

Ans:

National Symbols, Fractured  
Identities. Ed. by Michael  
Geisler. Middlebury, VT:  
Middlebury College Press, 2005.

## In the Shadow of Exceptionalism



### *Germany's National Symbols and Public Memory after 1989*

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**A**MID RECENT controversies over the continued validity of the well-worn historical metaphor of the German *Sonderweg*, little attention has been paid to the effect this debate has had on the Germans themselves. Briefly put, the *Sonderweg* debate (usually translated into English as "Exceptionalism,") started out with the argument made by social scientists and historians such as Ernst Fraenkel, George Mosse, Fritz Stern, Karl-Dietrich Bracher, Helmut Plessner, and others<sup>1</sup> that the Nazis' rise to power was best explained by certain "peculiarities" in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century history: the failed revolution of 1848, the demise of German liberalism, and Bismarck's "unification from above" in 1870/71, which promoted Prussian militarism, bureaucracy, and feudal social structure at the expense of the political and cultural enfranchisement of the bourgeoisie. Working together, these and other constraints of German history caused the young nation-state to pursue a "Special Path" (*Sonderweg*) instead of following the examples of the liberal democracies in England, France, and the United States. This rendered the already weakened Weimar Republic unable to resist the rise of fascism.

I do not propose to engage in the discussion of the many facets that have crystallized around this debate, since in this article I am not concerned with arguments for or against<sup>2</sup> German Exceptionalism but with its effective history, in other words with the way its reception in Germany itself has affected Germany's attempt, after 1945, and more specifically between the late 1960s and the reunification period in 1989/90, to rebuild a communal sphere of public memory and collective identity. Specifically, I will show that the fallout of the Exceptionalism theory led to a deep divide in German collective identity, centering on different readings of the past 150 years of German history,

the role of the Holocaust, and the need for, and definition of, a new foundational narrative for a democratic Germany.

In Anthony D. Smith's definition, a nation is "A named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all its members."<sup>3</sup> The problem, for post-World War II Germany, lies in the reference to "common myths and historical memories." In the German case there exists a tension between the semantic fields of "sharing" and "common." Depending on which definition of nationalism one subscribes to,<sup>4</sup> Germans certainly "share" between 200 and 2,000 years' worth of memories. Yet Smith's definition seems to rest on an underlying assumption that these "common myths and memories" are a heritage that is not only shared but also received and accepted, or in postmodernist terms read, "in approximately similar ways by the entire nation, or at least the overwhelming majority."

Debatable as this proposition may be with regard to some other nations, it is the defining problem of post-World War II German identity formation. For how one interprets the trajectory of German history between 1848 and 1945, that is between Germany's initially successful yet ultimately failed liberal revolution and the end of World War II, determines how one reads the national narrative of post-1945 German history, both East and West. Not coincidentally, three of the major national symbols of contemporary Germany (the flag, the anthem, and the capital) can all be dated back to that time period. As we will see, however, Germany's national symbols, while arguably functional at performing the state-related functions of their portfolio (representing and identifying the state both externally and internally, referencing a national homeland, and signifying an existing power structure), have by and large failed to accomplish their ideological tasks of sustaining the collective identity of the nation, bookending public memory, and integrating diverse subgroups. With the exception of the flag, they have failed because large segments of the population (mostly, but not exclusively, situated on the German Left<sup>5</sup>) felt, and continue to feel, alienated and excluded by the very symbols intended to include them.<sup>6</sup> In the late 1960s, this cleavage between Left and Right turned into an open contest for control of the national narrative when the rebelling students of 1967/68 forced a public debate on fascism and the Holocaust onto the agenda of a reluctant mainstream population. As Andrei Markovits and Philip Gorski put it:

Cross national surveys convey clearly that the generational cleavages in the Federal Republic are more pronounced than in other comparable liberal democracies. The gap is particularly clear between the sixty-eight generation and its parents. The parents formed the backbone of what has become known as the "silent generation," that is the last generation to have participated fully in the German war effort as young adults. [...] The sixty-eighters were the first to confront their parents massively both in private and in public. Indeed, the public aspect of the student revolt in the Federal Republic has to be contextualized first and foremost as a critique of the complacency and accommodation of the Bonn republic's institutions and political culture vis-à-vis the Nazi regime.<sup>7</sup>

In this volatile atmosphere, a popularized version of the Exceptionalism theory became the theoretical crowbar with which the German Left pried open the German national narrative. Popularized by such widely read books as Helmut Plessner's *Die verspätete Nation* (*The Belated Nation*), published in Germany in 1959,<sup>8</sup> the debate had trickled down into the German public (and media) throughout the 1960s. In the debates of the student rebellion, the *Sonderweg* theory became commingled with Theodor W. Adorno's work on the "authoritarian personality"<sup>9</sup> and, a little later, the even more successful *Wohin treibt die Bundesrepublik?* (*Whither, Federal Republic?*),<sup>10</sup> Karl Jaspers's philippic against what he perceived as dangerous continuities of German history still virulent beneath the surface of the Bonn democracy. In the tumultuous public controversies surrounding Germany's rearmament, the controversial passing of the emergency decrees, the Auschwitz trials (starting in 1965), and, finally, the student rebellion itself, this cocktail of popular grand narratives became something like the foundational narrative of the German Left.

The question of whether Germans could claim a common "usable past," as Charles Maier puts it,<sup>11</sup> came to a head in 1984, when, in the context of the German Historians' Debate, the conservative historian Michael Stürmer argued for a historical narrative that would provide Germans with a genuine sense of identity. Stürmer's (actually rather vague) call for a new national narrative provoked a harsh response by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who wrote at the time that it was a good thing that "national symbols had lost their formative influence," that the "naïve identification with one's origin" had "given way to a rather more tentative way of dealing with history" and that German youth had a stronger sense of the discontinuities of

erman history than of its continuities. According to Habermas, this could instill in German youths the only appropriate sense of community, a "postconventional identity" fueled negatively by Auschwitz and the acceptance of German responsibility for the Holocaust, and positively by what Habermas termed "constitutional patriotism," a sense of identification with the liberal principles on which the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany had been founded.<sup>12</sup>

As a result of these debates over what constitutes the nation's collective identity and historical legacy, we now have two competing readings of recent German history existing side by side, both supported by large segments of the population. The Right seeks to address this problem by attempting to reconstruct a traditional national narrative. This narrative casts today's Germany as the fulfillment of a democratic teleology that started with the Wars of Liberation, achieved its first temporary success in 1848/49, continued with the Weimar Republic, and—after a tragic deviation between 1933 and 1945—came into its own with the democratic foundation of the Federal Republic, which in turn eventually triumphed over its communist double and reached its fairy-tale ending in German unification. In this interpretation, Germany's past 150 years were really not that much different from those of other nations, a view that conservatives tend to reinforce by clinging to what they see as Germany's "traditional" national symbols. While the Third Reich and the Holocaust are by no means absent from the historical radar screens of most of the Right (neo-Nazi fringe groups not included here), their importance as central traumata of recent German history tends to be attenuated in the actual enunciation of the national narrative. One could also say that, the narrative as told by German conservatives, German Exceptionalism has shrunk to the time period between 1933 and 1945.

The counternarrative of the Left, on the other hand, in the respectable desire not to elide the chapter on the Third Reich and the Holocaust, has constructed a similarly abridged story emphasizing Germany's authoritarian traditions, Prussian militarism, and the systemic failure of German liberalism. This story dismisses the period dating up to 1848/49 as a failed foundation and insists on Germany's attempts to come to terms with the trauma of German responsibility for the Holocaust as the only plausible foundation for a new, democratic Germany. As leftists began to move into positions of power, especially in the educational bureaucracy, they implemented far-reaching changes in what German schoolchildren learned about their national heritage and identity. Where, before the late 1960s, the

Holocaust had been noticeably absent from German curricula (and most textbooks), it now took center stage, often explicitly presented as the result of German Exceptionalism.<sup>13</sup> In terms of collective identity, Habermas's "constitutional patriotism," in itself a product of the Exceptionalism argument, is presented as the new foundational narrative. Ian Buruma has remarked that, as a result of this "social science approach to history [. . .] German schoolchildren are no longer asked to identify with flags, songs, heroes, or a carefully constructed sense of historical continuity, but with an idea, the liberal democratic order."<sup>14</sup> Yet as Charles Maier notes with regard to Habermas's concept of "postconventional identity": "the nature of national identity he suggested seemed insufficiently compelling even to many of his friends. It was unconvincing as a psychological description of what was involved and unable to guarantee minimal loyalties."<sup>15</sup>

Since national symbols can generally emblemize only one interpretation of a nation's foundation myths, it was inevitable that these two radically different readings of recent German history would clash. A discussion of the historic and cultural connotations attached to Germany's current official national symbols, as well as to some major alternatives and oppositional symbols, will reveal not only the depths of the cleavage that exists between these alternate constructions of history but also the difficulty in reconciling the two.

For most of the twentieth century, not a single one of Germany's national symbols—neither the national anthem nor the national holiday, the national monument(s),<sup>16</sup> or the flag—functioned successfully as a stable emblem of German national and cultural identity, although the flag has come relatively close. To complicate matters even further, a number of less conventional articulations of the national narrative, which at certain times also acquired some of the cachet of national symbols—such as the currency (the Deutsche Mark) or the choice of the capital—have vied for popularity with the traditional symbols. Even the very name of the country has changed several times over the past century,<sup>17</sup> and its current incarnation, Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Federal Republic of Germany), though confidently hailed as "the end of all political vocabulary problems relating to Germany,"<sup>18</sup> was by no means uncontested during the reunification period.<sup>19</sup> Of these symbols, only the black-red-and-gold<sup>20</sup> of the flag has remained a relatively stable signifier—at least since the end of the Third Reich.<sup>21</sup>

In this essay, I will trace the clamorous and often acrimonious public debates surrounding two central German national symbols: the

national anthem and the national holiday. Since the history of both has already been covered elsewhere,<sup>22</sup> I will focus on the most recent contestations, which occurred immediately before, during, and after the East German revolution of 1989 and the German reunification of 1990. As a result of decisions made at that time, some in public and some behind closed doors, united Germany is left with a flag that enjoys broad-based popular support and acceptance at home as well as abroad, an anthem that continues to alienate large segments of the population as well as provoke old stereotypes abroad, and a national holiday that nobody seems to know what to do with.

### 'A New Song, A Better Song?'—The National Anthem

#### 1. The "Deutschlandlied"

Text: August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben

Music: Joseph Haydn

Deutschland, Deutschland über

Alles,

Über Alles in der Welt,

Wenn es stets zu Schutz und Trutze

Brüderlich zusammenhält,

Von der Maas bis an die Memel,

Von der Etsch bis an den Belt—

Deutschland, Deutschland über

Alles,

Über Alles in der Welt!

Deutsche Frauen, deutsche Treue,

Deutscher Wein und deutscher

Sang

solllen in der Welt behalten

ihren alten schönen Klang,

Uns zu edler Tat begeistern

Unser ganzes Leben lang—

Deutsche Frauen, deutsche Treue,

Deutscher Wein und deutscher

Sang!

Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit

für das deutsche Vaterland!

Germany, Germany, above all

Above everything in the world

If, always, for protection and

defense,

Brothers stand together

From the Maas\* to the Memel\*

From the Etsch\* to the Belt

Germany, Germany, above all

Above all in the world!

German women, German loyalty,

German wine and German song,

Shall retain, throughout the

world,

Their old respected fame,

To inspire us to noble deeds

For the length of our lives.

German women, German loyalty,

German wine and German song.

Unity and justice and freedom

For the German Fatherland

Danach laßt uns alle streben

Brüderlich mit Herz und Hand!

Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit

Sind des Glückes Unterpfland—

Blüh im Glanze dieses Glückes,

Blühe deutsches Vaterland

For this let us strive

Brotherly, with heart and hand.

Unity and justice and freedom

Are the pledge of fortune.

Flower in the splendor of this

happiness,

Flower, German Fatherland.<sup>23</sup>

\* Maas: (Meuse). Memel: (Nemen). Etsch: (Adige).

The tragicomic meanderings through German history of the hymn composed by the nineteenth-century professor of German literature and political liberal August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben have been well documented up to 1989 in books and articles by Hermand, Kurzke, Knopp and Kuhn, and others.<sup>24</sup> Since my primary focus here is the time around 1989 and after, I will only briefly rehearse the hymn's past.

From the very beginning, Hoffmann had an existing hymn by the Austrian composer Joseph Haydn in mind as the perfect musical complement for his text.<sup>25</sup> In 1797, as Napoleon's revolutionary troops were advancing on Vienna, Haydn had been commissioned by his aristocratic patron to compose a kind of Austrian "anthymn" to counter the galvanizing effect of "La Marseillaise." The resultant composition was a royal hymn titled "Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser" (God Preserve Franz, Our Emperor), purposely and contrastively cast in the mold of an Austrian folk song rather than a stirring march, like the French anthem. It was probably its folk character that attracted Hoffmann (who was himself a collector and writer of folk songs) to Haydn's composition. The music is slow, ceremonial, and strangely uplifting,<sup>26</sup> a testimony to the affinity of most royal hymns to sacred music.<sup>27</sup> In fact, Haydn's music is probably one of the major reasons for the continued popularity of the "Deutschlandlied" among many Germans, even as Hoffmann's text itself has become more and more problematic.

Defenders of the hymn have argued for a century and a half that the seemingly jingoistic first stanza, "Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles / Über Alles in der Welt," meant no particular offense but was intended as a reminder to Germans that the struggle for national unity (not expansionism) ought to be their loftiest goal. At the time this may have sounded less chauvinistic than it does today, for in 1841 (the year in which the "Deutschlandlied" was written) Germany was not a state but at best a nation<sup>28</sup> with a blurry claim to a territorial homeland based on linguistic and cultural affinities. The geopolitical reality was a so-called

federation (the Deutscher Bund), which consisted of thirty-five independent political entities and four free cities, a structure imposed by the Congress of Vienna in 1815 with the single purpose of reestablishing the sovereign power of thirty-five major or lesser monarchs, dukes, and princes who had everything to lose by national unification and nothing to gain. Against this backdrop, Hoffmann's exhortation to put the struggle for Germany (i.e. unification) topmost on the agenda—and this is precisely what "Deutschland über Alles" meant—was a slightly unrealistic but certainly not an unreasonable proposition. Depending on how one defines the borders of the "Deutscher Bund" in the mid-nineteenth century, a geographic case could actually be made for seeing the waterways identified in the song as the best-case scenario for a generally defined union of German-speaking states.<sup>29</sup>

However, after the failure of the revolution of 1848, the song, optimistically named "Das Lied der Deutschen" by Hoffmann, was quickly forgotten. The Prussian monarchy, having unified Germany from above in 1871, was thoroughly uninterested in this suspiciously democratic hymn. They preferred the royal anthem "Heil Dir im Siegerkranz" (Glory to You Wearing the Victor's Wreath) or the blatantly militaristic and Francophobic war song "Die Wacht am Rhein" (Watch on the Rhine).<sup>30</sup> Hoffmann's "Lied der Deutschen" meanwhile was moldering away in the basement of a Hamburg publishing house.

It was the first president of the Weimar Republic, Friedrich Ebert, who declared the song the official German national anthem. The fact that he was a Social Democrat has often been adduced by conservatives in defending the song against attacks from the left. However, one needs to bear in mind that Ebert's proclamation must be understood within the context of a bitter public controversy (which often degenerated into street fights) about another national symbol: the flag. Supported by the moderate conservatives of the Zentrum party, the Social Democrats had united behind the republican black-red-and-gold, whereas the extreme Right wanted to retain the imperial colors of black-white-and-red. The Social Democrats prevailed with regard to the colors, but Ebert likely saw his act of elevating the "Deutschlandlied" to the status of a national anthem as a conciliatory gesture to the Right, especially since his proclamation (there was no vote on the hymn in the German parliament, the Reichstag) met with little enthusiasm among the members of his own party.<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, even then Ebert tried to shift the emphasis of the song away from its controversial first stanza and onto the more innocuous third by alluding to "the song of unity, and justice, and freedom" (Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit).

The Nazis appropriated the song as one of the very rare elements of the republican legacy that they admired, although when they sang it they meant what until then had arguably been a misinterpretation of the song: Germany above all nations, "Über Alles in der Welt." Nevertheless, to put their own stamp of approval on it, they routinely combined the "Deutschlandlied"<sup>32</sup> with the "Horst Wessel-Lied," the Nazi fighting hymn.

By 1945, the anthem appeared to have become enough of an embarrassment to be disposed of in the trash bin of historiographical narrative. The GDR (German Democratic Republic, East Germany) replaced it with Johannes R. Becher and Hanns Eisler's "Auferstanden aus Ruinen," while in the Federal Republic the first attempt by members of the rightist fringe to salvage the song as the official anthem of the West German remainder nation was soundly defeated in parliament. Nevertheless, through a series of political maneuvers sometimes bordering on the absurd,<sup>33</sup> Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic, forced the reluctant president, Theodor Heuss, to officially reinstate the hymn on May 6, 1952,<sup>34</sup> recommending that only the third verse be sung on official occasions. In practice, Heuss's recommendation became the rule—the first verse with its controversial historical connotations was replaced by the far more acceptable "Unity and justice and freedom."

Still, the decision to retain the "Deutschlandlied" in any form met with extremely negative reactions from the foreign press, who saw in the act the beginning of yet another restoration of German militarism and expansionism. It did not help that less sensitive souls than Theodor Heuss—notably the German world champion soccer team of 1954—had no inhibitions about bawling the stigmatized first verse. And it also did not help that, while the third verse actually is a relatively harmless and peaceful text (especially when compared with the saber-rattling "Marseillaise"),<sup>35</sup> one needs to hear and understand the text in order to appreciate the difference between the third verse and the first. However, national anthems are played a lot more than they are sung, and for those who listen to the tune, especially foreign observers unfamiliar with the subtler details of recent West German national storytelling, the tune sounds wickedly like the familiar "Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles."

The question is whether this slippage is accidental. For there has been no dearth of attempts by German conservatives to resurrect the outlawed first stanza. In 1978 the popular German folksinger Heino made a recording of all three stanzas, which Baden-Württemberg's

minister president, Hans Georg Filbinger, wanted to distribute to all schools in the state. In 1985 and 1986 the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) initiated two more attempts at inculcating knowledge of all three verses among Baden-Württemberg's high school students. This led to a major political debate, which culminated in the controversial statement by the state's *Kultusminister* (secretary of culture), Gerhard Mayer-Vorfelder, that all German pupils were to develop a "natural relationship" to the entire "Deutschlandlied" including the first verse.<sup>36</sup> In the spring of 1989, just a few months before the Berlin Wall came down, the *Kultusminister* of the state of Hesse, the Christian Democrat Christean Wagner, reignited the debate when he issued a decree that all of Hesse's high school students henceforth were to study—and memorize—not merely the (relatively innocuous) third verse but all three stanzas.<sup>37</sup> Although Wagner, because of mounting public criticism, later modified his controversial decree,<sup>38</sup> now saying that students had to memorize only the third verse, while still insisting that all three needed to be "studied," the attempt nevertheless prompted the Hessian branch of the powerful (and left-leaning) German Teachers' Union (GEW) to publish a polemical broadside against the anthem. Without any pretense at historical objectivity, its author, Benjamin Ortmeyer, launched an all-out attack against the historicized readings that legitimized the problematic first verse, the legend that it was only the song's "abuse" at the hands of the Nazis that made it controversial, and the popular depiction of the song's author as an upstanding liberal and republican. He supported his polemic by citing verses by Hoffmann that made him appear to be an anti-Semite, a xenophobe, and a romantic supporter of unification at any cost—including the price of Prussian hegemony.<sup>39</sup> Ortmeyer also underscored the misogyny of the text, articulated not only in exclusionary phrases such as "fatherland" and "brotherly" (which could fairly be attributed to Hoffmann's mid-nineteenth-century sensibility) but also, more problematically, in the second verse, which explicitly objectifies women by lumping them in with other national possessions or attributes (of German men, presumably) worth going to battle over.<sup>40</sup>

It appears that, if there was ever a time when auspices for consigning Hoffmann's text to the dustbin of history were relatively favorable, it was in these years, the end of the 1980s. In 1987 a lawyer and a legal scholar published an article in one of West Germany's leading legal journals in which they claimed that the "Deutschlandlied" could not be Germany's official anthem since it did not have constitutional status, in contrast to the flag, which is

explicitly mentioned in Article 22 of the *Grundgesetz* (the German constitution). A mere presidential decree, they argued, did not suffice to make it the official anthem. "No hymn without a law!"—the two legal minds went so far as to suggest that, for lack of a constitutional foundation, West Germany did not even *have* a national anthem.<sup>41</sup> However, Article 90, Section 1, No. 2 of the German *Strafgesetzbuch* (penal code) threatens anybody who disparages the national anthem with up to three years imprisonment. Successive conservative administrations argued for the legitimacy of the decree, and in March of 1990 the Bundesverfassungsgericht (German Supreme Court) ruled that the third verse, but *only* the third verse, was indeed protected against abuse under the law, leaving aside the constitutional status of the hymn itself.<sup>42</sup> At the same time the Bundesverfassungsgericht made it clear that satirical parodies and other forms of artistic expression were protected by the constitution against prosecution under Article 90, Section 1, No. 2 of the *Strafgesetzbuch*.

According to various polls, the enthusiasm of West Germans for their national anthem appears to have been at a low ebb in the late 1970s and 1980s. Whereas in 1951, as the debate about the reintroduction of the national anthem was raging, 73 percent said they supported the adoption of the "Deutschlandlied" and only 9 percent were against it (18 percent undecided),<sup>43</sup> a 1976 poll yielded a different picture: when asked whether the national anthem should be played on German radio stations at the end of the day, a small majority (32 percent) actually opposed the idea; only 31 percent of those polled liked it, and, interestingly, 37 percent said they had no opinion. Significantly, those in the 16-29 age bracket came out most strongly against the anthem (35 percent against vs. 29 percent in favor), whereas those 60 and over supported it most strongly (44 percent for vs. 25 percent against).<sup>44</sup> It seemed that the anthem had a generational cohort problem. And in August of 1988, a German newspaper quoted an IPOS poll according to which a majority either did not care one way or another about the anthem or felt "bothered" by it. Only a minority, 46.5 percent, said that they felt a sense of pride when it was being played.<sup>45</sup>

This, in very rough outlines, was the situation when unification occurred. The question that arose after November of 1989 was whether to keep using the historically fraught "Deutschlandlied" or take the opportunity to finally come up with a new musical definition of German identity. This decision was rendered all the more poignant by the fact that seventeen million East Germans had grown up with another hymn, this one written by Johannes R. Becher, a Bavarian

poet and communist revolutionary who later became the first secretary of culture of the GDR, with a musical score by Hanns Eisler:

2. The GDR Hymn: "Auferstanden aus Ruinen"

Auferstanden aus Ruinen	Risen from the ruins we
Und der Zukunft zugewandt,	Are turning to the future now,
Lass uns dir zum Guten dienen,	Let us better serve you then,
Deutschland einig Vaterland.	Germany, united fatherland
Alte Not gilt es zu zwingen,	Need and suffering must end
Und wir zwingen sie vereint,	And united we will end it
Denn es muss uns doch gelingen,	For we surely will prevail
Dass die Sonne schön wie nie	And a glorious sun will shine
Über Deutschland scheint,	Over Germany
Über Deutschland scheint.	Over Germany <sup>46</sup>

These Germans had been taught that the "Deutschlandlied" was the battle hymn of West German restoration and militarism. Becher's anthem, on the other hand, was tainted by its association with the hated authoritarian East German regime swept away in the 1989 revolution; moreover, as a legacy of the official East German cold war policy that two German nations existed and would continue to exist, the hymn, since the early 1970s, was permitted only to be played instrumentally, lest the line "Germany, united fatherland" put sedition notions in people's heads.

In an interesting yet ultimately not a surprising twist of history, that very line, "Germany, united fatherland," then became one of the major slogans of the November uprising.<sup>47</sup> Soon after the fall of the Wall, the new, short-lived East German government lifted the ban on singing the anthem, displaying the text on GDR television at the end of each broadcasting day—a symbolic recognition of the way in which the popular uprising of October and November 1989 had made the hymn its own. For a brief moment in history it seemed that here was a national anthem that had been retroactively appropriated by the people, so that the adoption of Becher's hymn as the national anthem of a reunited Germany might not only have been a fitting memorial to the courage of the October demonstrators; it would also have provided the new republic with an excuse to remove the embarrassing historical legacy represented by Hoffmann's text.

Yet for the politicians in Bonn, who had been denouncing the GDR regime for decades, the thought of making the hymn of that entity the

national anthem of the new Germany was insupportable. And even among East Germans, in the end, the associations of "Auferstanden aus Ruinen" with the authoritarian regime it represented seem to have outweighed the fleeting satisfaction of having reappropriated their anthem. There never was much popular support for adopting the song except for some turncoat communists.

There was, however, a considerable amount of enthusiasm for adopting another text, written by none other than Bertolt Brecht, as a kind of response to Hoffmann's "Deutschlandlied":

Bertolt Brecht: "Kinderhymne" (Children's Anthem)<sup>48</sup>

Anmut sparet nicht noch Mühe	Grace spare not and spare no
Leidenschaft nicht noch Verstand	labour
Daß ein gutes Deutschland blühe	Passion nor intelligence
Wie ein andres gutes Land	That a decent German nation
	Flourish as do other lands
Daß die Völker nicht erbleichen	That the people give up flinching
Wie vor einer Räuberin	At the crimes which we evoke
Sondern ihre Hände reichen	And hold out their hand in
Uns wie andern Völkern hin.	friendship
	As they do to other folk
Und nicht über und nicht unter	Neither over or yet under
Andern Völkern woll'n wir sein	Other peoples will we be
Von der See bis zu den Alpen	From the Oder to the Rhineland
Von der Oder bis zum Rhein	From the Alps to the North Sea
Und weil wir dies Land verbessern	And because we'll make it better
Lieben und beschürmen wir's	Let us guard and love our home
Und das Liebste mag's uns scheinen	Love it as our dearest country
So wie andern Völkern ihr's	As the others love their own.

No fewer than six of thirty-two German intellectuals, politicians, and business leaders polled by the German weekly *Die Zeit* in June of 1990 opted for Brecht's text (while the majority, including two international experts on German history, voted for keeping the third verse—and the third verse only—of the "Deutschlandlied").<sup>49</sup> The anthem was also supported by parts of the German press, precisely because it "corrected" the problematic historical heritage of Hoffmann's anthem. To be sure, "From from the Oder to the Rhineland /

from the Alps to the North Sea" was, and still is, an accurate, non-expansionist description of German territorial claims, since it outlines the current borders of united Germany. And the desire that Germany should rank "neither over nor yet under" other countries was a reasonable and moderate wish. Yet in their eagerness to express in symbolic terms Germany's acceptance of the historical responsibility for World War II and the Holocaust, the supporters of Brecht's "anti-hymn," mostly on the German Left, overlooked some key aspects of the poem, which made it great literature but disqualified it as a choice or a national anthem.

First, the aesthetic finesse of Brecht's poem lies in its intertextual response to Hoffmann's text. Beyond the "downsizing" of territorial claims already mentioned, this is articulated explicitly in the line "neither over nor yet under" and it is implicit in "like any other good country" and the conditional, relativizing "Love it as our dearest country / As the others love their own," which obviously corresponds to Hoffmann's "Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles." This means that Brecht's text cannot be appreciated for what it is without knowledge of the Hoffmann anthem. However, if the point of suggesting the Brecht anthem was to replace the Hoffmann text with Brecht's, then even though this implicit desire to erase the former with the help of the latter certainly bears eloquent testimony to the embarrassment the "Deutschlandlied" had become for many Germans, but it would not have accomplished the job. For instead of *overwriting* one with the other (which was what the supporters of Brecht's text presumably hoped for), it would have merely painted a thin wash over the old text, with the Hoffmann lyrics showing through like penitimento.

Secondly, without knowledge of its intertextual relations to Hoffmann's text, Brecht's hymn would have provided Germans with an embarrassment of a different kind. For better or for worse, national anthems function simultaneously as identifying and celebratory devices: To the outside, they are the auditory signature of a state, identifying it in its geographic and historic specificity over and against other states (which is precisely why the "Deutschlandlied" continues to be a problem for Germans). To the inside, they serve to shore up national identity and reinforce the sense of a common narrative (however mythical in its construction) and collective accomplishment. It is hard to imagine how either purpose could have been served by an anthem that, had it been chosen, would have forced the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the present generation to explain to themselves and others exactly why other peoples need not

"flinch" away from Germans "at the crimes which we invoke," or why the only way in which their anthem could celebrate their country was by stating, three times, in three different ways, that it is really neither better nor worse than any other country. That way lies indifference, not national identity. Whether or not one agrees with the Christian Democrats on the need to love one's country "above all" and to express this need by resorting to the problematic language of the "Deutschlandlied" it is easy to understand why mainstream Germans would not have wanted to saddle their children with a text that, as a national anthem, would merely have created a sense of awkwardness every time it was sung.

In 1998 the Green Party whip, Werner Schulz, made the interesting suggestion that, if elected (as they eventually were), a Social Democratic-Green coalition should pave the way toward adopting a new national anthem, arguing that "we can't go on having a national anthem whose first verse is sung by the radical Right and whose third verse is sung by conservatives."<sup>50</sup> Apart from the insensitivity displayed by the implicit conflation of German conservatives with the radical Right, Schulz probably did not aid his cause by suggesting Brecht's "Kinderhymne" as a replacement. Even though Chancellor Schröder has recently also publicly confessed to being an admirer of Brecht's anti-hymn,<sup>51</sup> there has so far not been any attempt by the now-governing SPD-Green coalition to find a new anthem.

The problem is that the Right, which considers the "Deutschlandlied" part of the German heritage, has turned a deaf ear both to the embarrassment the hymn represents on the international scene and the continued pain it causes the victims of those who suffered under Hitler. The Left, on the other hand, in its collective insistence on a tune that, however well intentioned by its author, would only represent an embarrassment of a different kind, continues to undermine its own efforts by advocating Brecht's and other alternatives that the majority of Germans, left or right, would not be comfortable with. It is hard to say whether a serious, consensus-oriented effort at finding a substitute for Hoffmann's problematic hymn would ever meet with success. However, except for a lonely and unsuccessful campaign waged by President Theodor Heuss in 1951 on behalf of a newly created anthem by a minor German poet of the time, no such effort has been undertaken to date.

In the summer of 1991, Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker, in an official exchange of letters that echoed the earlier one between Adenauer and Heuss, reaffirmed that



the third verse of the "Deutschlandlied" was to be the national anthem of unified Germany as well. In doing so, Kohl and Weizsäcker brushed aside continuing objections to the anthem by large segments of the German population. Just a few months earlier, in June of 1990, the Deutsche Bundestag had summarily dismissed a number of attempts to make the song more palatable by changing one of its language.<sup>52</sup> If we accept the historicist argument, made by the Petitionsausschuss (Commission on Petitions) of the Deutsche Bundestag in rejecting the suggestions for change submitted by a number of citizens' groups, that the text "mirrors various epochs of Germany's national history" and should therefore not be tampered with (certainly a courtesy extended by literary historians to these kinds of documents), then the logical corollary of that decision is that the first verse is as much a part of the song as the third, and even Kohl and Weizsäcker's more recent, stronger emphasis on making the third verse Germany's anthem will not succeed in preserving it: one while hiding the others in plain sight, as it were. Where the third verse is sung, the first (and the second, equally problematic) will probably be sung as well. This has already happened several times since Kohl and Weizsäcker's recommitment to the third verse. In 1977 Martin Hohmann (CDU), then mayor of a small town near Garmisch-Partenkirchen, had the complete "Deutschlandlied" distributed in celebration of the new German national holiday, October 3;<sup>53</sup> and in June 2000, Peter Oettinger, chairman of the CDU faction of the Baden-Württemberg state parliament, sang all three verses at a public function.<sup>54</sup> In all these cases, all major theories of nationalism point to a link between a particular *ethnie* and a territorial homeland (actual or desired) as a quintessential element of the nation, this contemporary plane of the "Deutschlandlied" as a signifier of the German nation remains all the more problematic. Therefore, when the first verse of the "Deutschlandlied" is sung today by a functionary of one of Germany's major political parties, and when this is reported in the press (as it usually is when a citizen of Poland, for instance, might be justifiably upset to find that, despite Chancellor Kohl's official acceptance of the Oder-Neisse border in 1990, Germans, in this "historical document," still claim to his or her hometown).

A distinction needs to be made here between the actual historicity of the text, and of Haydn's music, and the contextual framework within which both are presented. Certainly, Haydn's "Emperor's Art Song," a variation on the tune for "Gott erhalte Franz den Kaiser," a beautiful composition that is played in concert halls all over the

world; the same tune is also the musical basis for an Anglican church hymn, "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken," which presumably is sung by congregations in English-speaking countries without causing major infernal conflicts.<sup>55</sup> And even a presentation of the original hymn comprising all three verses of Hoffmann's "Deutschlandlied" would be entirely unproblematic as part of a program surrounding, for instance, an exhibition on the German *Vormärz* (the movement preceding the 1848 revolution). In such a context, the historical context of the song would likely prevent political or geographic misunderstandings. However, the same historic text, presented as the anthem of a democratic Germany presumably interested in putting as much distance between the current nation-state and its expansionist past as possible, takes on a radically different meaning. Again, intertextuality is the key, in this case the relationship between a historical text and the framework of contemporary politics within which it is presented and received.<sup>56</sup>

This point has certainly not been lost on generations of German politicians who were well aware of the conflict between the two planes of the anthem. Nevertheless a dominant faction, mostly, but not exclusively, on the conservative side, has always felt that the particular "invented tradition" (to use Eric Hobsbawm's apt term<sup>57</sup>) both emblemized and sustained by the "Deutschlandlied" favored the historical over the contemporary view and acted accordingly. While one should think that fifty years of privileging the third verse would suffice, this is obviously not the case—among many German conservatives the lure of "Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles" has proved resistant to all efforts to dispose of that problematic heritage.

Similarly, five decades of trying to redirect the attention of people in other countries away from the objectionable language of the first verse and onto the innocuous words of the third have not been very successful. This became drastically apparent in U.S. reports and editorials during the time of reunification in 1989/90. On the day the Berlin Wall came down, ABC's *World News Tonight* reporter Brit Hume solemnly interpreted for his viewers images of German Bundestag members singing "Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit": "In the West German Bundestag today, the West German parliament, the news was greeted in song, people all standing together, no matter from what party, and singing 'Deutschland über Alles. . . .'"<sup>58</sup> On November 20, *Time* Magazine harked back to the same occurrence in articulating American ambiguities about a possible German reunification by specifically juxtaposing the two verses:

There was something moving about the unusual and spontaneous singing of the national anthem—the third verse: “Unity and justice and freedom / For the German Fatherland . . .”—in the West German Bundestag when the announcement was made that the Wall was being opened. But it was also a bit chilling to those for whom the famous chords of the former *Deutschland über Alles* are not so inspiring and for whom the dream of a united German fatherland more closely resembles a nightmare.<sup>59</sup>

Numerous references to “Über Alles” in the titles of commentaries and editorials, warning—more or less ironically—against what is perceived as a continuing tradition of Germany’s supremacist aspirations, also attest to the undiminished fascination with Hoffmann’s hapless phrase.<sup>60</sup>

One might object that this could have been the final paroxysm of a superannuated anti-German stereotype, resurrected one last time by the imminent specter of German unification. Yet as recently as the year 2000, an *Agence France Press* survey of national anthems around the world referred to Germany as the “nation that has retained the tune of the highly controversial anthem ‘Deutschland über alles’ [sic]—even though, for obvious reasons, the lyrics are outlawed.”<sup>61</sup>

To be sure, a national anthem can not and should not be altered or replaced any time some element of it becomes nonsynchronous or even obsolete. On the other hand, there may come a time when the “disconnect” becomes too obvious, when the tension between the signifier (the text of the anthem) and the national claims, aspirations, values, and collective desires it is supposed to represent becomes too great.

### A Day to Remember

Ironically, the only period in which Germany, as a unified nation, has ever enjoyed a relatively untroubled and undisputed national holiday comparable, for instance, to the traditional July 4 celebrations in the United States was during the time of the Wilhelmine Empire, between 1871 and 1914. This was September 2, the day on which, in 1870, German forces, under Prussian leadership, handed a crushing defeat to the French army near the city of Sedan in Lorraine, leading to the capitulation of Emperor Napoleon III and, eventually, to German victory and the foundation of the German Empire in 1871. Even though not without controversy in its time,<sup>62</sup> the *Sedantag*, as it came to be known, enjoyed widespread popular support and was commemorated

each year with torchlight or lantern parades (also military parades, of course) as well as bonfires, patriotic speeches, and commemorative events in German schools.

However, the patriotic fervor surrounding the *Sedantag* ebbed even before the outbreak of World War I, and, after losing the war to the Allies, the idea of continuing the tradition of a national holiday based on the lost glory of the past empire and steeped in Francophobic sentiment (while probably not without a certain appeal to many Germans in the wake of the Treaty of Versailles) seemed no longer politically tenable.

Instead the ruling Social Democratic Party (SPD) in 1919 first proclaimed May 1 as both a national and an international holiday of the working classes, a newly established tradition that even the Nazis, after usurping power, did not dare dismantle. However, since May 1 was seen more as an international than a national celebration, and since most Germans to the right of the political center did not particularly agree with this choice, November 11, the day on which the German constitution was passed, was added as the national holiday in 1921. (It was, by the way, on the occasion of this new national holiday celebration that President Friedrich Ebert, in 1922, proclaimed Hoffmann’s “*Lied der Deutschen*” the official national anthem of the German state.) However, this day was rejected by the political Right and largely ignored by most other Germans.<sup>63</sup> The communists would have preferred November 9, 1918, the day on which the November Revolution of the German navy enabled the Social Democrats to proclaim a German republic, whereas the conservatives and monarchists had their eyes on January 18, the foundation date of the German Empire in 1871.

After 1933, Hitler, cognizant of the socialist legacy within the National Socialist Party, retained May 1 as “National Labor Day” and, in 1939, added as official days of commemoration March 16, *Helldenkentag* (Memorial Day), and November 9,<sup>64</sup> the day when, in 1923, his first attempt to usurp power by force (in Munich) had ended in bloody defeat. On this day, Germans were supposed to remember those who had “given their lives for the Nazi movement.”

For some time after 1945 most Germans did not feel a particularly urgent need for a day of national celebration. But in June of 1953, dramatic events in East Germany suddenly changed all that: When the East German (communist) government tried to enforce an across-the-board increase in daily productivity quotas by 10 percent, the workers went on strike. Starting with the construction workers on East

rlin's Stalinallee on June 16, the strike spread like wildfire and, on ne 17, turned into a mass uprising against the communist govern- ant. The rebels now demanded a repeal of the raised quotas—along th the resignation of the government, free elections, and the release all political prisoners. For a brief, shining moment it looked as if e rebels might actually succeed in establishing democracy in East rmany as well, since the East German government seemed to have mpletely lost control of the situation. But eventually the communist gime called in Russian tanks. More than a hundred East Germans re killed, and, in addition, at least 29 of the strikers were sentenced death by Soviet military tribunals and 20,000 were arrested, of nom more than 1,400 disappeared behind prison bars.

Meanwhile, the West German government, having watched help- isly from the sidelines as the uprising was quashed by force, with the estern Allies standing by, did the only thing it could do: in a sym- blic gesture, it proclaimed June 17 the "Day of German Unity" and e official national holiday<sup>65</sup> of West Germany.

When the Berlin wall came down in 1989, eventually paving the ay for the reunification of Germany in 1990, the question of which y to choose as a national holiday seemed, at first glance, to have ken care of itself. As the news was breaking on November 9, 1989, at the border was open, that the East German people had won their oodless revolution, and East Germans and West Germans were inking champagne and dancing together on the Berlin Wall, it emed that Germany had finally found a day of celebration on a par ith the American July 4 or the French Bastille Day, and that this day as to be November 9. Yet once again history caught up with the ermans. As it turned out, the East German revolutionaries had neg- cted to look at their historical calendar. For it was on the night from ovement 9 to November 10, in 1938, that Nazi storm troopers arted to systematically burn, trash, and loot Jewish synagogues and inesses all over the Reich. The *Kristallnacht*, as it came to be own, heralded the systematic persecution of the German and Euro- an Jews. But that was not all. It was also on November 9, this time 1918, that the Social Democrat Philipp Scheidemann, speaking om a balcony of the Reichstag, proclaimed the first German repub- . And yet again on November 9, in 1923, Hitler's unsuccessful arch on the Feldherrnhalle in Munich put an end, or so it seemed, o the fascist threat to German democracy. As a consequence, when itler did come to power in 1933, November 9 became first an unof- cial and, in 1939, an official day of commemoration for the "fallen

heroes" of the Nazi movement. Could a day that was loaded with such a mixture of human triumph and inhuman, barbaric failure really be turned into a successful national holiday? Many Germans doubted it. And so a kind of free-for-all ensued among members of the German intelligentsia, a search for the ideal date of national celebration, a debate that is still ongoing and has been as fascinating as it has been ineffectual, at least so far.

In the *Zeit* survey cited before, among German intellectuals, politicians, and business leaders as well as national and international experts on German history, the following major alternatives to November 9 were discussed:

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Mar. 18, 1848 | The date when the first democratic German revolution began in 1848.   |
| July 20, 1944 | Claus Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg, a member of a secret conspiracy of senior German army officers to assassinate Hitler, overthrow the Nazi regime, and negotiate a peace agreement, plants a bomb in Hitler's headquarters. The bomb goes off, seconds after Hitler has left the room. Despite its tragic failure, this is the most significant act of resistance to the Nazi regime undertaken by Germans. |
| May 8, 1945   | German surrender after World War II, seen by many as the "zero hour," which gave Germans a chance for a new democratic beginning.   |
| May 23, 1949  | The date when the West German constitution was passed.  |
| June 17, 1953 | The beginning of the uprising in East Germany. The national holiday in the West until 1990.   |
| Nov. 9, 1989  | The pivotal day in the East German revolution of 1989. The day the wall was opened.   |
| Oct. 3, 1990  | The day of German unification.  |

However, like November 9, all of these alternative dates also had serious shortcomings:

March 18, 1848, marks the beginning of the revolution of 1848, even by many as the sort of democratic predecessor with which the Federal Republic would most want to be associated. This is expressed not only in the federal structure of the West German state but also in the very name West Germans chose for their new parliament in 1949: Bundestag"—harking back to the Frankfurt congregation of 1848/49 by the same name, where elected representatives of all the German states had gathered in the hopes of creating a new democratic nation. However, the first German "Bundestag" was as idealistic as it was short-lived. In 1849 Prussia and Austria put a quick end to the experiment: the parliament was dissolved, the delegates sent home, and feudalistic rule reestablished throughout the federation. The failed revolution damaged the nascent national-democratic movement beyond ideological repair; a disaster that eventually led to the Prussian-dominated empire of 1871 and the nationalistic expansionism that contributed to the outbreak of World War I. Would a new democratic Germany want to be reminded forever of this failure?

May 8, 1945, was celebrated in the GDR, for decades, as the day of liberation" from the fascist regime. From 1950 until 1966, and again in 1985, it was, in fact, a national holiday in the East.<sup>66</sup> Yet the burden of Warsaw Pact military parades staged on May 8, complete with Patriotic Order of Merit" awards to the likes of Marshal Zhukov, Erich Honecker, and East German spymaster Markus Wolf, burdened the date with a legacy West Germans would have found hard to tolerate. And even if that legacy could somehow have been set aside, there remained the nearly insurmountable ideological problems inherent in the date itself, as a day simultaneously of utter German defeat as well as of liberation and renewal. Bill Niven's excellent account<sup>67</sup> of the rare successes<sup>68</sup> and frequent fiascoes<sup>69</sup> experienced by generations of West) German political leaders commemorating this date serves as a persuasive reminder that trying to merge the guilt over Germany's war crimes and the embarrassment of defeat with the celebration of liberation and the democratic rebirth of the German nation would have likely turned into an impossible political juggling act.

May 23, 1949, the day when the West German constitution, the Grundgesetz, became law, would be as good a date to celebrate as anyone could think of, since it has more than stood the test of time. The problem is that no one seems to be able to remember it. There are frequent newspaper reports that when flags are up on May 23, to

commemorate the event, people are usually puzzled, unable to figure out what the flags are doing there.

A similar stigma is attached to June 17, 1953. The uprising against the oppression of the communist regime in 1953 was put down swiftly by Russian tanks after only five days, cementing the political division of the country for the foreseeable future. Moreover, as West Germans became more and more alienated from their East German "brothers and sisters," they simply chose to neglect the significance of the day by using it as simply another day off, going swimming or hiking without paying any mind to the national agenda.<sup>70</sup> Politicians and other public speakers, called on to infuse the day with new meaning year after year, struggled to reshuffle increasingly hollow phrases, consoled only by the fact that hardly anyone was listening. However, the revolution of 1989 added a new twist to this tale: some saw in it the successful completion of a history of resistance in the East, which found its first resounding expression in the 1953 rebellion. Considered in this light, the day could have been celebrated as the day that heralded Germany's finest hour. But—then again—there is another spin to that. Over the long term, West Germans might not have appreciated a constant reminder of the fact that it was the East Germans who staged the revolution, not the citizens of the West, who were basking in the warmth provided by the continuing economic miracle and an ironclad Deutsche Mark and who, for those reasons, believed that the glory really ought to go to them. And, finally, the newly friendly German-Russian relations (reunification would not have been possible without Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of glasnost and tacit approval) might have suffered under the strain of a holiday that celebrated what in 1953 was essentially an anti-Soviet uprising.

While it is true that July 20, 1944, may have been the finest hour of the German resistance, in the end the date would merely serve as a reminder that this resistance was too little and too late. More important still, until the late 1970s the German discourse on the Nazi regime had often taken the understandable, but problematic, route of engaging the period of the Third Reich and the Holocaust primarily through the prism of various resistance movements. This tended to overemphasize the magnitude of resistance while at the same time substituting a debate on the possibilities and limitations of resistance for a discussion of the genocide, thus displacing the horror at the center in favor of an intellectual debate on what was historically a marginal phenomenon.

That leaves us with October 3, the actual day of German reunification. As it turned out, all alternative scenarios remained hypothetical.

Once the GDR *Volkskammer* (the caretaker government that ran the country from the end of 1989 to October 1990) had settled on October 3 as the earliest possible and politically feasible date for unification, Chancellor Kohl, with a simple stroke of his pen, decided that this was going to be the new German national holiday. Prior to his decision, he had consulted, behind closed doors, with the ministers and residents of the German *Länder* (the federal states) and with the leaders of the major parties. But Kohl was evidently determined to forestall any public debate on his choice, even in the German parliament, the Bundestag.<sup>71</sup> From Kohl's point of view, the advantage of October 3 was that there appeared to be neither historical German failures nor particular German atrocities connected to that date.

By the same token, however, the day is somewhat featureless. Essentially, the date commemorates nothing more exciting than the bureaucratic procedure that sealed German unification, the conclusion of a dramatic process, to be sure, but a day with very little significance in and of itself. As many predicted when they heard of Kohl's choice, October 3 has been less than an unqualified success. The official celebrations held on that day mostly have a stale and perfunctory atmosphere, and there is little of the identity-fostering mass celebrations that surround the American July 4 or even the more controversial Bastille Day in France. Just how shallow passions run for October was demonstrated dramatically in 1994, when, as part of a bargaining process that involved the abolition of two of Germany's numerous regional holidays, even Chancellor Kohl's Bavarian ally, Minister President Edmund Stoiber, apparently felt that Germany could do without national celebration on October 3, suggesting instead that the commemoration could be moved to the following Sunday.<sup>72</sup> However, "some Sunday in October" does not bespeak a deep identification with the significance of October 3.

Over the years, a number of more or less serious attempts have been made to replace October 3 with one of the other dates listed above. The historian Arnulf Baring would like to reintroduce June 17 as the day on which a grassroots uprising, while defeated at the time, nevertheless foreshadowed the eventual triumph of 1989.<sup>73</sup> Another notable historian, Hans-Ulrich Wehler, would prefer March 18, the day on which the March revolution of 1848 began,<sup>74</sup> arguing that, since Germany sees itself so obviously as heir to the liberal-democratic tradition of that time that day would be the most convincing choice, a choice, moreover, marred neither by immediate defeat nor the simultaneous anniversary of any German atrocities.

However, by far the most serious efforts have been made on behalf of November 9. A number of German intellectuals have pointed out that it is precisely because November 9 represents the best and the worst of German history that this day would be the ideal national holiday, a fitting emblem for modern Germany in all its manifestations. The most recent, and perhaps the most prominent, proponent of November 9 was German foreign secretary Joschka Fischer, who, in an interview in August of 2000, was wondering

... why this republic does not have the courage to make November 9 its national holiday. [...] This is our entire history. The deepest mourning and consternation about what the German state has done to its Jewish citizens [...] but also the night on which the Wall fell and people danced in the streets. This date has a very special emotional quality.<sup>75</sup>

While many Germans, to this day, would probably agree with Fischer that the very tension of the date makes it a logical choice as a national holiday, it is hard to imagine just exactly what form such a celebration would take: in the morning an appropriately contrite memorial ceremony for the victims of the Holocaust, to be followed in the afternoon by lectures celebrating the revolution of 1989, as a kind of dignified buffer zone, and in the evening street parties and fireworks for the people? More importantly, it would appear that on that day the act of mourning should trump the festival of the people. As Paul Spiegel, the current president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, put it in a response to Fischer in another interview: "The idea of remembering the pogrom night of November 9, 1938, amid hot dog stands and public merrymaking seems inconceivable to me."<sup>76</sup>

The debate has by no means run its course. As recently as October 3, 2004, the German magazine *Stern* commented that the holiday "does not really meet with much acceptance among citizens in either East or West." In the same article, the President of the German *Bundestag*, Wolfgang Thierse, is quoted as advocating yet another holiday, October 9, the day when the mass demonstrations in GDR commenced, as a more suitable alternative.<sup>77</sup> Finally, one might note that perhaps too much emphasis has been placed on Germany's regionalist traditions in the protocol for the October 3 commemorations: In foregrounding the accomplishments and tourist attractions of the German states, the federal government appears to have foregone whatever small opportunity the day may have presented for shoring up a sense of German identity. Celebrating beer from Bavaria, Meissen porcelain from Saxony, and apple wine from