, 1966.
forming of public opinion and, with their votes, to electoral results. In this and many other ways, the quest for German unity has directly affected the domestic political process, elicited disputes as to priorities, determined the scale of political values, and influenced the position of political parties. The juridical-constitutional aspects of Germany’s status gave rise to doctrinal opinions which guided political decision-making. Without the comprehension of the generally accepted doctrinal standpoint on reunification, the West German Deutschlandpolitik cannot properly be appreciated.

The present situation of Germany is also the result of a complex historical process; contemporary phenomena can be understood only within the context of this development. The first chapter is accordingly devoted to a discussion of the evolution of the German problem. The other six chapters, essentially functional in character, discuss the impact of the reunification issue on West German politics, the reactions of the people of West Germany, the East German state’s response to the question of German unity, Berlin as a capsule replica of the German issue, and the reunification question in international politics; and the last chapter adds some concluding observations.

The ramifications of the German problem and its intricate nature make its comprehensive presentation within the limits of a manageable volume a matter of painful selection and difficult apportionment. A review of the topic from its many angles as well as the necessity of organization lead unavoidably to arbitrary arrangements in the placing of individual issues and also to some inevitable duplication. To avoid a surfeit of material, the discussion of concrete cases in the grand debate on reunification had to be reduced, and the cases treated had to be sifted according to their precedent value. I wished to refrain from the temptation to offer detailed plans or blueprints for the solution of the German problem. I preferred, rather, to limit myself to an objective presentation and analysis of events, views, trends, and forces, and to venture only a few suggestions on basic issues and principles.

By caprice of chance, I have been fortunate enough to have had direct insights into the German scene at various turning points in Germany’s recent history. As a boy, I happened to be in Berlin during the first days of August, 1914; I traveled widely in Germany as a student in 1921 at the time of the occupation of the Ruhr and the catastrophic inflation; before World War II, including the weeks of Hitler’s advance to power, I was a frequent visitor to the
Reich. By another happenstance, I stayed in Berlin at the beginning of the blockade and the airlift in 1948. Eight years later I saw West Germany, phoenix-like, risen from her ashes.

However, the present study originated from the research conducted under a grant awarded to me by the Rockefeller Foundation. Under this grant, I spent several months in Germany in 1963, returning there again in 1965. During my sojourns, I greatly profited from interviews and discussions with members of the Bundestag from all the three parties, officials of the German Foreign Office, economic leaders, leading intellectuals, and many others. I am very grateful to all of them for having given me so liberally their valuable time.

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