

# **POLITICAL CHANGE AND XENOPHOBIA IN GERMANY : UNIFICATION AND AFTER**

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**Political Change and Xenophobia in Germany : Unification and After**" submitted by **Mr. Rajesh Kumar** for the award of **Master of Philosophy** is an original work and has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other university.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the **Master of Philosophy Degree of this University.**

**Dr. Rajendra Kumar Jain**  
Supervisor

**Prof. Christopher S. Raj**  
Chairperson

*Dedicated to  
My Grandparents and Parents*

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Unification has brought definite contradictory patterns in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). The eventful years of unification and after were characterised by massive political turnaround in both the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) and West Germany and the rise of a resurgent nationalism. While nationalism performed a positive and political task of unification, it also bred certain negative and alarming phenomena of xenophobia, anti-Semitism and neo-Nazi violence.

The rise of neo-Nazi and the resurgence of xenophobia have brought alarming concerns. The xenophobic murders and neo-Nazi violence which swept across the Federal Republic in 1991 and 1992, terrorised the minds of foreigners, immigrants, asylum-seeks and larger democratic masses of Germans alike. The neo-Nazis and skinheads organized systematic raids and attacks against foreigners and immigrants in Hoyerswerda (November 1991) Rostock (August 1992) and in Mollen (November 1992). According to the Federal

Office for the Protection of the Constitution, during 1992 alone there were over 2,500 attacks on foreigners across Germany, 697 cases of arson and 17 people were left dead. It was a remarkable change compared to 1989, when the number of militant neo-Nazis has slumped to around 1,500, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution was reporting relatively low levels of serious attacks on foreigners.

Indeed, there are fears of a militarised "Fourth Reich" and xenophobic nationalism in post-unification Germany. In fact, in the case of Germany, these fears are legitimate and stem from the historical legacy of National Socialism and the Third Reich. Apprehensions of xenophobia are widespread, and socio-psychologists, historians and politicians alike, draw striking similarities and alarming comparisons of the present-day German democracy and political and constitutional changes in the Federal Republic, with those of the crises of the Weimar Republic.

Wilhem Heitmeyer argues that the danger of resurgent xenophobia is taking the continent, especially the Federal Republic, into its grips. There is a widespread skinhead fascist epidemic from

Great Britain, to Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany and the Scandinavian countries. He remarks that two-thirds of the people are in favour of kicking out foreigners. According to him : "This is a very dangerous development which, the European leaders and democracies must curb and control without dilly-dallying".<sup>1</sup>

Heitmeyer adds that history has shown us that the "belief and approach that democracy was fit only for shopkeepers and the merchant class; bred xenophobia, anti-Semitism and extreme form of nationalism in Europe".<sup>2</sup> In fact, the new right-wing extremist and parliamentary party, the Republikaner in the Federal Republic, echoes similar fascist expression.<sup>3</sup>

The Republikaners' economic programme is clearly extremist and anti-democratic. "The trade unions and their democratic right of collective bargaining are considered irrelevant. The trade union movement, according to the Republikaner party's programme will be subordinated to an authoritarian state".<sup>4</sup>

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1. H.S. Chopra, "United Germany", *World Focus*, Vol. 13, No. 8, August 1992, p.18.

2. Ibid.

3. Alan William, *The State of Germany* (Longman, 1992), pp.102-103.

4. Norbert Walter in Gary L. Geipel (eds.), *The Future of Germany* (Indianapolis, 1990), pp.120-121.



Commenting on the politics of neo-Nazi organizations and xenophobia in Germany, Richard Stoss argues that the socio-historical roots of development of anti-Semitism and xenophobia are due to a lesser degree of civic and socio-political integration in the Federal Republic of Germany. The post-war generation of German youth have developed "more or less critical of the historical guilt burden" and support the neo-Nazi revisionists.<sup>5</sup>

Although sympathy for national socialism has decreased markedly since 1945. Stoss points out that the fact remains that the right wing extremist views have a widespread potential, and they are not a spent force. This potential consists mainly of pro-Nazi, anti-Semitic and xenophobic attitudes, which fluctuate between 20 and 40 percent. In February 1989, the Berlin Centre for Research into Anti-Semitism published the following statistics : "6% of the West German population showed manifest anti-Semitism in the sense of a closed world-view, a further 10-15% expressed overt anti-Semitic prejudices, and a further 15-20% showed anti-Semitic traits in their thinking, without expressing this openly."<sup>6</sup>

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5. Richard Stoss, Politics Against Democracy : Right-Wing Extremism in West Germany, New York, (St. Martin Press : 1990).

6. Allan, n. 3, p.109

Alexander and Margarete-Mitschelich, commenting on the role and importance of the Nazi xenophobic and anti-Semitic past, in post-War Germany, asserts :

"While it is true that after 1945, the Nazi ideology was temporarily rejected, this does not mean that people had managed to establish a safe critical distance from it. A critical analysis of the past would have required just that; but this did not occur. Hence fragments of this ideology could be described as naive, because they are unreflective, have remained completely unchecked".<sup>7</sup>

From a socio-psychological point of view, Mitschelich's central theory is that the post-war generation of German youth managed to reject guilt complex and chauvinistic and irrational love for Nazi nationalism, which was based on xenophobia and racialism of the "Great German Nation"; in a perverted way. "They did it by repressing, much more, denying, national socialism. By denial, they sought protection from the past. The youth did it, in order to avoid any insight into reality and the pain associated with it".<sup>8</sup>

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7. Stoss, n.5, pp.51-52.

8. Ibid.

People see themselves as the "victims of evil forces : firstly of the evil Jews, then of the evil Nazis, and finally of the evil Russians".<sup>9</sup> each case, the evil is externalised: it is sought outside, and affects the individual from the outside.

"The potential for neo-Nazi views, xenophobia and right-wing extremism is no less a result of the refusal to engage in a critical examination of the past, and even more, there has been no serious attempt to rationally organize and train public awareness vis-a-vis that Nazi past".<sup>10</sup>

The various facets of extremists and xenophobic views, which have surged in the Federal Republic after unification, must clearly be understood against the background of German history. In fact, "anti-democratic and anti-foreigner view and their organization by the right-wing extremist parties exist in all Western European countries. But, nowhere else, is the burden of the history so oppressive and resurgent than Germany".<sup>11</sup> Nowhere else in Western Europe, is the "national identity so extremely pronounced than in West Germany, and even whole of the Federal Republic after unification".<sup>12</sup>

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9. David Childs, *Neo-Fascism in Europe*, (Longman, 1991), pp.179.180.

10. Juergen, Elsassasser, *Anti-Semitism : The Old Face of The New Germany*, (Berlin, 1992), p.205.

11. Childs, n.9, p.178.

12. Ibid.

In 1967, Scheuch and Klingemann proposed the following hypothesis: "The potential for radical right-wing political movements exists in all Western industrial societies... Viewed from this perspective, right-wing radicalism is a "normal" symptom of liberal industrial societies".<sup>13</sup>

The situation in Germany is unique. Historically speaking, National Socialism represented the most radical form of fascism that existed between the two World Wars, and the consequences of its in-human national policies and most extreme xenophobic nationalism, which were experienced by Germany, Europe and the whole world, still have a lasting influence on German political culture. Still more, it is characteristically alarming of Germany that both historical and contemporary xenophobia and right-wing nationalism are dealt with by repressing them and minimising their influence.

Moreover, some opportunist political parties and politicians in Germany, in order to garner a right-wing conservative vote bank, at times, underestimate the danger of xenophobia, racialism and

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13. Stoss, n.5, pp.1-2.

neo-nationalism by shifting national attention towards left-wing extremism. Even the Federal Constitutional Court and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution face a "constitutional dilemma" to decide upon important courses of action vis-a-vis politically radical neo-Nazi organizations and hooligans, who perpetrate xenophobia.<sup>14</sup> For example, the responsible authorities of the Federal Republic, are still trying to establish whether the Republikaner Party, founded by the neo-Nazis in 1983, and which has even got parliamentary representation in several local and state parliaments, is a "redical" or an "extremist" right-wing organization.

The rise of the Republikaner Party, under the leadership of Franz Schonhuber, an influential personality with a criminal Nazi and anti-Semitic past, marks a qualitatively important step forward. The post-war development of a "respectable" Right, and its prospect of potential political and coalition partner with the mainstream parties, has coincided with a "re-alignment" of political forces".<sup>15</sup> The political development of the Republikaner Party (REP), the

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14. Alan Watson, The Germans : Who Are They Now ? (U.K. : Mandrain 1992).

15. Hams George Bertz, Post-Modern Anti-Modernism : The West German Republikaner, (Berlin, 1991), pp.85-87.

German People's Union (DVU) and the National Democratic Party (NDP) into right-wing extremist parliamentary parties has, in fact, changed the character of xenophobic mobilization and the neo-Nazi movement in the Federal Republic after unification.

Unlike the neo-Nazi gangs of street hooligans and anti-Semitic terrorists, the Republikaner's movement represents the "populist form of xenophobic mobilization and extreme nationalism".<sup>16</sup> Thus, the real anti-foreigner agenda of the Republikaner Party is not merely to stop the influx of immigrants in united Germany, but to restore the traditional culture and identity of the "Great German Nation". This identity, according to the Republikaner Party, is threatened both by the development of "cultural heterogeneity and pluralism of the teeming masses of immigrants", and the un-German cultural influences in the Federal Republic owing to excessive Western, and particularly American cultural presence.<sup>17</sup>

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16. Ibid.

17. Tara Kartha, "Internal Divisions in Germany" *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. XV II, No.7, October 1994. A Prominent Rightist Ewald Althars was quoted to have said that he considered Germany to have been colonized by America.

The fact that xenophobia has become widespread, and still more organized in the Federal Republic, and its political mobilization against the foreigners has been heightened both by the neo-Nazis and parliamentary populism of the right-wing extremist parties; has shown that it is not a spent force.

Michael Balafour has argued that it marks a "disturbing under-current" in German politics.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Elizabeth Pond highlights the "increased use and politicization of anti-foreigner sentiments in Germany", and discusses the growth of skinheads and neo-Nazis, especially since unification and after.<sup>19</sup>

The changing nature of Germany's foreign population offers a key to this sudden outburst. According to Roger Eatwell, during the 1950s, guest-workers, known as Gastarbeiter, had primarily been West European young males, some of whom returned home with their new-found earnings but during the 1960s and the 1970s, new arrivals came increasingly from Yugoslavia and Turkey. More

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18. Michael Balafour, Germany: The Tides of Power, (London, 1992), pp.267-268.

19. Elizabeth Pond, Germany in the New Europe, (London, 1992), pp.48-49.

importantly, the Gasterbeiter began to stay and set up families, posing a serious problem concerning citizenship, for German nationality was essentially defined in terms of "blood". The crucial issue was line of descent, rather than place of birth or length of residence. The number of people seeking asylum under Germany's liberal asylum laws also increased suddenly, the figure rising more than tenfold between 1983 and 1992. "In all, 438,000 arrived in 1992. Many of those who came, for instance, the particularly disliked Romanian gypsies, seemed to be economic migrants rather than political refugees".<sup>20</sup>

Although one may debate and discuss the "foreigner problem", immigration mainly economic, and constitutional amendments toughen immigration laws; the guest workers have been an asset to the West German economy, both before and after unification. History has shown that it has only been at the time of economic depression and industrial recession, that immigrants and foreign work force were made "scapegoats of unemployment and xenophobic politics" of unemployment.<sup>21</sup>

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20. Roger Eatwell, Fascism: A History, (Chattos, 1995), p.233.

21. Zig Layton and Zletnik Henia, The Politics of Immigration, (Cambridge, 1992), p.148.



European capitalism and particularly German capitalism, with its ageing population and even despite high level of unemployment, have a "structural tendency" to be in need of guest-workers.<sup>22</sup>

"Foreigners are not, in fact, competing with Germans for the same jobs".<sup>23</sup> The Cologne-based Institute for the German Economy calculates that six million foreigners account for about 0.9% of the GDP. As heavy manual labour is not in the liking of most Germans, 24% of the labour in foundaries comprises foreigners, 17% in textiles, 14% in mining and 20% in the hotel and tourism industry. "The majority of the foreign work-force is engaged in large residential complexes, construction-industry, waste disposal works and garbage collections".<sup>24</sup> According to an estimate of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and trade unions in the Federal Republic, should the "guest-workers" leave, 41 percent of German industry would collapse. According to an estimate of the Rhine Westphalia Institute of Economic Research worked out in 1991, foreigners, who pay taxes without the citizen's right to vote, contributed DM 30

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22. Doris Meisner, "Managing Migrations", *Foreign Policy*, No.85-86, Spring, pp.67-68.

23. Tara Kartha, "Re-emergence of Facism : Germany After Unification", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.15, No.11, p.1049.

24. *Newsweek*, 9 September 1992.

billion in taxes and social benefits. henceforth, a net "income" of DM 14 billion.<sup>25</sup>

There is an important "relationship" between unemployment problem and foreign immigration and the development of xenophobia in the Federal Republic after unification.<sup>26</sup> The role of migration in Germany for the resurgence of xenophobia is very crucial in a society which is already facing socio-economic pains of higher rents and financial difficulties. R.K. Jain argues that in the Federal Republic after unification, social dislocation, identity-crisis and elimination of "cradle-to-grave" social security benefits have altered the pattern of life style in East Germany.<sup>27</sup> The increase in cultural heterogeneity and racial inter-mixture, "due to the immigration and diverse foreign population", has been responsible for anti-immigrant politics by the radical-nationalist groups.<sup>28</sup>

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25. Tara Kartha, n.23, p.1050.

26. R.K. Jain, "Migration in Germany : Issues and Responses", *India International Centre Quarterly*, 20(4), Winter 1993, pp.19, 22, 32. According to him, the waves of neo-Nazi attacks have been coupled with the public indifference and passivity in regarding migrants as an economic and cultural threat. This has enabled for right demagogues to make foreigner scapegoats of Germany's real and imagined ills. Neo-Nazi youths call for the expulsion of "undesirable foreigners" and creation of a "pure Germany".

27. Ibid.

28. Heather Booth, The Migration Process in Britain and West Germany, (Aldershot, 1992), pp.111-112.

Migration policy in Western Germany until the 1970s and the mid 1980s was a "non-policy" and "non-political" issue as well.<sup>29</sup> The fact that since unification, hundreds of thousands of foreign immigrants and political asylum-seekers have poured in Germany; subsequent xenophobia and neo-Nazi riotings and terror wave have alarmed the German psyche and the political establishment of the Federal Republic. Most of all, this electrified an already tense constitutional debate on asylum rights. In 1993, the Federal Government passed strict immigration laws, thereby greatly curbing the inflow of immigrants.<sup>30</sup> Applications for political asylum are now entertained only after the federal immigration authorities examined and substantiated the reasonable political merit of the case.

The change in the Basic Law by way of amending Article 16,<sup>31</sup> which provided that "politically persecuted persons enjoy the right of

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29. Jain, n.26, The Turks might be singled out by some as a large group posing greatest problem, Ibid, p.21.

30. The new Asylum Law has been voted by the Bundestag by 521 votes to 132, more than the 442 (two-third) required. Jain, n.26, p.24.

31. The new 'Asylum Procedure Act' (1993) inserted a new Article 16(a) in the Basic Law.

asylum", seems to have reflected contradictory and alarming trends in the German domestic politics. The Social Democratic Party, the champion of the poor and the underprivileged during the days of Willy Brandt, was in flux on the issue of "foreigner problem". Subsequently, when the SPD realized that the right wing extremist parties washed off a sizeable chunk of its mass support, on the platform of anti-immigration politics, the SPD was alarmed and felt under pressure.

The Institute for Applied Social Science (Infas) found that 30,000 voters have switched side from the SPD to the neo-Nazi extremist party, the German People's Union (DVU), in Schleswig Holstein.<sup>32</sup> in Baden Wuerttemberg, the loss of the SPD was again the gain of the Far Right Parties. In a rather surprising move in April 1992 the SPD Chairwoman was quoted in Die Zeit, that, "if necessary, people must be deported.... the right of asylum is reserved for people who are individually persecuted for political, racist and religious reasons".<sup>33</sup> Apparently, the SPD is not really far away

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32. *The German Tribune*, 4 September, 1993.

33. Tara Kartha, n. 23, p.1044.

from the ruling coalition parties, on the question of the role of immigration in the resurgence of xenophobia.

The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) wanted to go further and reject the application for asylum from Poland and Romania. The CDU argued that since they had returned to democracies, the immigrants could no longer claim asylum rights, because they are no longer "political refugees".<sup>34</sup>

To a large extent, the government and other Federal organizations too believe that the "foreigner problem" has synergy with the immigration of non-ethnic Germans. The government, under new national policy, even took a decision to deport gypsies, who are seen as a particularly nasty part of the foreigner problem. Human right groups like Helsinki Watch have attacked the government, with the charge of a move directed against a particular community. Germany has around 60,000 gypsies from Romania and Yugoslavia; nearly, half a million of them had been killed in the Nazi Holocaust. In a compensatory gesture, however, the government has

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34. Daniele Jole, Refugges : Asylum in Europe , (London, 1992), p.85.

agreed to pay \$ 21 million for so-called "job training" for these forced emigres.<sup>35</sup>

The next move was to "retransfer" the Bulgarians. Since Bulgaria was now a democracy, a "political refugees" could not be accepted. Another \$17 million was to be earmarked for this particular enterprise.<sup>36</sup> Whatever be nature of the decision, powerful trade unions like IG Metall have come out against changing the asylum law. But it appears that their members feel differently. It is estimated that 70% of them are against the generous immigration laws, believing in spite of statistics, that foreigners were taking away their jobs, and were responsible for the downturn of the economy.

The exact timing, terms and effectiveness of the change remain unclear but it does mark a fundamental shift in German constitutional practice. It is clear recognition that the Constitution which served Western Germany well, can no longer apply in its entirety to a united Germany faced with the new situation in Europe. The liberal clause on asylum had stemmed directly from the past. It was an aspect of

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35. Ibid, p.120.

36. Ibid, p.91.

"Germany's atonement for the racial crimes of the Third Reich".<sup>37</sup>

The change testifies to a new imperative; the need to place the present and the future over and above the legacy of the past.

It also raises a "disturbing but unavoidable question". If the racial violence instigated by the neo-Nazi and xenophobic groups increased the pressure for this change, does this establish a precedent both sinister and potent? "Would it not be natural for the extremist right to view the constitutional change as a major victory and to increase the pressure for further changes".<sup>38</sup> This is clearly the danger and the fear, but it is difficult to see how some change in the immigration laws could have been avoided. According to Alan Watson :

"What is clear is that reunification has marked the re-entry of both race and class into German politics. Race issues and racial conflict are now part of the stuff of German politics and are likely to remain so for some time. So too are the difficulties and dangers of class conflict as the contrast in living standards between Eastern and Western Germany creates, to a quite new extent in German politics, a society of 'haves and have nots', a dangerous fissure through what was previously and almost uniformly prosperous society. Unemployment is the sharpest edge of this class conflict. Taken together, the issue of race and

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37. Eatwell, n.20, pp.231-235.

38. Watson, n.14.

class have disturbed, and arguably banished forever, the safe, if sometime dull tranquillity of so much of the politics of the Federal Republic prior to reunification".<sup>39</sup>

Race and class were, of course, dynamic and destructive elements in the politics of the Weimar Republic, and we thus come to the question of whether history is repeating itself.

Golo Mann, in his History of Germany, on Hitler's assumption of power on 30 January 1933 remarks : "Here was merely one more in the pathetically long list of German Chancellors since 1917, but "the man who was given the little occupied the centre of German and world events for a good ten years". This should never have happened. "It is an episode as stupid as it is gruesome, designed to make us question the meaning of history. Yet it did happen: it followed on what went before and arose from it, just as what exists today came out of what was there then".<sup>40</sup> Therefore, we must try to describe it and to understand its causes.

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39. Ibid. Also see, Jain, n.26, p.31. According to him, the politicization of race and ethnicity is a wider phenomenon and not confined to Germany alone.

40. Ibid.



There is today a surprising if broad consensus on the reasons for Hitler's rise to power and the causes of the fall of the Weimar Republic, although as we have seen earlier the "Historikerstreit" shows how little agreement exists on the consequences.

Chancellor Konrad Adenauer once said that history is the accumulation of the things that could have been avoided. If that be the case, then clearly it is just as well that historians are substantially agreed on how Hitler came to power, so that we can learn from these mistakes and ensure that a similar occurrence does not recur. Without doubt, Hitler's victory provides an important means of analysing the true significance of the rise of the extremist right in contemporary Germany. We can usefully measure its characteristics and causes against those of the Nazi takeover of power in 1933.

The reasons for what the Nazis chose to describe as their "Machtergreifung" are many and various, but three dominant causes can be identified. The first was the state of the economy prior to Hitler--the collapse in the value of money, the mass unemployment

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and the general sense of Germany's isolation within a siege economy. Second, there was that great well of humiliation and resentment which stemmed from the Versailles Treaty and was reinforced by the misfortunes of Weimar. There was a thirst for revenge and with that came the inevitable and unedifying search for scapegoats. Third, there were the complex and self-destructive politics of a republic short of both republicans and democrats. Weimar was a republic, a democracy and a "political system that in the end desired its own downfall and achieved it".<sup>41</sup>

Let us then measure the present against the past. At a number of levels the economic predicament facing Germany today corresponds with the economic crisis of Weimar. It is this aspect, above all others, that so encourages the neo-Nazis in the parallels they draw with the Weimar Republic. Thus Michael Swierszek, leader of the Augsburg-based National Offensive, says: "Surely this is definitely not 1932 but we could be somewhere in the 1920s. The

41. Chopra, n.1, p.18. According to him, the tragic Weimer experiment at political democracy in the aftermath of World War II has not been forgotten. Owing to inadequate returns from economic reforms introduced in the former GDR, xenophobic elements are surfacing in the present eastern part of Germany, with spill-over effects both in West Germany and Eastern and Western Europe as well.

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system is tottering. Destabilisation has set in. The boom years of the economic miracle are over, and in a crisis Germans always turn to the "fright".<sup>42</sup>

There is certainly a case that, as alleged by Michael Swierszek, the boom years of the economic miracle are over at least for the time being. Western subsidies to the new laender (States) of eastern Germany are running at some DM 150 billion annually and are likely to continue to do so for decade. This in its turn has led to higher taxes and to a budget deficit. "Gone are the days when Germany could lecture the United States on the profligate nature of its budget deficit. Chancellor Kohl is not able to wag his finger at Washington in the way that helmut Schmidt so enjoyed doing during his years as Cahncellor".<sup>43</sup> However, the level of infrastructure investment into eastern Germany may well provide the foundation, for another "Wirtschaftswunder" by the end of the decade. What matters for the moment is that while there are severe structural strains in the German economy, objectively these cannot be described as comparable to those that afflicted Weimar.

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42. *The Nation Europe*, 1993, Vol.38, No.10, p.3.

43. Watson, n.14, p.490.

In the 1920s, the value of the German currency collapsed. It was this appalling inflation which destroyed the savings of the German middle classes. Money was rendered meaningless and that nightmare experience certainly contributed to Hitler's rise. It obliterated any sense of middle-class stability and judgement.

However, it is exactly the memory of this experience of devaluation which determines the stern attitude of the present Bundesbank towards the value of the currency and its fight against inflation in the Federal Republic. The iron will of the Bundesbank which so infuriated the British government during 1992, and which led indirectly to the disarray of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism as high German interest rates channeled speculative pressure onto the weaker currencies of the pound and lira, stemmed directly from the Weimar experience. In merging the Deutschmark with the Ostmark at the start of reunification the German authorities took a profound risk. Not only did that move undermine any remaining East German manufacturing competitiveness, it also resulted in a substantial increase in the real money supply and with it a concomitant risk of inflation. The fact is, however, that no matter how

painful the results for many of Germany's allies, the Bundesbank have resisted the unprecedented external pressure on them to abandon their high interest rate policy in defence of the Deutschmark's value. There have been small marginal reductions but no change of policy. The result is that the Deutschmark remains strong, its domestic and foreign buying power substantially unimpaired by the turmoil of reunification. As long as that continues to be the case there can be no comparison with the economic affliction suffered by the Weimar Republic disappointing though the neo-Nazis may find this.

The more meaningful comparison between economic distress now and then must focus on unemployment. Unemployment has risen steadily in both West and East Germany. The prognosis is gloomy. Unemployment must be expected to continue rising to figure above 7 percent in Western Germany and possibly as high as 16 percent of the force in Eastern Germany. Yet, here too, "closer examination shows that the comparisons cannot really be sustained between Weimar and the present-day Federal Republic of Germany".<sup>44</sup>

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44. Bernard Heitger and Waverman, Lenoard (eds.), German Unification and the International Economy, (New York, 1993), p.181.

Following the 1939 Wall Street crash, German companies literally collapsed as American loan payments to the Reich were suspended. Unemployment, which rose to 6 million, provided a primary reason for the rise of Nazism. In the literal sense, tens of thousands of the unemployed chose the relative security of Hitler's Brown Shirt Army (SA). The SA provided a uniform, free food and financial support. Even more important, the SA gave its members a sense of self-esteem and increasing self-importance. To join the Nazis was a route out of the hopelessness and fear of unemployment. "In jackboots and a brown shirt, an unemployed German could feel ten feet tall. Today there is no SA army to join the motley and constantly changing neo-Nazi groups hardly provide that".<sup>45</sup> At the maximum their membership totals some 25000 and this membership is splintered, as we have seen, between dozens of changing organizations. There is no 'alternative system'.<sup>46</sup> But the real difference between then and now lies in the provision made today for the unemployed.

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45. Watson, n.14, pp.125-127.

46. Ibid, p.475.

One of the primary reasons for the 150 billion Deutschmark annual subsidy from western to eastern Germany is the provision of social benefits. Indeed, over 60 percent of this sum goes in unemployment and related benefits. "It is a formidable burden but it is a levy on a vastly rich state". It is a price that Europe's strongest economy can continue to pay although Western Germans will do so with increasing resentment. This is exemplified by the bigoted hero of a television soap opera which attracted huge audiences in the Federal Republic at the start of 1993. Friedhelm Motzke symbolises West German resentment at the "money grabbing Ossies".<sup>47</sup> In their heart of hearts, many West German television viewers no doubt share this unattractive hero's sense of remorse about the day the Berlin Wall fell. For him it was a black day in German history and an even blacker day for him personally. Looking at the picture of East Berliners streaming through the Wall he felt sure they were coming straight for his hard earned money. In the case of the fictional Friedhelm Motzke his newly discovered East German relatives did just that but Motzke and other West Germans, despite their

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47. Ibid, p.239.

complaints, are able to pay and, indeed at a more profound level may judge it wise and necessary to do so.

The result of this Western German largesse is that the unemployed in Eastern Germany enjoy the same degree of basic support as the unemployed in the West. they are entitled to two-thirds of their previous post-tax income when employed. Germany's practice of the welfare state remains Keynesian, and Norbert Frei of the Munich Institute for Contemporary History observes, the unemployed of today are "unhappy -- but they are not desperate".<sup>48</sup>

The economic comparisons between the Weimar Republic and contemporary Germany cannot be sustained. Joblessness has fuelled current neo-nazi violence, but it is not at a level, nor does it have the potential, to create the kind of mass hopelessness which was so essential to the rise of Hitler.

If there is broad agreement that economic distress was a primary reason for the rise of the Nazis, there is an equal consensus

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48. Heitger, n.44, p.185.



that national feelings of humiliation, resentment and a desire for revenge provided the Nazis with another powerful buttress of support. Certainly Hitler skillfully exploited these sentiments, making them an integral of a litany of hatred which embraced the French, the Marxists, the plutocrats, but above all, the jews. For the Nazis the only true explanation of Germany's defeat in the First World War was conspiracy. The brave German armies were "stabbed in the back".<sup>49</sup> Their racial superiority and their courage made such an outcome inconceivable. They were out-manoeuvred, betrayed by an evil coalition of foreigners and Jews, an unholy alliance of plutocracy and communism held together by "International Jewry".<sup>50</sup>

It was this distorted and psychotic vision that provided Hitler with his enemies and his victims. That so many Germans went along with this vision and that significant numbers of them enthusiastically shared it, is partly explained by the endemic and ancient anti-Semitism of Central Europe and the Balkans. However, the factors which transformed this consuming hatred into national policy

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49. Marc Fisher, After the Wall : The Germany and the Burdens of History, (New York, 1995), pp.205-209.

50. David Keithly, "Shadows of Germany's Authoritarian Past", *Orbis*, Spring 1994, p.215.

was the state of public opinion created by German failure in the First World War, and her resentment at her treatment afterwards at the hands of the Allies. The question is : Do comparable feelings of resentment and revenge exist in German minds and hearts today ?

Again there are some disturbing and undeniable parallels, but also, on closer examination, there are clear grounds for hope. Resentment exists in contemporary Germany. There is the resentment felt by the West Germany about East Germans, feelings of irritation and anger at the alleged slowness of East Germany to recover. West Germans often insensitively accuse their Eastern countrymen of being work-shy, of having lost the German virtues of discipline and initiative. Equally, in eastern Germany there is resentment of the overbearing 'Wessies'. East Germans have been offended and infuriated by the assumption of the West Germans, that they know best about everything. Teachers have resented retraining. Workers have resented new managers. The unemployed have resented losing their jobs. However, despite the caricatures, such sentiments do not amount to hatred and nor are they likely to lead to one side or the other becoming victims of violence and prejudice. The numbers involved are too great. The unity of the country is too

overwhelming a sentiment and commitment.

The unnerving similarity with the Weimar Republic is the attitude towards immigrants. Are the Turks and the East Europeans of today the successors of the Jewish victims of yesterday ? Are both scapegoats for a sense of defeat and revenge ? There are two essential points, Alan Watson emphasizes.

First, there is no evidence today of any deep sense of German failure. While East Germans acknowledge the failure of the GDR, its incompetence as well as its authoritarianism, its corruption and its dictatorship, there is not the sense that this can be blamed on an enemy. Indeed, one of the most remarkable aspects of reunification has been the absence of hatred and vilification of the Russians and the former Soviet Union. M. Gorbachev is rightly recognised as one of the instigator of reunification. Historically, he takes his place as a liberator of the German people. The award to him of the Freedom of Berlin was entirely appropriate and strongly supported by East as well as West Berliners. There have been few attempts to deface Soviet war memorials, or physically to make life difficult for the remaining Soviet troops in early years in barracks throughout Eastern

Germany. Rather, the popular feeling is one of some sympathy for these survivors of a once of almighty Soviet superpower, who must now return to almost certain unemployment and likely physical insecurity.

The 20,000 racist incidents recorded throughout the Federal Republic in 1992, the more than 2,000 attacks on individuals and the deaths of seventeen people constitute a level of racial violence unprecedented in the Federal Republic's history. Does not such violence and the organisations and activities described in this chapter indicate that there is here a clear repetition of history, a return to the nightmare? Despite the virulence and the violence of all the xenophobia experienced since reunification, the answer should be an affirmative 'no'.<sup>51</sup>

That is the view of many in Germany's Jewish community today. At the height of the xenophobia in November 1992 a number of German Jews left Germany. Many of them had received threatening telephone calls and this caused not only distress but also

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51. Micheal Schmidt, The New Reich : Violent Extremism in the Unified Germany and Beyond, (Hutchinsmm, 1993), p.255.

fear. Many people were very alarmed. The Jewish writer, Ralph Giorando, issued a call for Jews to arm themselves and in the Turkish community there were similar calls for self-defence. The majority reaction, however, has been different.

More persuasive to the Jewish community as a whole, has been the view of Ignatz Bubis, the leader of Germany's 40,000 strong Jewish community and Chairman of Germany's Central Council of Jews. It was he, who had stood alongside Richard Von Weizsaecker at the ill-fated Berlin demonstration in November 1992 and declared 'this is not 1938'<sup>52</sup>. At a meeting in New York in January 1993 called by the World Jewish Congress, representatives of the Likud Party urged a boycott of German goods as long as anti-Semitic attacks continued in the Federal Republic. But Bubis declared, "Hitler is not here. Germany is not burning"<sup>53</sup>. The Jewish Chronicle reported him as arguing that the number of anti-Semitic and racist attacks had already fallen by some 50 percent from October to November. Although highly critical of the slowness of the German government's

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52. Eatwell, n.2, p.250.

53. Watson, n.14, p.355.

initial reaction, he said that he was now confident that the Germans and their government were taking the neo-Nazi threat seriously. He pointed to the arrest of the neo-Nazi leaders like Thomas Dienel and the banning of neo-Nazi groups such as the right-wing Alliance for German Comrades. He also welcomed the Government's willingness to investigate the constitutionality of the Republikaner Party<sup>54</sup>.

This too has been a theme emphasised by the Chairman of the Jewish Community of Berlin, Jerzy Kanal. He has stressed that while thus far, "no members of the Republican party have been caught red-handed in the violence, and its leaders have been careful to disassociate the party from the methods of the extremists, if not from their aims, they do provide the ideology and give it to the youngsters"<sup>55</sup>. However, Jerzy Kanal acknowledged that while the authorities had been slow to react, they had not "started to take action". He also saw the mass demonstrations against racism a

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54. Eatwell, n.20, p.255.

55. Watson, n.14.

critically important. "The silent majority has finally shown it is ready to act"<sup>56</sup>.

Another Jewish spokesman, Rabbi Welliam Wolff, has placed on record speaking to the press his conviction that the German authorities, while slow to react have now moved decisively. In December, 1992, he condemned the early reaction of the German government towards racist outbreaks as "suspine" but stated his belief that Germany remains "one of the most stable and secure democracies in Europe". His own family fled Nazi Germany in the early 1930s, but despite his family's memories, he rejected the idea that Hitler "poised for a resurrection"<sup>57</sup>. Instead, he has emphasised the continuing attempts by many in Germany to atone for the murderous record of the Third Reich. "Nearly fifty years on, the attempt to pick up the moral, emotional and financial bill for the Nazi havoc continues without let up. The evidence is not merely in the billions of marks paid in compensation to institutions but also to individuals"<sup>58</sup>. He cited the attempts by individual towns and cities to

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56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

trace the relatives of Jews murdered in the Third Reich, Who once lived in their communities, and to invite them back to Germany to re-establish contact. Above all, Rabbi Wolff is persuaded that "neo-Nazis remain a micro precentage of the German Masses".

There can be no conclusive view, but it clear that there is, in contemporary Germany no evidence of the feelings of resentment and revenge which so distorted public opinion during the Weimar Republic. Contemporary Germans do not live under the burden of the Versailles Treaty. The neo-Nazi gangs have been able to pick on immigrants as targets and victims, but there is no national desire for a scapegoat nor any need for one. Popular concern over immigration should not be confused with the "search for mass victims" for mass hatred.<sup>59</sup>

In rejecting the supposition that the neo-Nazi attacks since reunification augur a return to the past, one must enter two fundamental provisos. Were the German economy to collapse and were unemployment to rise to 6 million and above, then the future

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59. Schmidt, n.91, p.190.



would become totally unpredictable. The March 1993 State Elections in Hesse provided abundant proof of this. The Republikaner scored 9.5 percent of the vote in Frankfurt and up to 15 percent in some of the smaller towns. At the same time however, the Government and Opposition in Bonn, the sixteen Laender and the employers and trade unions achieved their characteristically consensual deal to fund the growing costs of reunification. There is a race against time.

Similarly, with migration were no controls to be applied and were the tide across Germany's frontiers to rise to millions in a year, then again this situation would become unpredictable. In the event, neither of these disaster scenarios is likely. "The spectre of Weimar may wait in the wings but to this point it is not written into the play".<sup>60</sup>

The third broad reason given for the rise of Nazism and its take-over of power in 1933 is that "the political structures of

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60. Elsassner, n. 10, pp. 155-157.

Germany at that time collapsed and that, in a sense, the Weimar Republic was the author of its own destruction".<sup>61</sup> German politicians of the Right in the Weimar Republic such as von Schleicher and von Papen conspired to bring Hitler to power, foolishly believing, that they could control him once they had put him there. On the left, that both they and the Weimar Republic had failed and were drowned. The Communists so hated the Republic that they refused any co-operation with the Social Democrats and contributed to the collapse of the system by fighting the Nazis on the streets.

In the event, it was not the mob or the street battalions of right and left that brought down the Weimar Republic. It was the political establishment and its own machinations. It was in this sense, that the democrats if so, Von Schleicher and Von Papen can accurately be called - brought down the Weimar Republic Having come to power, the Nazis created on this, as on all else, their own version of history. They had seized power. Theirs was a "Machtergreifung" - a seizure of power. As Joseph Joffe has observed, "this version of events later

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61. Ibid, p.169.

provided some form of moral alibi for people and thus entered the popular version of history".<sup>62</sup>

After the demise of the Third Reich, many Germans were only too happy to perpetuate the myth that Nazism was inflicted on them "as if Hitler's storm-troopers has landed in Berlin from outer space. In fact, Hitler's accession was perfectly legal and democratic".<sup>63</sup>

Are the politicians of Bonn likely to be as self-destructive as the politicians of Weimar? Is Bonn Weimar? Again the answer is likely to be an affirmative no.

Certainly, Germany's political establishment has been slow to act with sufficient force and urgency to deal with neo-Nazi violence. Certainly, it has taken the politicians a long time to come to terms with the challenge of immigration at unprecedented levels. Certainly, Bonn underestimated the economic cost of absorbing the five new Laender of eastern Germany. Certainly, the challenge and threat of unemployment has proved far greater than foreseen. But these failure of judgement do not aquate with the tragedy of Weimar.

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62. Joseph Joffe, "The New Europe : Yesterday's Ghosts", *Foreign Affairs : American and the World*, 1992-93, Vol.72, No.1, pp.41-56.

63. James H. Anderson, "The Neo-Nazi Menace in Germany", *Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 18, 1993, pp.39.

Indeed, it can be argued, that many of the mistakes by the Bonn government, in the years since reunification, have stemmed not from lack of self-confidence, but from an excess of it. There has been more complacency than panic.

Since the murders at Moelln, any complacency in the German political establishment has been shattered. The actions taken by the Justice and Interior Ministers of the Laender; the very clear statements of policies against racism, the actions taken by the Constitutional Court the acceleration in the rate of arrests and the much sharper implementation of laws against racial violence, all demonstrate a democracy well able and indeed willing to defend itself. The democratic government has cracked the whip and the neo-Nazis do not have the resources or popular support to challenge the authority of the state.

In conclusion, they be let in by the back door. The established parties, the CDU, the CSU, the SPD and the FDP have no interest in or intention of conspiring with the neo-Nazis, or indeed with the Republikanger or the NPD. Thus, history does not appear to be repeating itself.

## CHAPTER 2

### RESURGENCE OF XENOPHOBIA: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Since unification, there has been a resurgence of xenophobia and neo-Nazism in Germany. This is the third wave of organized xenophobia and anti-Semitic violence, to have rocked the Federal Republic in the post-war Germany. This is very much alarming, because in terms of membership, political mobilization and electoral success, it seems likely to supersede the preceding neo-Nazi waves. The rise of organized attacks on foreigners, and related activities of xenophobia, in the aftermath of unification, has compounded the fears of a militarised Fourth Reich. Indeed, in 1992 alone, 20,000 "violent incidents" took place against foreigners and non-ethnic Germans, viz. Turkish, Jewish, Russians and Mozabicans and so forth<sup>1</sup>. In all of them the skinheads and neo-Nazi groups displayed various Nazi symbols in the public and, in some cases, desecrated the Jewish graveyards and gravestones with Swastikas.

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1. *The Washington Post*, 19 March 1993.

This chapter will examine and analyse the various causes of the resurgence of xenophobia, and significant political and foreign policy consequences. Xenophobia is used here as a collective term to include all manifestations in public mobilization against the non-Germans staying in the Federal Republic. As a matter of fact, xenophobic mobilization takes two general patterns. First, since the late 1980s and, especially since unification, radical and militant neo-Nazi groups and skinheads have indulged into street violence and raids against the asylum houses, hostels and doormatrics housing foreigners and immigrants. Secondly, there is politically explicit and elaborate form of xenophobic mobilization, which is, however, "populist" in nature and has shown strong and extreme nationalism<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, the second form perpetuates and in turn thrives on an anti-democratic attitude against foreigners and immigrants which has been prevalent in the post-unification Germany. The Republikaner Party, which is

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2. R.K. Jain, "Migration in Germany : Issues and Responses", *India International Centre Quarterly*, 20(4), Winter 1993, p.30

politically and constitutionally recognised in the Federal Republic, comes under this category<sup>3</sup>.

Among others, there is one thing which is undoubtedly shared in common by both groups. They share a common historical legacy of the National Socialism, and Adolf Hitler. Moreover, both of the xenophobic organization interrelated and interpret between nationalism, and anti-Semitism and racialisim.

## OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT

As a historical background, the development of xenophobia and anti-Semitism in post-War Germany is divided into three main stage. According to Richard Stoss, the year 1965 was considered to be the turning point. Until then, the so-called "Post Fascists" influenced events, that is, people who had received their political socialization during the era of National Socialism and were united by the memories

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3. Ibid, p.30. According to him there is no denying the fact that the Republikaner, which is perhaps more right-wing populist than right-wing extremist, is capitalising on both the prevalent feelings of weariness and disappointment with established, mainstream parties and popular anger at asylum seekers and foreigners.

of the Third-Reich<sup>4</sup>. After 1965, those activists came to the forefront, who were not tainted with National Socialism but, who had grown up in the era of the Cold War and had been influenced politically by the 'CDU state'. This generation has been described as the "neo-Nazis"<sup>5</sup>.

The first major economic crisis, the decline of the policy of economic reconstruction and the Grand Coalition of CDU/CSU and SPD, in the mid-1960s, initiated the second stage of development of xenophobia and neo-Nazism.

In the 1970s, the political climate in Western Germany became particularly harsh as a result of the confrontation between the social-liberal federal government and the CDU/CSU opposition, and this encouraged the development of xenophobic violence and neo-Nazi mobilization in the framework of a campaign against the treaties with the East. After 1977-78 the violence escalated into a neo-Nazi terrorism and, violent incidents of xenophobia were widespread. This

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4. Richard Stoss, Politics Against Democracy : Right-Wing Extremism in West Germany, (St. Martin Press : 1990), pp.101-102.

5. Richard Stoss, "The Problem of Right-Wing Extremism in West Germany", *West European Politics*, Vol.1, No.2, April 1988, pp.40-46.



was carried out primarily by youth groups and skinheads, inspired by anti-Semitism and extreme form of nationalism. "Until the mid-1098s, neo-Nazis and anti-Semistists were organizationally weakened and politically disillusioned after many of them were banned and their leaders imprisoned<sup>6</sup>.

The greatest organizational and political success of xenophobic attacks, attitudes and mobilization came in the aftermath of unification in 1989. On the eve of unification and after, immigration and related problems of unemployment, higher rents, financial difficulties and so forth, were greatest reasons for the new wave of xenophobia in the Federal Republic.

In the third stage after unification, immigration and unemployment were major reasons of xenophonia. In 1992 alone, close to a million foreigners and refugees came to Germany "out of which 450,000 were political asylum seeker<sup>7</sup>. Besides, hundreds of

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6. Ibid, p.50.

7. Jain, n.2.

thousands of ethnic Germans came in from the east-bloc. According to Tara Kartha, next to economic recession, xenophobia was a great obsession in 1992 in Germany<sup>8</sup>.

## **XENOPHOBIA IN ESTERN GERMANY**

An overview of the historical roots of xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and neo-Nazi violence in the former German Democratic Republic is sought to be discussed below. This is reasonable because any number of attacks have occurred against foreigners and immigrants, in some cases terrific and most organized, in the five new states of the Federal Republic.

The former German Democratic Republic was a restrictive and tightly controlled society. In this society, social and political spontaneity were suppressed, organized and mobilized by the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). The youth were, in particular, discouraged from joining, much less, forming any independent political groups. Whenever several young people gathered, there the party

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8. Tara Kartha, "Re-emergence of Racism : Germany After Unification", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.15, No.11, p.1038.

insisted on its dominance and integration. Any "outward display of human individualism was disapproved as anti-socialist behaviour"<sup>9</sup>. Political membership in youth organizations was mandatory and formed an ordinary part of a citizen's life in "real existing socialism"<sup>10</sup>. Most of the youth regularly participated in the official activities of such "organizations as the Young Pioneers, the Free German Youth and the Society for Sport and Technology, the last being an official paramilitary organization"<sup>11</sup>.

Such state-sponsored youth activities ended with the collapse of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (the SED). After unification, there has been "widespread feeling of boredom, frustration, and loneliness"<sup>12</sup>. This was, in most cases, very troubling as many young people were not accustomed to using their disposable and free time in the new world. The lackluster economy in eastern Germany did not offer enough opportunities to promote optimism about an easy-going future.

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9. David M. Keithly, "Shadows of Germany's Authoritarian Past", *Orbis*, Spring 1994, pp.208-212.

10. David M. Keithly, The Collapse of East German Communism : The Year the Wall Came Down , (Westport), 1992), pp.130-131.

11. Keithly, n.9, pp.208-209.

12. Ibid.

More significantly, youth leaders of former party organizations, the free German Youth (FDJ) in particular, in an astonishing and disconcerting volte-face have been joining neo-Nazi and xenophobic groups.

Thomas Dienel, a former FDJ official in Thuringia, typifies such political perversion. Dienel, now an outspoken neo-Nazi agitator and a violent anti-Semite, heads the neo-Nazi German National Party. This party was finally designated an illegal political organization in a 1993 court order. The organizational skills acquired in the former German Democratic Republic, and the personal ruthlessness necessary for success in it, in part, explains the rapid ascent of neo-Nazi and xenophobia groups in the Federal Republic after Unification. Dienel gained notoriety of the most terrific sort in the northern city of Rostock, where, there was a most organized xenophobic violence against immigrants and refugees. He had also announced that should a demonstration that his German Nationalist Party was planning in Thuringian Rudolstadt be banned, he would see to it that the city

would experience "a second Rostock"<sup>13</sup>. It was not a trifling threat, and neither was the demonstration banned.

In December 1992, Dienel was sentenced to a term in prison for inciting to riot and for "insulting the memory of the deceased"<sup>14</sup>. In his hearing, Dienely admitted to desecrating Jewish gravestones and throwing pigs heads onto the grounds of Jewish communities. German authorities also took action against Dienel's associate called Heinz Reisz, an anti-Semitic agitator whose political background in the former GDR was similar to that of Dienel.

The pattern is prevalent and alarming. Leaders of the National offensive, a violence-prone neo-Nazi and xenophobic group, which has a cadre complete with the stonetunes of communist organizations, such as, former Young Pioneers and the Free German Youth activists, mobilise for recruitment. National offensive even employs some former FDJ slogans, demanding, for instance, "selfless party discipline"

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13. *The Economist*, 20 November, 1993.

14. *Ibid.*

and "constant vigilance" vis-a-vis the "intrigues of the enemy"<sup>15</sup>. Such political sloganeering and related symbols are alluring to young persons whose socio-political world and standards of living have undergone rapid change. These symbols and slogans offer a false sense of tranquility to those who find themselves unable to adjust to the new society.

In a similar instance of extreme advocacy in 1992, many teenage members of National Offensive, all former communist members of the Young Pioneer, exhibited the dubious combination of socialism, nationalism and racism. They railed against the "excessive foreign influence" in German society, demanding, that most foreigners be expelled. They spoke of the need for new "national" and socio-political values<sup>16</sup>. They even praised the Hitler Youth as the

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15. *Nation Europa*, Vol. 14 (1987), p.167.

16. *Nation Europa*, Vol.18 (1991), No.10, p.10. For details about "foreign problems", also see *jain n.2*, pp.23-24. A study on xenophobic violence released in July 1993 in the Bundestag highlighted the young age of suspects and offenders. The offenders, the study noted, "tended to be motivated by diffuse feelings and ideas about a general threat to and discrimination against 'Germans' because of 'foreigner' meaning asylum-seekers in particular".

organization that contributed to the "moral strength" of society. All expressed concern about what they term zinskneckschaft (usury) a favourite target of the Nazi propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels's entourage. They also condemned the "so-called international Jewry, whose power, they believe, controls international finance and rules the United States"<sup>17</sup>. In general, neo-Nazi's language is laced with Nazi and communist racial-catchwords, which range from "new society" to Volksgemeinschaft ("national community") to Volkisch ("pure German")<sup>18</sup>. This had in its ranks, hundreds of clandestine violence-prone members, whose very existence was denied in propaganda issued by them.

The GDR was, in fact, one of the most introverted and parochial country in Europe. This hardly offered an environment conducive to the popular development of sensitivities for foreign countries. Most party officials and members of the armed forces were simply forbidden by law from having contacts of any sort. Interestingly, although

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17. Ibid.

18. Keithly, n.9. Also see Jian, n.2.

paradoxically, it has been pointed out that the effective segregation of foreigners sometimes bred popular prejudice and bigotry in the open, pluralist, and relatively cosmopolitan society of West Germany. But then, one has to understand that social difficulties are much greater in the once closed and monitored areas of the former GDR.

Refereing to level of conciousness vis-a-vis foreigners in the former German Democratic Republic, it has been argued that the attitude of the government towards foreigners, especially towards "racially conspicuous foreigners" like Asians and blacks, was shocking<sup>19</sup>. In East Berlin, foreigners have frequently been cursed at and harassed in the streets. Sometimes, they are attacked and beaten for no other reasons than because they were racially different. The xenophobic violence, which rocked Rostock in 1991 is an important example. At the official level, the GDR was a dogmatic country with no shortage of explicit portrayals of an ideological enemy or implicit

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19. Jain, n.2, p.20. At present, there are 6.5 million foreigners living in Germany of whom 1.3 million are children or youths under 16 yrs of age. The largest group of the foreigners are the Turks. Who constitute 28% of the total.



displays of bigotry and anti-Semitism. Official publications periodically made outrageous remarks about Jews, and the contempt of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) for Israel was proverbial. The GDR never had diplomatic relations with Israel and even prohibited all postal communications with Israel and South Africa. The regime's enemies were often referred to as "Jews" or accused of being in the employ of "International Zionism". In the height of the "Prague Spring" of 1968, the East Berlin accused that "Jewry reigns in Prague" or "Zionism has consequenced Czechoslovakia"<sup>20</sup>.

Foreigners from "socialist brother-states" of the Third World, such as Vietnam, Ethiopia, and Mozambique, who came to Eastern Germany to work, had little or no contact with the public at large<sup>21</sup>. They were not encouraged to have any, and were usually housed in secluded areas. In another example, Soviet soldiers were another ghettoized foreigners. They lived in isolated compounds. Enlisted

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20. Keithly, n.10, pp.185-186.

21. Keithly, n.9. pp.213-214.

members of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG) were seldom permitted outside the caserns, except in military exercises. Officers too lived in compounds and as a rule, were dissuaded from cultivating local contacts.

Dormitories for foreign workers were burned and Russians were assaueted. In one well-publicized case, a crowd entered a Russian barracks and proceeded to throw young soldiers out of upper-story.

## **NEW NATIONALISM : CAUSES AND CONCEPTION**

After unification of Germany, new national questions and conceptions emerged in a full force. Nationalism can assume different shapes and slogans. Nationalism or rather "New Nationalism", on the eve of unification and after, has shown a conspicuously double face in the Federal Republic of Germany<sup>22</sup>. The events of 1989 ushered in the

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22. Stern Fritz, "Freedom and its Discontents", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.72, No.4-5, 1993, pp.122,128.

restoration of German national identity. Clearly then, on the "positive side", nationalism furnished the necessary impulse for Germany's reunification. As might be expected, Germany's rejuvenated nationhood should now help to promote a stable society based on mutual values. On the otherhand, the "dark side of the New Nationalism" is to be found in the bigotry and xenophobic aggression occuring in many German cities<sup>23</sup>. In its more fervent and extreme manifestation nationalism recurrently becomes "entwined with racial hatred and anti-Semitism".<sup>24</sup>

All through the post-war years, unification had been the single most agenda of the neo-Nazi parties. Each time they tried to bring, sometimes rather forcefully, the "unification agenda as the manistay of political debate, they were sidelined".<sup>25</sup> For the first three decades of the Federal Republic, they were frustrated. In sharp contrast to their reunification theme, the Republic's theme was economic growth and

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23. Ibid, 125.

24. Stoss, n. 5, ,pp.45-46.

25. Debora Lipstadt, Denying the Holocaust, (New York, 1993), p.220.

political-democratic stability. They wanted to persuade the nation to follow such policies which they judged, could make reunification possible. The "nation's preoccupation, in the post-war years, was its integration in the West through membership of NATO and the European Community".<sup>26</sup> The neo-Nazis and skinheads preferred to turn the clock back to an earlier cultural sense of nationhood and of being German. For the neo-Nazis and skinhead organisations, unification was "the biggest surprise of modern history" in the post-war years.<sup>27</sup>

The whole process was rapid and unprecedented, even more painful, when they were dispossessed of their *raison d'être*. But some important political and physical events, which came in alongside of the unification, soon gave them a cause to flourish.

Economic uncertainty breeds frustration and unemployment promotes radicalizations of politics. In most of the former GDR, the

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26. Ibid, p.222.

27. Roger Eatwell, *Fascism: A History*, (Chatto, 1995), pp.233,236.

official unemployment rate after unification has been over 15%. The actual rate is even higher, since many of those who are employed, are working part-time. The transfer of population in the wake of unification and migration have caused much social and economic tension in the society in the Federal Republic. Xenophobia and related anti-foreigner violence easily found anti-immigrant platforms in a population in which a significant percentage hold immigrants responsible for housing shortages and unemployment.<sup>28</sup>

## **UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC**

The collapse of the GDR in the wake of unification caused major economic dislocation in East Germany. But in 1990 and 1991, the unification of Germany proved a major economic boon to the West German economy. At the same time, for East Germans, it was time now to make money. The one-on-one exchange rate between the

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28. Jain, n.2, p.22. Many are infuriated by what they perceive as the abuse of a generous social security system by the immigrants.

Deutschmark and the Ostmark and two Ostmark to one Deutschmark conversion rate boosted the purchasing power of East Germans. Increased West German exports to Eastern Germany ensured higher economic growth for West Germans, even as, a general recessionary trend in European markets was delayed in Germany.

The banks and financial service companies also found a willing and eager market. A population which had no experience of commercial banking, was now given profitable account holding in vast numbers. The Chancellor Helmut Kohl looked hopeful and optimistic about the the positive economic impact of unification. In April 1990, he had ruled out any increase in taxation to fund reconstruction of East German economy, on the grounds, that such a move would be quite un-necessary, "given the East German propensity to consume and the universal German characteristic to work". Subsequently, however, "Chancellor Kohl's euphoria began to wane and everything looked defensible" within months, situation had begun to change.<sup>29</sup>

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29. Alan Watson, The German's : Who Are They Now ?, (Mandarin, 1992), pp.415-416.

Unemployment in Eastern Germany was on the rise. Two factors were, however, very much responsible for surge in unemployment, viz. (a) the sale of East German state-held companies by the Treuhand, and, (b) collapse of demand in the East German market. Eastern Germany was attempting to transform itself into capitalist and entrepreneurial economy out of chaos, resulting from the disintegration of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Furthermore, "the disintegration et traditional job market in Eastern Germany following the political collapse of the GDR, compounded the pains of unemployment".<sup>30</sup>

Nowhere was this more dramatically seen than in Rostock. Rostock, the former industrial hub of the former GDR, lay in ruin and disorganization. Xenophobia witnessed an all-time high miblization in 1991, in this industrial blackhole. After the division of Germany, Rostock was promoted by the communists to be a showpiece of East German industry, Its shipyards built high ships of many kinds for coastal traffic throughout the Baltic. Their most important customers

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30. Ibid, p.384.

were the Russians. East German industry, exemplified by Rostock, enjoyed "a reputation for quality and expertise". With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the "booming shipyards became irrelevant" and their products unsellable and hopelessly uncompetitive in the west.<sup>31</sup>

In practice, little could be done, for, Rostock also suffered a major characteristic disadvantage of the communist system. The concentration of industry in one location, for example, shipyards in Rostock alone, might have been convenient for the central planners of a communist command economy, but, disastrous in transition to capitalist organization. There was simply no other work available in Rostock. As a result, during 1991, "unemployment rose dramatically in the area touching well over 60%. The sorry state of Rostock was replicated throughout E. Germany, and as unemployment grew, consumer demand fell.<sup>32</sup> The bonanza of saving convertible to two Ostmark to the Deutschmark came to an end. The economy plunged into pessimism.

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31. Ibid, pp.384-386.

32. Ibid. Also see the *Europe Reviewed*, 1991-92, n.10, pp.102-104. The unemployment rate surged to 9.2% of the population.



In Western Germany also, the economy began to show signs of strain. The growth rate halved within twelve months. Nevertheless, throughout 1991, goods and services flowed from West to East at around 41 billions DM a quarter. The warning sign was that the flow in the opposite direction remained very small. A marked "balance of payment deficit swung in, and there occurred high levels of public borrowing and unemployment".<sup>33</sup>

With jobless numbering 2.26 million in Western Germany and 1.2 million eastern Germany, the xenophobic organizations and skinheads found themselves operating in a promising environment. They stood poised to politically and culturally mobilize the unemployed youth, and many of them, have since, filled their ranks. Indeed in the Federal Republic in 1992, people were alarmed by the fact that, "next to economic recession, xenophobia was a great obsession".<sup>34</sup>

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33. *The Times*, (London), 19 August 1991. The figure of unemployed jumped from 1,42,000 before the merger in the East to over 1 million in July 1991. Also see, *International Herald Tribune*, 26 November, 1992.

34. Tara Kartha, "Right-Wing Violence in Germany" (unpublished Research Paper, IDSA, New Delhi, 1996).

The guest-workers (Gastarbeiter), who have been otherwise instrumental in success of West Germany's economic miracle, became easy and frequent targets of anti-foreigner mobilization.

## IMMIGRATION IN GERMANY

There was a marked flow of immigrants in the Federal Republic, in the wake of unification and after. Significantly though, the migratory invasion has coincided with the rise of xenophobic and neo-Nazi activities. By itself, this was not a new phenomenon. Foreign workers, were essential to the capitalist economy of West Germany. Throughout the 1980s, millions of foreign workers mainly from Turkey, continued to work in West Germany industry. They were mainly concentrated in South Germany and around Frankfurt. Their presence, although, resented by the neo-Nazi and xenophobic elements, did not alarm most Germans. Very few Gasterbeiter took German nationality.<sup>35</sup>

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35. *Country Survey*, 1982, p. 162. The families of the Gater-beitars also tended to be large.

Towards the end of the decade 1980s, however, the Federal Republic was given to a characteristically "new wave of migration" of population.<sup>36</sup> A new element entered the immigration movement into West Germany. The political refugees in the Federal Republic of Germany sought asylum under the Article 16 of the Basic Law. This was aimed at redeeming the racial expulsion of the Third Reich. But, in practice, this opened the floodgates of refugees across Germany's borders. The definition of 'political ground' proved to be extremely difficult to apply. There is, however, no doubt that even during the 1980s, many political asylum seekers were, in fact, "economic refugees" from depressed parts of the world.<sup>37</sup>

In October 1989, an estimated 30,000 citizens emigrated to FRG from the GDR. The GNP stood as US \$ 18,530 perhead, and in the GDR, at \$12,400 perhead. A table of foreigher entering the country is given below :

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36. Richard Layard, East-West Migration, (Cambridge, 1992), pp.205-206.

37. Jain, n.2, p.25.

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1988	345,581
1989	842,227 refugees (total) of which 720,909 ethnic Germans (East Europe) 121,318 non-Germans
1990	397,000 total of which 148,000 ethnic Germans (USSR) 133,000 ethnic Germans (Poland) 111,000 Romanian refugees

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SOURCE : Statesman Year Book, 1990-91, Refer, Tara Kartha, "Re-emergence of Racism : Germany After Unification".

The early years of the 1990s have seen a vast increase in the number of immigrants entering Germany. It is estimated that in 1991 and 1992, between 1.1 and 1.5 million immigrants entered the Federal Republic each year joining the 4.5 million guest workers already there.

Clearly then, the economics of these figures were not as much alarming as the sociology of them. Even if Germany were to have no

unemployment and its economy were immune to recession, such an influx and sudden social heterogeneity would create uncertainty and resentment. In practice, Germany of 1992, although reunited, was an uneasy country with huge unemployment and deepening recession.<sup>38</sup> This was in no position to receive new waves of immigrants.

## RIOTS AT ROSTOCK

Unemployment and immigration had converged to create conditions for the resurgence of xenophobia. The neo-nazis banked on anti-immigrants and xenophobic nationalism. In 1991, signs of xenophobia, were already apparent, though they did not receive much media attention. In Zittau in Eastern Germany, a mob attacked a dormitory housing 40 Russian youths.<sup>39</sup> In Wittenberg, again in the East, neo-Nazis assaulted Mozambican immigrants. Huge anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish slogans have been spread in pedestrian sub-way in and around Stuttgart.

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38. *International Herald Tribune*, 26 November 1992. Chancellor Kohl acknowledged on 25 November that West Germany is in recession and "it seems that the global ailment has finally caught up with Germany.

39. *International Herald Tribune*, 15 November 1992.

Peter Koderitzsch and Leo Muller, in their analysis of neo-Nazi development and anti-Semitic violence, identify two dates, in the middle of 1990, as the moment when neo-Nazis began to reap the harvests of xenophobia.

On 1 May 1990, near Eisenach, a prominent neo-Nazi from West Germany, Michael Kuhnen addressed a meeting at which the Nazi-party song, the Hosst Wessel Song, was sung. Two months later, Kuhnen, a well known figure in neo-Nazi circles in West Germany, spoke to an audience of 200 young neo-Nazis in Cottbus. Although arrested, he was released within hours. In the opinion of Koderitzsch, and Muller, "Kuhnen's appearance was a signal. For the neo-Nazis, from East and West, the ice had been broken". In this context Watson notes that "the ice was already very thin. Underneath it, the water ran deep and dark and it only required the determination of experienced neo-Nazis and xenophobic groups from the West to crack it wide open".

In the autumn of 1991, neo-Nazi violence and racial attacks in Hoyersweda superseded all those in ferocity. The events took the citizens of Hoyersweda by surprise as they did the rest of Germany. Indeed, it was here that xenophobia and racism had first burst into the consciousness at the wider level in the Federal Republic. Any number of Molotov cocktails were directed by neo-Nazi activists at the hotel, which was housing 230 asylum seekers. What was new and alarming, about Hoyersweda, was the clear popular support for the xenophobic violence. The police were effective in taking action. They could only remove the immigrants they saw to be the cause, then arrest the neo-Nazis responsible for the racial outrage.

Similarly, in Rostock, the Baltic port plagued by high unemployment and scarred by empty shipyards, in 1992, around 700 neo-Nazis launched a terror campaign of xenophobia and racial violence against asylum seekers for almost a week. There are some aspects of the Rostock riots which need to be highlighted.

1. The authorities had been aware of the hostility of the residents to the foreigners in their midst, for sometime. In the light of the Hoyersweda incidents, some gestures could have been made to tone down this hostility.
2. The demonstration was reportedly announced in the local paper (Ostseezeitung) and the attackers even gave the estimated time. What is more, the violence started at 8 P.M. precisely.
3. Residents, all around had already gathered to watch and cameras were positioned well in advance. Adequate news coverage was already ensured.
4. Even as the violence continued into the third night, no attempt was made to arrest the perpetrators and the police remained silent and passive.
5. Worse still, sympathisers and hooligans came in from Hamburg, Berlin, Saxony and the North Rhine-Westphalia.
6. Police suddenly withdrew, leaving the field open for the attackers, who promptly set fire to the barracks, where,



150 Vietnamese and Romanian gypsy women and children were hiding.

7. Rostock, at that time, had not seen any rise in the number of refugees.
8. The main employer, Warno Shipyard, and a big jeans factory, had closed down.<sup>40</sup>
9. The 'solution' was to remove the refugees and "clean up the area".<sup>41</sup>
10. No fresh foreigners had been brought thereafter into either of the two cities, both however has seen a rise in unemployment.

Even as there remains a strong correlation between unemployment and xenophobia, a few exceptions to the general pattern could be seen. For instance, in Saxony Anhalt, where the number of attacks had been the highest, the number of foreigners actually dropped from 9,200 in 1990 to a mere 2,294 in 1991 and unemployment had actually improved.<sup>42</sup> A survey done in Saxony Anhalt, revealed that over 30% of juveniles were overtly racist and considered the Jews to

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40. *The German Tribune*, 4 September 1992.

41. *Ibid.*

42. *The German Tribune*, 24 July 1992.

be a "curse".<sup>43</sup> The vandalism of Jewish cemeteries was similarly on the increase all over the Federal Republic. In Wuppertal, 36 miles north of Bonn, an ancient cemetery was badly damaged.<sup>44</sup>

Before Rostock, there had been some 800 cases of attacks on foreigners by the skinheads and neo-nazis in the Federal Republic during 1992. In two months that followed, the number of attacks rose to nearly 2000.

In all the incidents of anti-foreigner mobilization and acts of racial violence, the neo-Nazis frequently resorted to public display of Nazi symbols and other ideals and emblems of the Third Reich. Indeed, their ideology is derivative, and most of all, distorted. These eccentric and sometimes, "pathologically disturbed youngsters" would not have commanded such overwhelming attention, had they not appropriated the Nazi symbols and "anti-Semitic slogans of the

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43. *The German Tribune*, 25 September 1992.

44. *International Herald Tribune*, 5 November 1992.

National Socialism", no matter how inappropriately.<sup>45</sup> Their personal predilections are bizzare. But, as the SPD's deputy leader, Dr. Daublier - Gmelin said : "Auschueitz makes the difference".<sup>46</sup>

The year 1992 was a landmark in the history of neo-Nazi violence, xenophobic mobilization, and counter-mobilization. As we have already seen, it was the murder of the two young Turkish girls and their grandmother at Moelln on 23 November 1992 that galvanised the political, judicial and law enforcement establishments of the Federal Republic. Until that point, their reactions to the rising tide of xenophobic mobilization and anti-foreigner violence during 1991 and 1992, seemed to be irrelavent. According to Alan Watson there were some important reasons for the inadequate response.

First, the Constitution of the Federal Republic so greatly upholds individual rights and freedom of expression, that it was extremely and neo-Nazi outrages. Secondly, the federal nature of the

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45. Joseph Rothschild, Return to Diversity, (New York, 1993), p.185.

46. Ibid, p.186. Also see Alan Watson, n.29, pp.280-282.

German Constitution provided hurdles in co-operating police and judicial reaction. Each province had to find its own solution. Thirdly, the fact that the Federal government assumed, and so with real justification, that since immigration was a major reason, it would take time for different political parties to settle the debate. This provided an excuse for the slow and ineffectual response of the authorities to the immediate danger of xenophobia and neo-Nazism.<sup>47</sup>

Under Germany's Federal Constitution, the individual states are given significant power over policing. Yet, during 1991 and the early months of 1992, inter-state co-operation and consultation was not coming. The truth of the matter was that there were inadequate police resources in five new states. As in the case of the Rostock riots of neo-Nazis against immigrants; bureaucratic delay stemming from disorganized resources, meant that immigrants were held in hostels for long, that was unnecessary.

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47. Watson, n.29, p.385.

Whatever the specific rights and wrongs of these incidents and the strengths and weaknesses of the excuses provided : what is undeniable is that, a strong lead from the very top of government would have had a major impact on attitude of the political, judicial and law reinforcement establishments. Personally, Chancellor Helmut Kohl and his cabinet clearly deplored the racist and xenophobic attacks and aggression. Yet, as the head of Germany's 40,000 strong Jewish community, Ignatz Bubis pointed out forcefully during 1992, that, "Kohl government had not really spoken out firmly against, what was going on". According to him, the government instead preferred to focus on the debate over "altering the country's liberal asylum laws".<sup>48</sup>

Lawmakers feel that there were enough laws to try the offenders, if the government should so decide. Instead of quibbling on Article 16 of the Basic Law that deals with asylum, it was felt that the government should be laying down the law on Article 1 of the constitution, which declared that human dignity is inviolable.

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48. *German Tribune*, 25 September 1992. Joseph Joffe was also quoted to have remarked : "They engage in endless discussions, but the problem they agonized over was not the offenders but the potential victims. . . . They talk about dishonest motives. . . . And unreasonable demands. . . they mean the refugees who are trying to escape persecution and become persecuted again in Germany.

Within the days of Mollen, however the Federal Interior Minister Rudolf Seiters had called an urgent meeting with the Interior Ministers of all the states. Together, they agreed on a series of measures to combat the specific actions of neo-Nazi, anti-foreigner and anti-Semitic violence. After that meeting, the Chairman of the Standing Conference of the Interior Minister announced a whole package of measures, which in practice, had powerful effect. These included the "establishment of special police units", which could be deployed at short notice.<sup>49</sup> Many special commissions were to be set up to co-ordinate the fight against racist aggression. Special forces were put on stand by at specific trouble spots like Rostock on the Baltic coast. There was a rapid improvement in the flow of information between local and federal police forces, the appointment of special police liaison officers to communicate with foreigners, housed in hostels and help to be provided by local residents, refugee administrations and police personnel. Steps were to be taken to make sure that the hostels for asylum seekers were directly linked to police stations, and that these

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49. Ham Fisher, After the Wall : Germany and the Burdens of History, (New York, 1995), pp.255-257.

links would be secure against attacks. Much of the damage that had been done to hostels had occurred because the police were slow to turn up. Most of all, the number of police officers assigned to protect refugees and prevent neo-Nazi and xenophobic outbursts was greatly increased.

The Interior Minister also looked at the criminal law and particularly those sections already described which, if implemented effectively could significantly reduce neo-Nazi activity. Thus, section 86 (a) of the criminal code, on the use of Third Reich symbols, was to be strengthened. So too was the section 130 on incitement to xenophobic violence. Under section 125(a) the powers of arrest in cases of civil disorder were to be extended.

All this amounted to an unprecedented attack on the perpetrators of violence, but the minister did not limit themselves to these specific actions. They also called for a massive public information campaign including advertising, television and materials for schools. The government had decided to fight for hearts and minds in quite a new way. The government was going to lead public opinion rather than be led by it.

In the event, public opinion, in the aftermath of Mollen, kept well ahead of government. Opinion polls, in the month after the Mollen xenophobic killings, showed two great things :

1. The percentage of Germans, rejecting the extremist right-wings' and neo-Nazi-gangs-of-skinheads' slogan 'Foreigners Out' had suddenly risen from 43% to 69% and,
2. The percentage of those, professing to understand neo-Nazi extremist actions, "because of the foreigner problem" plummeted from 33% to 12%.<sup>50</sup>

In 1992, there were remarkable outbursts of anti-xenophobia demonstration all over the Federal Republic. The sheer numbers involved throughout, were testimony to an unprecedented mobilization in the post-war history of Germany: 350,000 people in Munich, over 100,000 in Cologne and in Hanover, over 200,000 in Frankfurt, over 150,000 in Bonn and over 20,000 in Moelln itself, participated in these

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50. Watson, n.29, pp.412-413.



demonstrations. As the foreign editor of the *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, Josef Joffe, wrote in an article, "at last the silent majority is standing up for decency and democracy. People have begun to understand that attacks against foreigners are also attacks against us---- against our whole way of life".<sup>51</sup>

Munich and Mollen were great landmarks, which accelerated the enforcement of the law even as the Chief federal Prosecutor Alexander von Stahl himself took over the Moelln case, the first time that the Federal Prosecutor had become involved with the prosecution of neo-Nazi terrorists. Within days, a suspect named Michael Peters had been arrested. He was accused of founding a neo-Nazi terrorist group. Within hours, another senior establishment figure had moved with impressive alacrity. The Interior Minister, Rudolf Seiters announced that the German Nationalist Party, a neo-Nazi splinter group was to be banned and finally its leader Thomas Daniel was arrested.

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51. Joseph Joffe, "The New Europe : Yesterday's Ghosts" *Foreign Affairs : American and the World*, 1992-93, Vol. 72, No. 1, p.47

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a couple of points should be emphasized. Firstly, the resurgence of xenophobia in the Federal Republic of Germany after unification underlines the "dilemmas and difficulties" of multi-cultural society. The Western Europe is building a "Fortress Europe", which will only help destabilize the multi-cultural assimilation of migrant populations. The funds for "admission and resettlement schemes" have been quite as skimpily as the resolve of Europe's governments.<sup>52</sup>

Secondly, the "Islamic threat" and Turkish "demographic explosion" are other main reasons, which come in the way of cultural assimilation of the racially conspicuous groups such as the Turks.<sup>53</sup> The attitude and reaction of the migrant Turkish Muslims workers also hampers the cultural inter-mixture. The Turks retain their exclusive clothings, food, education and cultural ideals, and this, unwillingness intensifies the problem. Moreover each nation wants to resist its

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52. Jain, n.2, pp.27, 33.

53. John L. Esposito, The Islamic Threat : Myth or Reality ? (Oxford, 1992), pp.176-177.

change into a multi-cultural frontier-free "melting pot" community.<sup>54</sup> As, indeed, one scholar noted, "it is not only the language, it is the attitude : the unpreparedness of Western Europe to accept Moslems and the difficulty Moslems have integrating themselves into Western society."<sup>55</sup>

Thirdly, the new politically unified Germany is economically dislocated. The modern political history of Germany shows, that in times of economic recession, there has been the resurgence of xenophobia and neo-Nazi movement. The post-Unification resurgence of xenophobia, and growing political, even parliamentary popularity of neo-Nazi parties in Germany represents a disturbing under current in the German polity. "However, it is not likely that xenophobia will wither away with a reduction in unemployment and greater economic prosperity", noted one scholar.<sup>56</sup> Another school of thought belongs to the contrary opinion. It is argued that right-wing phenomenon and

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54. Alsaadir, Stewart, "Migrants, Minorities and Security in Europe", *Conflict Studies* (London), No.247-256, June 1992, pp.24-25.

55. Norbert Walter in Gary L. Geipel, ed., The Future of Germany, (Indianapolis, 1990), pp.102-103.

56. Jain, n.2, p.34.

xenophobia, like left-wing extremism will lose force with economic stability.<sup>57</sup> However, the balance of the evidence support the argument that the xenophobia will not become a generalised phenomenon.<sup>58</sup> Since the foreign workers and migrant masses are concentrated in certain specific areas, for example, Turks in Berlin and Frankfurt and South Europeans in the Ruhr area, xenophobic mobilization will most likely be felt only in certain cities than in others.<sup>59</sup>

Finally, the problems of foreigners and migrant workers and their effective removal will need Germany to make necessary cultural and material adjustment. The cultural integration and assimilation of migrant population viz. foreigners in the German Society will be a necessary prerequisite. As one authority has noted, "in one form or the other, therefore the issue of foreign workers and asylum-seekers will continue to remain on the agenda of German politics for many years to come."<sup>60</sup>

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57. Eckhart Werthebach, Head of the office for the Protection of Federal Constitution quoted in David Mansh, "Street War against Skinheads", *Financial Times*, 30 July, 1993.

58. Emphasis added.

59. Auther B. Gunlicks, "Between Elections in West, 1976, 1980 and 1980-83", in Karl H. Cerny, ed., *Germany at the polls : The Bundestag Elections of the 1980s*, (Durham, 1990), pp.12-14.

60. Jain, n.2, p.34.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE REPUBLICAN PARTY IN GERMAN POLITICS

The Republikaner (The Republicans) are a neo-nationalist and neo-Nazi party. Their xenophobic nationalism and anti-Semitic activities marked a new step forward in the history of neo-Nazi political mobilization, especially since unification. The Republikaner party represents the most populist and politically elaborate form of neo-Nazism in the Federal Republic. Unlike the skinheads and street-based gangs of xenophobic terrorists and racial nationalists, the Republikaners are represented in the various state parliaments of the Federal Republic, notably Bavaria and Baden-wuerttemberg and so on. In terms of their party programme and propaganda, they gloss over the Nazi crimes and the Holocaust. The Republicans have been politically the most articulate and influential group in revising and relativising the Nazi historical past and Germany's war guilt. In order to subvert the free democratic base and liberal political order of the Federal

Republic, they incite anti-Semitism, racism and cultural nationalism.

Before we go on describing the political programme of the Republicans and its political position vis-a-vis various other parties of the Federal Republic, it is indispensable to understand the development of this organization and its role in the rise of xenophobia in the Federal Republic of Germany.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Republikaner were founded in November 1983 in Munich by the two former Christian Social Union (CSU) Bundestag members, Franz Handles and Ekkehard Voigt. Franz Schonhuber, the former television journalist in Bavarian Television, was also instrumental in the formation of this "neo-conservative" and xenophobic organization.<sup>1</sup> The impetus had come mainly from widespread dissatisfaction within the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union

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1. Silvermann and Julius H. Schoeps (eds.), New Anti-Semitism and the Old Holocaust (Cologne, 1986), p.163.

(CSU), particularly regarding the 'change', which had failed to materialize.<sup>2</sup>

On 1 October 1982, the social-liberal era had come to an end. The Chancellor of the SPD-FDP coalition, Helmut Schmidt, was overthrown by a vote of no confidence. The Bundestag elected the former leader of opposition, Helmut Kohl of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), as his successor. The change in power, which the CDU/CSU had been striving for since 1969, was therefore, not the result of an electoral decision by the West German people. Rather, the FDP had changed its coalition policy, because its political differences with social democracy, had become insurmountable. The liberals demanded a neo-Liberal turning back ('Wende') in economic policy, in view of the severe economic crisis.<sup>3</sup> This was, however, unacceptable to the Social Democratic Party (SPD), because it did not want a further cut in the social welfare area for the fear of trade unions. In great realignment of political forces, the Green Party was making inroads into the SPD's electorate.

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2. Richard Stoss, Politics Against Democracy : Right-Wing Extremism in West Germany (New York : St. Martin Press, 1990), pp.202-203.

3. Ibid, p.202.

Even though the CDU/CSU had come in power, the dissatisfaction of the right-wing conservative circles within the CDU/CSU had become widespread. According to the right-wing conservative lobby, the CDU/CSU leaders had betrayed the "promises of change" made in the campaign against the social-liberal coalition.<sup>4</sup>

The right-wing conservatives demanded a fundamental intellectual and moral change towards a consistent conservative policy. These circles were stepping up their calls for such a change, which would entail among others, a diminution of the influence of the state and bureaucracy, renewal of the family, overcoming the socialist-nihilistic "cultural revolution", which had apparently been caused by the social liberal era, the "re-establishment of traditions and historically-proven values" and virtues.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the conservatives wanted the recreation of the German national consciousness.

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4. David P. Conradt, The German Policy (New York, 1986), p.40.

5. Adrei S. Markovita, "Germany's Radical Right", *Orbis*, Vol.38, 1994, pp.250-262.



The dissatisfaction of right-wing conservative circles with the CDU/CSU was partly reflected in the election results. When the CSU chairman, Franz Josef Strauss, negotiated a loan of about DM 1 billion to the German Democratic Republic (GDR) this caused great "controversy" in the rank and files of the CSU.<sup>6</sup> Two of his fellow CSU bundestag members, Franz Handes and Ekkehard Voigt, as well as the former Bavarian television editor Franz Schonhuber, founded the party Die Republikaner in 1983.

The Republikaner achieved 3 percent of the vote in the 1986 Bavarian state parliament elections.<sup>7</sup> This result signalled to a possible nation-wide restriction of the CDU/CSU's capacity to integrate the right. This was to be subsequently confirmed in the Berlin election and the European Parliament election.

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6. Stoss, n.2, pp.202-203.

7. R.K. Jain, "Migration in Germany's Issues and Responses", *India International Center Quarterly*, Vol.2, No.4, Winter, 1993, p.23. Also after their local triumphs in Berlin and Frankfurt in 1989, the Republikaner polled nearly a million votes in the December 1990 all Germans elections. This was still below the 5 percent required to enter the Bundestag.

Another important right-wing and neo-Nazi party, which banked on the dissatisfaction of right-wing conservative forces with the CSU/CDU, and with which the Republikaner had to compete, was the Deutsche Volks Union (DVU)-Liste D. The party with "considerable financial backing, a group of press companies and a large number of supporters", had been founded by Dr. Frey. But because, he lacked a functioning organization capable of conducting election, he formed an "alliance" with the National Democratic Party (NPD) led by A. Mupgnug.<sup>8</sup> In the 1987 Bundestag elections the NPD mobilized over 225,000 voters (0.6%), and in the same year the neo-Nazis were able to win a parliamentary seat at the state level for the first time since 1968. In Bremen, the DVU managed to overcome the 5 percent restrictive clause. In 1989 the National Democratic Party in Hesse entered several local government parliaments.<sup>9</sup> In the Frankfurt local elections, for example, it won seven seats.

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8. Mankovits, n.6, pp.250-262.

9. *Nation Europe*, Vol. 40 (1990), No.10, p.15.

However, the "real break through" was achieved not by the old established right-wing extremist parties but by the "neo-nationalist Republikaner".<sup>10</sup> In 1989, they easily overcame the 5 percent restrictive clause twice : in Berlin they secured 7.5% of votes with 11 seats, and in the European Parliament six seats with over two million votes. In the Bundestag (Federal Assembly of Germany) general elections on 16 October 1994, the Republikaner Party won 875, 175 votes i.e., 1.9% of the total, with no seats. The Republikaner chalked up the 9.6% of votes in the state parliamentary elections of Baden-Wuerttemberg on 24 March, 1996. In the final analysis, however, it was not the DVU, supported by the NPD, that profited from the considerable trends towards disintegration at the right wing of the party system. The Republikaner were the main beneficiaries.

The main reason, why the Republikaner succeeded in out-stripping the NPD/DVU alliance in the elections was because they are not perceived as a neo-fascist party by the vast majority of the

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10. Michael Balafour, Germany : The Tides of Power (London, 1990), pp.262ff.

population. Furthermore, "ideologically, they cover the area from right-wing extremism to right-wing conservatism", and also because they have received a "great deal of publicity from the media".<sup>11</sup> In addition and in contrast to the NPD and the DVU, they are not officially considered to be a right wing extremist and neo-Nazi party. As a result of this possible inhibition thresholds are lowered in the electorate psychology, and membership of the party (e.g by the people employed in public services) is not countered with any form of sanctions. In many cases, the Republikaner are not even excluded from the democratic spectrum, but are rendered quite "acceptable as potential coalition partners".<sup>12</sup>

The political legitimacy and the democratic respectability won by the Republikaner Party have been under constant scrutiny of the greatest established official organization. This is, the Verfassungsschutz

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11. Roger Eatwell, Fascism: A History (Chatto, 1995), pp.232.233.

12. Stoss, n.2, p.234. Also see R.K. Jain as for the electoral potential of the Republican Party, it could also limit the coalition options for the other parties. Jain, n.7, p.30. It maintains that the Republikaner Party could limit the coalition options for other parties which have all officially rejected any form of cooperation with the Republikaner.

(Third Branch of the German Secret Service under the control of the Bundestag). The Verfassungsschutz is, however, also known as the office for the protection of the Constitution.

In the fight against various enemies of constitution, the Office for the protection of the constitution has been the right organization to draw distinction between neo-Nazi xenophobic groups and other extremist neo-nationalist parliametary parties, such as the Republikaner, the NPD and the DVU. As regards the relationship between neo-nazi street groups and the Republikaner, the Vafassungsschutz has failed to produce evidence of overt collusion between them. Certainly the Republicans have been careful to deplore xenophobic violence and stay on the right side of legality, while sharing many arguments used by the perpetrators of xenophobic violence. If there is no collusion, there is undoubtedly "synergy".<sup>13</sup> The head of the Verfassungsschutz, Dr. Werthebach, confirmed to Alan Watson in an interview in 1991 that he

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13. Christopher Rojahn, "Extreme Right-Wing Violence in Germany", *Conflict Studies*, No.292, September 1996, pp.45-47.

and his agency saw the Republikaner, the NPD and others as the 'respectable face of extremism' and xenophobia.<sup>14</sup> About the Republikaner, the chairman concludes that at present, in terms of official organization, it should not be characterised extremist. This should not rule out the possibility that individual members are real extremists.

What is significant is, that despite the fact that the Verfassungsschutz characterises many right-wing-extremist parliamentary parties such as the Republikaner, as respectable face and democratic facade of Facism; it has chosen not to move against these parties. The Verfassungsschutz has certainly not requested that these parties should be banned, despite widespread public and sometimes popular pressure to that end. Both the Verfassungsschutz and the Federal Constitutional Court have been caught by the greatest dilemma, as to whether to characterize the Republikaner Party as the right-wing "conservative" party or the right-wing "extremist" party.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Alan Watson, The Germans : Who Are They Now ?, (Mandarin, 1992), pp.380ff.

15. Stoss, n.2, p.135.

The synergy of extremist right-wing opinion and activity in Germany is such, that the parliamentary parties can voice a philosophy which appears to justify the emotions and prejudices that infuse the actions of the violent. This is not conspiracy, it is not a provable complicity, but it is undoubtedly synergy.

There appears little likelihood, at least for the present, of street level neo-Nazism and xenophobic and extremist right-wing parliamentary parties, like Republikaner, making overt common cause. Any proven organizational link would immediately place at risk the parliamentary status of the Republikaner party. It could even lead to the banning of the Republikaner. What the law requires is, evidence of open incitement to violence and xenophobia.

Significantly, another important source of mobilization of xenophobia and racial hatred is the fact, that both the Republikaner and the other respectable right-wing extremist parties indulge in historical

revisionism. The Republikaner confront the "central question of the war guilt of the Third Reich"<sup>16</sup> and in different ways reject it. The exoneration of Hitler and the trivialisation of Nazi crimes represent a central motive force of all Schonhuber's utterances. The chairman of the Republikaner, naturally and systematically, underestimates the industrial and cultural genocide of millions of Jews and gypsies by the Nazi regime. Schonhuber's indirect and implicit anti-Semitism and racial nationalism must be evaluated, as particularly treacherous and deceitful, because he does not directly deny the Holocaust. Rather he represents it as a question that is apparently unexplained : "Were there six, four, two million, or even 'only' three hundred thousand dead Jews ? Who shot whom where and when first ? Such questions must definitely be posed by the historians and answered to the best of their knowledge and conscience".<sup>17</sup>

Very much like several neo-Nazi gangs and right-wing extremist parties, the Republikaner agrees that history has become the vital key to both the present and the future. Ironically, it is an Englishman, David

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16. Garton Timoshy Ash, We The People : The Revolution of 1989, (London, 1992), pp.135-137.

17. Stoss, n.2, p.204.



Irving, who provides one of the few visible and overt links between the 'respectable' right and the neo-Nazi gangs. He does this through his exclusive sense of appealing to the members of both, and from time to time, addressing meetings attended by members of both. David Irving, in his neo-Nazi interpretation of Nazi history, forces the point, that "Hitler did not know of the Holocaust".<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, he would also have us believe that the Holocaust, as generally understood, did never occur.

In November 1991, David Irving addressed an ecstatic audience in Hamburg attended by the activists and supporters of the Republikaner. He claimed that "this myth of mass murders of Jews in the death factories of Auschwitz, Majdanek and Treblinka etc etc, which infact never took place... this horrific ghost of guilt from which the German people have suffered for the last forty-five years will be laid".<sup>19</sup> Leaving aside the neo-Nazi revisionism of history by the

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18. Tara Kartha, "Right-Wing Violence in Germany" (Unpublished Paper, presented in an Indo-German Seminar at J.N.U, New Delhi, 4-5 November 1996), pp.8-9.

19. Ibid, p.8.

Republikaner; over the years, the Republikaner have always had an immediate reason for political existence. The nature and character of reason has changed, from the mid-1980s agenda of reunification to the 1990s agenda of immigration. This also shows the changing character of the neo-Nazi movement.

As we have mentioned already, for the first three decades of the Federal Republic, the neo-Nazis and right-wing extremist parties were frustrated. Their main theme was reunification. The main theme of Republic was economic growth and democratic stability. In the 1980s however, the fourth decade of the Federal Republic, things changed. The Republikaner had been robbed of their main political agenda of unification of Germany, because the process of unification had been spectacular and very rapid. Instead, the Republikaner and their allies have found themselves with a anew and genuinely central cause of further existence, the issue of "immigration and xenophobia".<sup>20</sup>

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20. Zig Layton and Zletnik Hemis, The Politics of Immigration (Cambridge, 1992), p.235A. Also see Eatwell, n.11, pp.234-235. The rise in violence after 1990 did not immediately tarnish the electoral prospects of the Republicans and other fringe radical-nationalist groups. Their association with strident anti-immigration politics helped them to differentiate them from the more sanitised statements of the CDU-CSU.

The Republikaner argue that immigrants are hateful and subject to xenophobia not only because they endanger the prospect of employment of ethnic Germans, but also because, they compete for the German Soul. The issue of immigration, both continental and transcontinental, henceforth, reinforces the Republican concept of new German nationalism. The Republikaner feel that a new cultural nationalism and revolution is necessary, because the German culture is apparently under threat from the cultural invasions of racially conspicuous immigrants, viz. Asians and Africans.

In his subject on the "anti-modernism of the West German Republikaner". Hans-Georg Getz argues that the Republicans want to exploit the diffuse feelings of many Germans, that Germany's culture is somehow under threat from mass immigration, and that the historical nature of German society is threatened by cultural pluralism.<sup>21</sup> The Republikaner believe that patriotism requires an ideological framework and that is essential for such an "ideology that Germans are freed from historical guilt".<sup>22</sup>

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21. Hans George Betz, Post-Modern Anti-Modernism : The West German Republikaner (Berlin, 1991), pp.205-206.

22. Juergen Habermans, Yet Again : German Identity (New York, 1992), pp.185-187.

Franz Schonhuber, the national chairman and political ideologue of the Republikaner Party, claims that his party has been spearheading the new cultural and national revolution of Germany. He has been very careful in condemning the crimes of the Third Reich. Yet, like Jorg Haider, the leader of the Austrian right-wing extremist party--the Austrian Freedom Party--he laces his view of the Third Reich in the shield of heroism, self-sacrifice and patriotism.

Above all, for Schonhuber, there was a lesson to be learned from the ever-increasing number of immigrants, entering the Federal Republic after unification. Again, like Haider, across the border in Austria and indeed, like Le Pen in France, he deplores the issues of rising cultural heterogeneity due to immigration. He deplores the popular phrase now running in the Federal Republic "a foreigner is someone, who shares with", from the view of point of xenophobic nationalism and national self-interest of German people.<sup>23</sup>

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23. Klans Bades, Germans Abroad : Foreigners in Germany (Munich, 1992), p.205. Also see Andrea Targimni, "Review of Politics and Culture", *German Comments*, No.45, January 1996, pp.105-107.

German, he seems to say, must be sensible about their own self-interest. Alan Watson interviewed Schonhuber; this is given below.

Q. If unemployment in the five eastern states continues to rise, would you advocate the expulsion of foreigners and non-Germans from Germany ?

A. No, I hate the word expulsion. That does not belong to my dictionary. If you have unemployment at say 50% in the new states, it is obvious that we must do everything, that is necessary to give the work places first to the Germans. But the word expulsion is not a word in my language.

Q. What do you hope for Germany by the year 2000 ?

A. I am not longing for a greater Germany or a Fourth Reich. I hope that my country will be a normal nation, but being a normal nation means that Germans should not be blamed for years and centuries ahead for what happened during the Third Reich. I am a member of European Parliament. My personal aim is for a greater European family, a European house, and in this house, Germany should have a good room, you know what I mean, a good room worth living in.<sup>24</sup>

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24. Watson, n. 14, pp.345ff.

The Republikaner view that a new "German" nation would be fateful and possibly healthy, provided that future of Germans is not determined and held hostage by the Nazi history of the Third Reich. The Germans should be allowed to shape their own destiny. In its fight against "criminalisation" of German history, the Republikaner argue that as long as the interpretation of German history is determined by the victors of World War II; Germany remains alienated from its own past and will not find a secure identity.<sup>25</sup> Thus, it is taken as a key aspect of a Western and especially and American enslavement of Germany. Thus the real agenda of the Republicans is, not simply to curb the immigrants coming into Germany. It is also to restore parochial German identity threatened by the immigrants and across-the-board influx of different masses of foreigners and nationalists.

In addition to cultural threat from the immigrants, more significantly, the German identity is apparently threatened by "Western and particularly American influences in German thinking".<sup>26</sup> The

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25. H. James Anderson, "The Neo-Nazi Menace in Germany", *Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol.18,1992,pp.43-45.

26. David M. Vriethly, The Collapse of the East German Communism : The Year the Wall Came Down (Westport, 1992), pp.140-142.

theoreticians of the right-wing extremist parties and neo-nationalists such as the Republikaner, furthermore, seeks a 'Third Path' between capitalism and communism, between idealism and materialism, between East and West.<sup>27</sup>

The Republikaner's current party manifesto focuses on the demand for "national self-determination and intellectual and moral revolution". The opening passage of their political programme, known as, "The position of the Divided Nation and the German people", articulately discusses the right-wing view of conservative cultural revolution of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>28</sup> The Republicans argue that apparent social and economic advancement of the West Germany, is deceptive. This conceals the fact that all over Germany, intellectual and political culture is increasingly being eroded, customs are not respected. They believe that the failure of desire to recreate cultural and moral awareness has, in turn, led to national alienation.

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27. Stoss, n.2, pp.28-29.

28. Ibid, p.202. Also see HansJacoachim Veen, "German Politics in Transition and Political Change in Germany", *German Comments*, No.44, October 1996, pp.46ff.

The conflicting re-education of Germans, in the two state, is believed to be the main reason of the national cultural alienation. It is thus no surprise that in the Republican party programme of 1990, the chapter dealing with education states:

"We reject these theses of collective guilt of the German people and demand, in the interest of historical truth, that all the archival documents be made public and all files and archives be returned.<sup>29</sup>

As long as the Germans are made to feel guilty, they will remain "political and moral cripples".<sup>30</sup> It is a deeply dangerous demand and it may yet prove to be their most significant.

The Republikaner believe that the current government policy is also responsible for the cultural and political malaise. In contrast to their stated goals, when they were in opposition, the CDU/CSU government of Chancellor Helmut Kohl has not shown any signs of an "intellectual/moral change'. The worst failure , as an irony, has been in

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29. Watson, n.14, p.387.

30. Stern Fritz, "Freedom and its Discontent", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.72, No.4-5, 1993, pp.122-124.



the area of socialisation and education of young people. They have fallen into a moral crisis, combined with an increasing loss of ethnical values.

One of the greatest reasons of dissatisfaction and disillusionment of the Republicans with the CDU/CSU government has been that, it is alleged to have done nothing to instigate the decriminalisation of German culture, history and the German people. The war progaganda of the victorious powers has entered German history books and their "exaggerations and falsehoods" have to be largely believed by the post-war generation of the Federal Republic. The Republican pessimism of history is that there is, apparently, still no possibility of an "objective" description of history in entirety.<sup>31</sup>

In their European election manifesto ("Yes to Europe, No to the EC"), in the pre-unification period, the Republikaner under-lined the statement that a one-sided Western integration of the Federal

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31. Nicholas Coichesher and David Buchan, Europe Relauched : Trush and Illusions on the way to 1992 (London, 1990), pp.105-106.

Republic could make reunification impossible and demanded "Germany must come first!"<sup>32</sup> In the post-unification European election 1994, the Republikaner seem to have agreed the European project of integration, both political and economic.

With regard to the political order in the Federal republic in Germany, the Republikaner support the concept of an authoritarian state, with the intention of strengthening the state as a factor of control.<sup>33</sup> The anti-democratic perspective of the "respectable" right-wing party' incorporates the neo-conservative view that the democratic decision-making organizations and institutions are a sham. The Republicans try and aim to curb the democratic power base of the culturally plural organizations, and want to reduce their influence. Viewed against the entire gamut of statements made in their party programme, the demand that reasons of state and common weal should take priority over reasons and freedom of party, group and individual interests, can only be understood as a gradual elimination of democracy.

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32. Eatwell, n.11, pp.203-231. In it's Cahest Policy statement, the Republikaner advocate the policy of Euro-Federal.

33. Ibid, pp.234-235.

The party continually swears its allegiance to partnership, community and public spirit, and individual or group interests are classified as tendentially harmful.

In socio-political terms, the Republikaner consider themselves to be advocate of the (German) 'man in the street', who is concerned with "social peace". The reform of social order, for which they strive, is to be achieved, they claim, by means of a "change in consciousness", and the feeling of all working people "living together and working together", must be created.<sup>34</sup> The party supports the promotion and safeguarding of private property, mainly from government intervention, which fighting against the "formation of power blocs".<sup>35</sup> In the old right-wing extremist traditions, the Republikaner sing the praises of free enterprise and distrusts the socialist interests of workers. The unions are obliged to conform to the state and the common weal (as the Republikaner understand it); the right to free collective bargaining is to be abolished.

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34. Marc Fisher, After the Wall : Germany and the Burdens of History (New York, 1995), pp.235-237.

35. Stoss, n.2, pp.125-126.

Anti-democratic tendencies are also visible in the section of the party programme regarding their policy on the media. There, they bluntly threaten to abolish the freedom of the press. In terms of their party manifesto and propaganda, there is no doubt that they are a right-wing extremist party, no matter how they conceal themselves in the protective spectrum of right-wing conservative politics, and portraying themselves as good as the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) or the Christian Social Union (CSU).

For tactical reasons, the Republikaner had to be careful, that they did not become tainted as neo-Fascists and alienate potential voters from the CDU/CSU political/electoral base. They avoid such attributes as, 'German' or 'Nationalist' in their party name. In general political parlance, they prefer the description "patriotic". Moreover, the name "Die Republikaner" does not suggest any association to 'party' or 'union' and certainly not to any historically tarnished or tainted examples.<sup>36</sup> Instead, they have created the image of something

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36. Ibid, pp.201-202.

new and original. In fact, the most important REP demands coincide largely with those of the NPD and German people's Union (DVU), no less right-wing extremist.

The fact that the Republikaner are not generally recognised as such by the public may be one reason for their considerable electoral success. The party, which has some 25,000 members, and which is given as great deal of attention by mass media, is more successful than its rivals in covering the ideological spectrum from right-wing conservatism to right-wing extremism, especially as they are even viewed by sections of the CDU/CSU as a possible coalition partner and hence made "acceptable" to the voters of the CDU/CSU.<sup>37</sup>

All is however not well with future and political prospects of the Republikaner Party. Indeed, what is happening in the Federal Republic in Germany is a "huge realignment of political positions among the traditional mainstream parties' viz. the CDU, the SPD and the CSU."<sup>38</sup>

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37. Betz, n.21, p.210.

38. Hans Joachim Veen, "German Politics in Transition : Political parties and Political Change in Germany", *German Comment*, No.48, October 1996, pp.46, and 54.

The main political objective behind it is to broaden their social bases of support by eating into the votes of new radical and rival forces both left and right of the centre viz. the Alliance 90/ the Greens and the Republican Party and the the German People's Union (DVU).<sup>39</sup> The Republikaners' attempt to align with Greyhard's Deusche Voks Union (DVU) led to the "electoral rejection of its chairperson, Franz Schonhuber in 1994".<sup>40</sup> Since then, the party has been split by dividiions, however not a little by the fact that its main cause for existence, the foreigners seem to be ariving in lesser number, after the government passed restrictive immigration laws.

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39. Ibid.

40. Eatwell, n.11, pp.235ff.

In August 1994, Schonhuber, the chairman of the Republican Party, announced the creation of a "defensive force" with Frey's DVU against the "leftist popular front" (there was much talk about the SPD-Green alliance). The decision was highly controversial within the Republikaner Party, as the DVU remained more clearly and extremist organisation. In December 1993, the DVU had even invited the unstable Russian 'Fascist' Vladimir Zhimnovsky to a rally. The moderate wing of the REP, therefore saw the pact with DVU as a disaster, which would make it impossible to appeal to the more respectable voters in the future. The result was that the Schonhuber was deposed shortly before the election, though he responded by taking legal action to reverse the decision. The party entered the elections effectively leaderless and hopelessly.

In the new political realignment in the Federal Republic after unification, one major political party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) has traveled far enough to the right-wing REP, just as the Social Democratic Party (SPD), another mainstream giant, has traveled left to encompass the platform of the Greens. The traditional mainstream parties are leaving no stone unturned to make the new arrivals, viz. the Republikaner and the Greens and so forth, irrelevant. Efforts to become more moderate (in wording, though not in thought), the Republikaner's view at times have not been very different from that of the CDU. In fact, the Christian Social Union (CSU), another major right-wing conservative party seemed to be more "nationalistic" than the Republikaner.<sup>41</sup> The Republikaner always remain under the constant watch of the Vefassungsschutz (Third Branch of the Secret Services under the control of the Bundestag). The future prospects of the violence prone skinheads and neo-Nazi group perpetrating xenophobia, especially the Republikaner, will most likely be determined, precisely

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41. Ibid, pp.236-237.

by the future political behaviour of the right-wing conservative parties, namely the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU).

The Republikaner, currently under Franz Schonhuber's unchallenged leadership, Handlos and Voigt, other founding members have since left the party, are expected to have further electoral success. Although, in term of their membership and political constituencies, they remain predominantly a southern German Party. it is true that the Republikaner functionaries are devoting all their efforts to extend the organization to the middle and northern states. The Republikaner are aided in this by the DM 16 million they receive in election campaign reimbursement from their European election result. Besides, its chairman, Franz Schonhuber garners lots of contingency funds in his capacity as a member of the European Parliament.

To sum up, it is harder to evaluate the significance of the extremist right-wing parliamentary party, especially the Republikaner. As a right-wing extremist party (although, they do not profess to be; for



tactical reasons) it has the advantage of some sort of synergy with neo-Nazi gangs, while it remains as an influential parliamentary party. This duality also defines the double face of the Republikaner. Certainly, the success, they have sought hardest, is to alter the basic orientation of German political debate so that their issues are not seen so peripheral, or indeed not even as extreme, but as pivotal and central to German political life. Furthermore, the development of what is called "respectable right-wing extremist and neo-nationalist parties, has been a new development in the post-war Germany, especially towards the eve of Unification of Germany. They have attracted wide support, have entered the democratic process itself, and are considered by some to be as good as any other coalition partner.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCLUSION

The unification of Germany was a great political event in the post-war European history. In the greatest turn-around of events, in the early years after unification, the new resurgent nationalism combined with xenophobia, and anti-Semitism. In fact, there has been widespread apprehension about the role of cultural and xenophobic nationalism in Germany after unification. A number of neo-Nazi organizations, skinheads and xenophobic groups have claimed for a new nationalist assertion of "German" cultural values. Furthermore, xenophobic mobilization by such right-wing extremist and parliamentary parties as the Republikaner (REP) and the German People's Union (DVU) pose certain extremely alarming questions about the future prospects of democracy. Although, German democracy has shown greatest convictions towards cultural heterogeneity, sensitivity to foreign culture and democratic pluralism, in the post-war era. An

important question is what is the exact relationship between the changing pattern of politics and Federal constitution on the one hand, and pressures of xenophobia and extreme nationalism, on the other.

The neo-Nazi movement and xenophobia focusses on the "national question", that is, the re-establishment of national unity and cultural ideals of the Third Reich. The importance of moral awareness and 'German' cultural revolution is much more realized by them, now than ever before.<sup>1</sup> The conservative revolutionaries, indeed laced with anti-foreigner agenda, have attacked hostels and dormitories housing political refugees and asylum seekers. Xenophobic violence has surged even more against racially conspicuous Turks, Mozambicans and Vietnamese, etc. The Romanian and Yugoslav Gypsies and even Russians have been targeted. All through 1991 and 1992, xenophobia was raging in the new states of the Federal Republic, and has really shown, that it has not been a spent force.

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1. Richard Stoss, Politics Against Democracy : Right-Wing Extremism in West Germany (New York : St. Martins Press 1990).

As a matter of fact, since 1945, sympathy for national socialism and xenophobic nationalism has remarkably declined. However, in the Federal Republic today, a broad potential for neo-Nazi attitudes and xenophobia exists and pro-Nazi, anti-Semitic and xenophobic tendencies are to be found in 20-40% of the population.

The existence of this enormous potential for xenophobic and extreme form of nationalism, can only be understood, against the background of German history. There has never been a widespread and intensive critical analysis of the Nazi past, and the common way of overcoming the historical guilt burden and Nazi past is to repress it, gloss over, or ignore it. Hence, even today, national socialism still exercise a considerable influence over the political culture of the Federal Republic. It was only because the neo-Nazis appropriated the symbols and slogans of the Third Reich, and its regime of national terror and xenophobia; that they could get overwhelmingly attention. The past thus becomes very crucial source of mobilization of xenophobia.

The past history of the former German Democratic Republic had great potential for the repository of xenophobia, anti-Semitism and anti-Western influences. Because of a closed-door national policy and ideological projection of regime's enemy, the ex-GDR hardly gave a conducive environment for the popularization of sensitivities to foreign culture. Lack of contact with the external world, and the policy of national hatred against Israel and Zionism fostered a lukewarm attitudes to foreign cultures and culturally heterogeneous groups. In the years after unification, all these factors compounded in the sudden outburst of xenophobia in the new states. The high level of unemployment and economic uncertainty coupled with a sharp decline in the standard of living led to the resurgence of neo-Nazi violence, and racial attacks on immigrants and foreign workers in Eastern Germany.

By contrast, in Western Germany, rising heterogeneity in the population has been responsible for the resurgence of xenophobia. A sudden explosion of immigration in the Federal Republic, in the aftermath of the unification has led to the surfacing of such

contradictions. The year 1989 proved to be a watershed. The events, before and after 1989, also shows the changing pattern of xenophobic mobilization, and this in turn speaks of the changing character of neo-Nazi movement in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The eventful year of unification in 1989 came as a biggest surprise for the neo-Nazis. The whole process of unification was so rapid and dramatic, that they were robbed of their single most agenda, and they were completely sidelined, but immigration and sudden and subsequent rise in cultural heterogeneity gave them a new 'national' cause to flourish.<sup>2</sup>

Xenophobia and the politics of anti-immigration attained this highest watermark after unification. In 1990, signs of xenophobia were already present. In Zittau and Wittenburg, neo-Nazis assaulted Mozambicans and Russians. The xenophobic violence in Hoyersweda and Rostock marked greatest-ever racial riots and anti-Semitic

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2. Ibid.

agitations. These events were highly publicized, and international media were quick to report them. The Neo-Nazi violence and murders at Mollen, of two young Turkish girls and their grandmother in 1992, alarmed the nation and larger democratic masses of population in Germany.

Besides immigration, unemployment and economic uncertainty constitute another major sources of political extremism against foreign-workers.<sup>3</sup> In the East, unemployment jumped from 142,000 before the merger, to over one million in July 1991, whereas in the West, the number of those unemployed continued to fall the just 5.8%. The opening to the East seemed to have been beneficial to the West, as it continued a GNP growth rate of 4.5%, in spite of recession in much Europe. Industry was working at full capacity, though in the East the disappearance of the captive market lowered productivity. The artificial boom created by the unification has, to a large extent,

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3. R.K. Jain, "Migration in Germany : Issues and Responses", *India International Centre Quarterly*, 20(4), Winter 1993, pp.19,22,23.

dissipated. It was finally acknowledged, that the global ailment has finally caught up with Germany. Rostock, which was the grand showpiece of communist command economy lay in ruin and disruption, and the booming shipyards had suddenly become irrelevant. Rostock had registered an all-time high unemployment of over 60% and the xenophobic violence and raids had superseded every other place in ferocity.

Several established organizations in the Federal Republic have attempted to study the menace of neo-Nazism and xenophobia. The Versfassungsschutz (Third Branch of the Federal Secret Service under the control of the Bundestag) drew up a detailed report, and concluded that 69% of all violent neo-Nazis were younger than 21, one in four was an apprentice, and 7% were school pupils. Moreover, all of them came from "rural and structurally underdeveloped regions".<sup>4</sup> Another report states that neo-Nazi centres are run from the West.

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4. Tara Kartha, "Re-emergence of Racism : Germany After Unification", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.15, No.11, pp.1040-1045.



The Far Right Deutsche Volkunion, which won elections in Bremen, increased its membership from 22,000 and 24,000. It was formed in 1971, under the leadership of Dr. Gerhard Frey. He publishes the Deutsche National Zeitung and Deutsche Wochen Zeitung, which have a total weekly circulation of 20,000.

The most organized neo-Nazi party, which is openly committed to xenophobia and anti-Semitism, is the Deutsche Alternative led by Frank Hubner. Founded in Bremen on 5 May 1989, its leadership seeks to defend the country against the increasing foreignerisation. The Verfassungsschutz are in the dark as to who controls the 5,000-odd party faithful, and media state that the cadre is remaining underground, as a "steel hard ideologically convinced cadre".<sup>5</sup> The party aims to make itself more acceptable to the German voters who, while fighting shy of actual Nazism, may still wish to rid their neighbourhood and country of the scourge of foreigners. Thus, a "modified" version of

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5. David Childs, Neo-Fascism in Europe, (Longman, 1991), pp.179-185.

Nazism is propagated. The Verfassungsschutz alleged that in the 1980s it actually trained cadres on a "defence sport" event, where recruits were taught to carry out attacks on foreigners.<sup>6</sup>

Another rival organization cited by the office for the protection of Federal Constitution is called the National Front. This was founded on the eve of the unification. Their creed is to make life as uncomfortable as possible for the foreigners. The Free German Workers Party is yet another neo-Nazi radical group of skinheads.

By far, the most important neo-nationalist and parliamentary party, to have made real political and electoral breakthrough, is the Republikaner Party (REP), which represents the most populist, and politically the most organized in the right-wing political spectrum. The formation of the Republikaner Party heralded a 'New Right' movement in the 1980s, even as the right-wing conservative---liberal era of politics came up in the Federal Republic of Germany.

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6. Ibid.

Schonhuber's early policy statements concentrated on issues such as the defence of the family, and the need to limit the number of foreigners, asylum seekers and 'guest-workers' coming to Germany. He wanted a change in the Basic law. By the late 1980s, it was becoming more clearly a radical nationalist party, though its preferred self-definition was 'patriotic'.<sup>7</sup> It continuously called for German unification, based on the Germany's pre-War boundaries. Its 1987 programme denied the 'singular guilt' of Hitler's Germany for the outbreak of the Second World War, and accused indirectly of the 'exaggerations and falsifications', which are 'mostly believed by our youth'.<sup>8</sup> But, it did not openly defend Nazism, nor did it call for dictatorship. Rather, it seemed to advocate a more authoritarian form of government, which would restore order and national pride.

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7. Stoss, n. 1, pp.202-205.

8. Ibid.

In the mid-1980s, Republikaner's supporters had been relatively old middle-class. But, from 1989 onwards, it had attracted a remarkable diverse cross-section. In Berlin, it had made gains among both young people and the working class, who often lived in the proximity of the "guest-workers". In the European elections (1989) its voter profile was similar to that of the DVU-CSU. This meant, that it had managed to attract Catholic, as well as protestant voters. Its two main distinguishing features were, that it appealed to males particularly, and that it was especially strong in Southern Germany, where the death of Franz Josef Strauss had deprived the Christian Social Union (CSU) of its most charismatic and nationalist leader. The main motive, for voting REP, seems to have been policy rather than protest. The REP's voters were not the most disadvantaged groups economically. They seemed to have liked the most violent attacks on the foreign workers. As a matter of fact, the Republikaner incited anti-Semitism, racism and racial-hatred. They also want to restrict the influence of parties and associations, destroy the right to free and collective bargaining and abolish the freedom of the press.

The rise in violence did not immediately tarnish the electoral prospect of the Republikaner party and other fringe radical-nationalist groups. Their association with strident anti-immigrant politics helped to differentiate them, from the more orthodox position of the traditional mainstream parties viz CDU-CSU alliance. The post-1990 period, moreover, was one of growing public discontent with the CDU-CSU alliance and politicians. 'Politikverdrossenheit' ('Being fed up with the lot of them') was the mood of the hour, because of a wave of scandals mostly involving corruption, the mounting cost of unification and growing unemployment and so on.

The Republikaner also succeeded in outstripping the NPD/DVU alliance in elections, mainly, because the official establishment and the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, and the public at large do not see them as a neo-Fascist Party. This is also because, they cover the area from right-wing conservatism to right-wing extremism, and also because, they have entrenched the democratic process itself. In many cases, the Republikaner are not even excluded from the

democratic spectrum, but are rendered 'acceptable right' and a potential coalition partner as well.

The year 1992 was crucial, both from the point of view of the xenophobic violence and the counter-measures taken by the government. According to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, during 1992 alone, there were more than 2,500 attacks on foreigners across Germany, 697 cases of arson, and 17 people were left dead. The change was spectacular in comparison of 1989. In December 1992, the government decided to ban the German Alternative, as part of a belated response to the sudden upsurge of violence (by 1995, ten organizations had been banned, including the FAP). The attacks had caused a wave of international concern. Strong anti-Fascist movement in Germany included a mass candle-lit vigil, after a five bomb attack at Mollen in former Germany had killed a Turkish woman and her young granddaughter and niece. The government clearly reasoned, that a lax attitude could lose vital centre-ground support, for there is no doubt that the attacks caused a

widespread revulsion. Before the Mollen murders in late 1992, only 43% of the population were definitely against the slogan 'foreigners out'--but, immediately after the five-bombing, the figure rose to 60%.<sup>9</sup>

Other polls, however, revealed a lingering anti-Semitism. They indicated that around 10-15% of Germany could be classed as anti-Semitism, and the negative stereotype, such as the belief that Jews were cunning, were increasing trends, which help to explain why, Jews too become a target after 1991. This is despite the fact, that Germany's Jewish population had dropped from just over 500,000 in 1933 to around 20,000 in the 1990s. More generally, the polls showed that the majority of German thought, that there were too many foreigners in the country. Many people clearly disliked the ethnic minorities, but they rejected neo-Nazi xenophobic violence and racial terrorism even more. As a result, there was little public opposition to a change in constitution in the Asylum Law during 1993. The strict immigration laws sought to

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9. Alan Watson, The Germans : Who Are They Now ? (Mandarin, 1992), pp.381ff.

restrict the inflow of immigrants. Left-Wings critics and the trade unions bitterly attacked to government, for exploiting the 1991-92 violence to secure an amendment in the Basic Law, and gain party advantage.

Human rights groups, such as Helsinki Watch have criticized the government's resolution to deport gypsies. The government's move against a particular community has invited world divide criticism. The fundamental question, however, remains : Is government under pressure from the neo-Nazis anti-foreigner movement ? Was the change in constitution and immigration laws, an attempt to appease the neo-nationalists and ultra-right-wing extremist parties ? Do the neo-Nazis and xenophobic parties see the change in Federal Constitution a sign of victory, against the Federal Republic ? Would they increase the pressure for further changes ? Moreover, the most alarming question remains, is Bonn Weimar ? A host of such other questions strike a note of alarm; whether the Federal Republic is giving way to xenophobia, and is the "fear of the Fourth-Reich" legitimate ?<sup>10</sup>

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10. R.K. Jain, "A Germanized Europe ?", *World Focus*, Vol.13, September-October, 1992, pp.20-24.



A closer examination of the present, against the past gives us a negative answer. There are strongest signs of hope and stability.

Even as, 20,000 incidents of xenophobia were recorded throughout the Federal Republic in 1992, the year 1992 was also marked for the unprecedented and organized counter-measures taken by the government. Anti-xenophobia demonstration and democratic mass-mobilizations took place all over the Republic. Many neo-Nazi organizations were banned and, such xenophobic terrorists such as Thomas Dienel and others were arrested. The government took the citizens in confidence, and provided greatest security and police resources in the hostels for immigrants. Under the pressure of the vocal Jewish community and its citizens, the government took stern action, although belated, and put the Republikaner party, under the category of nationally monitored organizations. The German People's Union, another right-wing extremist parliamentary was already under the monitoring of the Third Branch of the Secret Service under the Bundestag. The number of anti-Semitic attacks had already fallen by some 50% from October to November in 1992.

The political pattern in the present-day Federal Republic is not under any crisis of democracy. Certainly, the government and politicians of Bonn showed early go-slow in dealing with the neo-Nazi menace with insufficient force and resources. Certainly, challenge and threat of unemployment has proved far greater than foreseen. All the more, the government has forced a change in constitution to make the immigration laws much less liberal. But, these failures of judgements do no mean that there has been a distinct change of national policy. The Mollen xenophobic incident had galvanised the legal, judicial and administrative machinery of the government, and justice and Interior Ministers of States took necessary actions to increase police resources to combat xenophobia. The action taken by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, the acceleration in the rate of arrests and ever-increasing implementation of laws, against violence and xenophobic crimes; all demonstrate a well stabilized democracy.

On the other hand, the traditionally established parties the CDU, the CSU, the SPD and the FDP have no doubt reflected a definite

contradiction and dilemma of the Republic. As we have noted, that the years after the unification have been witnessing a political realignment in Germany. The mainstream political parties commit to broaden their social basis of power and political support. They are trying to do that by eating into the votes of new radical and rival forces, both left and right of the center, viz. the Alliance 90/the Greens and, the Republikaner and the German People's Union (DVU). As a matter of fact, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) led by the Chancellor Helmut Kohl has traveled far enough to the fringes beyond right-wing radicalism. Furthermore, the Christian Social Union (CSU), another major right-wing conservative ruling partner at the centre seemed to be more "nationalistic" than the Republikaner Party.<sup>11</sup>

After unification, the quest for national identity has become so central, that it has "electrified" the domestic politics in Germany.<sup>12</sup> It

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11. Childs, n.5, pp.180-183.

12. David M. Keithly, "Shadows of Germany's Authoritarian Past", *Orbis*, Spring 1994.

might, however, prove alarming to the nation. The CDU has been willing now, after Kohl's re-election as Chancellor in 1994, to use nationalism to rally support for the CDU, which is now much less firmly rooted in the Catholic community. The objective is to build a new coalition on the right, which will also cover the neo-national political space of such right-wing extremist parties as the Republikaner clearly then, the future prospect of the neo-nationalist and extremist parties will be mostly likely going to be determined by the political behaviour of the CDU and CSU. Still more, the central question is not so much whether there is a nationalist revival as who will be the main beneficiary---the radical neo-Fascist parties, or the CDU ?

Till 1992, it seemed that there was some kind of neo-Fascist revival and assertion. But, the decline of both the major neo-Fascist and parliamentary party, the Republikaner and racially motivated violence, since late 1992 and 1993, seems to provide strong evidence, that Germany is not about to become the Fourth Reich. There can be no comparison with the mass Nazi-party after 1930, which regularly

battled in streets with the left. There is no significant section of the policy which contemplates overthrow of democracy. In particular, there are no disaffected army, agricultural or business interests which seek to create an authoritarian nationalist state, founded on xenophobia and anti-Semitism. Nor should the power of anti-Fascism be neglected, including the rise of a women's movement willing to challenge neo-Fascism. The exceptionally strong criticism of Nazism and racism made by church leaders during January 1995, also implied a self-criticism of their own past role vis-a-vis the Nazi Germany.

The recovery of the economy, and the growing sense of the people that life was no going to be better now has contributed to the growth of a challenging attitude against xenophobia and violence whereas, at the end of 1993 only 24% of those asked thought that economic situation was going to improve (24% in the West Germany and a mere 18% in East Germany); by May 1994 and the run-up-to the European election, the percentage had change dramatically. Fiftytwo percent of the people thought, that the economic situation was

improving (55% in Western Germany and 42% in the new states of Eastern Germany), this had an adverse impact on the future prospect of neo-Nazi mobilization xenophobia, and the unemployed have shown lesser degree of xenophobic attitude.

The Federal Republic of Germany is not swinging towards a Fourth Reich.<sup>13</sup> Bonn is not the Weimar Republic, neither is it intent upon creating one. All the same, however, the Germany of the 1990s will be most likely quite different from that before unification.

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13. Jain, n.10, p.22

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