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"The Conscience Of The Nation?
Intellectuals In Unified Germany"

Joyce Marie Mushaben

THE CONSCIENCE OF THE NATION?
INTELLECTUALS IN UNIFIED GERMANY

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THE CONSCIENCE OF THE NATION?

INTELLECTUALS IN UNIFIED GERMANY

I will begin by asking your indulgence. You no doubt realize that I am a political scientist and that my discipline has its own set of *isms* at its disposal: the ones of greatest significance to my work are socialism, fascism, communism, and capitalism. Yet the debate in which I will attempt to engage you necessarily includes references to post-modernism, aestheticism and, heaven help me, deconstructionism. My understanding of those terms does not necessarily coincide with their application in the field of literary criticism. . . .

The title of my talk infers a three-fold task: the first objective is to explore the traditional role of German intellectuals as the "conscience" of the nation. The second task is to explore the role of intellectuals thrown into a state of turbulence over the need to reconfigure the idea of a single German "nation," a task which many cannot undertake in good conscience. My final aim is to consider the extent to which developments subsequent to the more or less miraculous opening of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 do or do not offer some prospect of rendering the intellectuals of East and West "unified" at some point in the foreseeable future.

WHO ARE THE INTELLECTUALS?

I will argue that the role of German intellectuals has been fundamentally redefined since 1945, and that the ranks of postwar intellectuals have been anything but orderly and cohesive, in stark contrast to the united front projected by intellectual elite(s) of earlier eras. Yet it would be too simple to attribute those differences to the impact of political division alone, that is, into categories of Eastern versus Western *DichterInnen* und *DenkerInnen*. Consonant with many

other political cultural changes that have taken root within the two German states since WWII, our understanding of who is/who isn't an intellectual has been clouded, or at least made more complex, by an ostensible changing of the generational guard. Allow me to back-track a bit for the benefit of those who are not well acquainted with German history and culture.

The classical model of the intellectual (to which I was exposed as a graduate student through the work of Fritz Ringer) centered on the *German Mandarins of the Pre-World War II Era*, most of whom were professor-philosophers, historians or legal theorists by nature and profession. They were not men or women of letters in the literary sense; their writings were politically controversial at times but they had little in common with our contemporary image of number-crunching social scientists. The more prominent members of this generation included Carl Schmitt, Ernst Jünger, Max Weber, Martin Heidegger, and Karl Mannheim--[*Gruppenbild mit Damen*] Hannah Arendt was the outstanding exception to the rule. Raised in the academic tradition of Wilhelm von Humboldt [*Einsamkeit und Freiheit*], the Mandarins perceived themselves as a kind of "spiritual aristocracy" (in German sense of *Geist*) attuned to values of a higher culture.¹ As self-appointed though nonetheless distanced "diagnosticians of the times," this breed of German intellectuals spoke of *power, will, and (self-) determination*, yet they feared the darker side of democracy--a system with which they would have, in fact, had precious little experience, most of which was negative, between 1919 and 1933 [Weimar]. Adverse to the prospect of vulgar populism, mob rule or Bonapartism, those who grudgingly accepted the ideal of democracy as superior to authoritarian forms of government (e.g., Max Weber) sooner envisioned it as the "circulation of elites"--the very critique C. Wright Mills would lodge against the practice of democracy in the United States during the 1960s.² These intellectuals found it

easy to justify their role as the "conscience of the nation," given the limited amount of trust or confidence they placed in the rest of the *Volk* comprising the nation. In the words of Schmitt, "*The people can only say yes or no; they cannot advise, deliberate or discuss; they cannot govern or administer; they also cannot establish standards, but rather only sanction a given set of standards with a yes*" (Schmitt, 1968, p. 93).

The Mandarins of old mourned the decline of the "West" (Otto Spengler, Nietzsche) and sought solace in antiquity (Schliemann). Though not adverse to the "welfare-paternalism of the police state" instituted under Bismarck (deriving from an older tradition of *noblesse oblige*), they did not care to pollute their political discourse with questions of social relevance or justice. Both their "higher conception of politics"--i.e., an illusory belief in their own ability to "lead the Leader" [*den Führer führen*] a la Heidegger--and their holistic idealization of the nation (apotheosis reified) was utterly and definitively discredited by the postwar revelations of the Holocaust, especially those Nazi crimes against humanity committed in the name of *Wissenschaft* (Blockhouse 10 at Auschwitz). Their sort was quickly overwhelmed by the power of expanding economic "interests" and the "triumph of ideology" (over idealism) which became Germany's surrogate for national politics and identity subsequent to the 1945 collapse of the Reich.

The next wave of intellectuals to emerge as voices of the newly-divided "national conscience" after 1949 stemmed from what I have labeled *Aufbau or Reconstruction Generation*. It is quite significant that many of the German figures who acquired a measure of intellectual prominence throughout the 1950s and 1960s remained outside of formal institutions (with the exception of a few in the GDR who were needed to foster legitimacy for the new regime). They were largely authors and sometime professional moralists (theologians), with

only few academics thrown in for good measure. They sought to establish for themselves an independent position vis-a-vis society, the unintended consequence of which was their subsequent difficulty in forging a positive relationship with that society in relation to questions of national identity. Unwilling to build on pre-existing structures and competing traditions, "they declared the past suspect and no longer useful; this at a time when the general populace was yearning for some sort of secure footing."³

The values heralded by intellectuals in the Western state included universalism, individualism, progressivism and resistance; among the key thinkers of this era were Karl Jaspers, Carl von Weizsäcker, Heinrich Böll, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Günter Grass, Helmut Gollwitzer, and Walter Jens). They would reflect the concerns of what Helmut Schelsky came to call *the skeptical generation*.

The core values espoused by their counterparts in the East German state likewise revolved around resistance, universalism and humanism, coupled with a distinctive interpretation of social justice/solidarity (largely at odds with the western emphasis on individualism). Representative figures linked to this generation in the GDR included Johannes R. Becker, Anna Seghers, Robert Havemann, Rudolph Bahro, Christa Wolf--you will note that women appear on the list only on the Eastern side. I do not intend to debate whether the Eastern thinkers were "free" to market their ideas and ideals in the Western sense. My argument is limited to the influence of generational factors, in particular, the extent to which one's biographical proximity to the traumas of WWII serve to determine what one's specific responsibilities "to the nation" ought to be.

This was (and remains) a generation of thinkers whose moral authority derived primarily

from its anti-nationalism, from its highly critical response to the collective past, and from its dream of a "better (that is, perpetually anti-fascist) Germany." As Albrecht Weber opined:

The evil national question was . . . set aside. National consciousness was put in a category somewhere between error and crime. In the state of national paralysis, national identity was to be replaced with either a social or a European identity. . . . Literature became ahistorical and as a consequence . . . nation and state became objects of . . . cynical . . . criticism.⁴

The *Narrenfreiheit*, alternatively, the poetic license afforded by their chosen medium of literature (novels, short-stories, plays and sermons), allowed them to dig deeply into the human psyche, to seek links between fascism and the human condition when the official "explanations" afforded by their respective governments fell quite short of the truth. Although their aversions to the nationalist past frequently overlapped, the intellectuals of the two postwar states often drew very different political conclusions and lessons from history. They were neither militantly anti-modernity, nor have their values rested on absolute truth claims (in fact, a few seemed a bit too attached to relativity in my judgment, e.g. *Historikerstreit*). In this they differed substantially from the Mandarins preceding them: they embraced more radical forms of democracy, "radical" in the sense that neither side believed that real democracy could be achieved prior to a fundamental transformation of existing educational, cultural and economic institutions. Unlike their predecessors, these intellectuals did not consciously avoid discussions of social justice, even though those discussions were sometimes veiled as literary treatments (e.g., Böll's *Die Verlorene Ehre*. . . .) Sometimes they were more direct in their criticisms, channeled through the medium of party-political involvement, for example. There were, in any case, significant gaps to be

found between the *theory* and *praxis* of democracy in both systems through the early 1970s.

Among the intellectuals of Reconstruction age, the focus on the past--bordering occasionally on the obsessive--superceded the need for critiques of the present, or to put it more accurately: their critiques of the present eventually became a "failure to reflect and willingness to go along" with the conditions of one's own era. The dilemmas faced by GDR intellectuals were particularly acute, where the options were often reduced to *Weg-gehen oder Hier-bleiben*. John Borneman has argued that neither Günter Grass (West) nor Christa Wolf (East), proved capable of coupling their profound insights regarding the National-Socialist past with a comparable, equally self-critical analysis of their lives in the *Bundesrepublik* or the *DDR*.⁵ The present was critiqued primarily as a vehicle for preserving memory and warning against a repetition of the past--leaving a large zone of mutual acceptance or "agreed upon silences" particularly in the GDR.

A new generation *qua* new breed of intellectuals appeared on the scene as of the late Sixties/early Seventies, evincing a loss of common ground after two decades of separation. I label my Western sample the *Sixty-Eighters*; I believe their East German counterparts are best characterized as *the Blocked Generation*. "Born into" their respective postwar states, the members of these two groups sought no distance from the present but rather tried to shape it. In fact, *Gegenwartsbewältigung* was and remains the primary focus of their critical reflections. 1968 was a year of world-historical import for thinkers on both sides of the Wall, albeit for different reasons.

Like their French counterparts storming the academic Bastille of the Sorbonne in Paris, West German university students took to the streets by the hundreds of thousands, demanding

an end to elitist admissions policies, hierarchical administrative structures, arcane curricular requirements, the Vietnam war, and Third World exploitation, *inter alia*. Rejecting the "internal immigration" of earlier cohorts, the social thinkers born of the Sixties viewed their intellectual predecessors as "little more than court jesters" for the existing order; what they lacked were agents and role models for cultural revolution. Rather than limit themselves to the task of discursive social criticism, many members of this generation thus opted to become *Do-it-yourself-Realpolitiker* or at least critical theorists of real-political developments a la Jürgen Habermas. Their names read like a *Who's Who* of Social Democratic electioneers and Green Party protest managers: the list includes but is not limited to Peter Glotz, Joscha Fischer, Daniel Cohn-Bendit; the literary exception to the rule is Berlin author Peter Schneider; one woman occasionally mentioned in the course of deeper debates about the present's relation to the past is once-theologian Antje Vollmer.

The Sixty-Eighters, over time, have distanced themselves from the Mandarins' "passionate distaste for industry and capital, for bureaucracy and parliament;" they have abandoned the media of philosophical treatise and historical novel for the venues of radio, TV talk-shows and the popular press. They do, however, continue to propagate an image of the world (or at least their part of it) as constantly subject to impending crisis and imminent doom (vis-à-vis the government's claims that all is well with Germany except, of course, for a few blips on the post-Wall screen that are largely the folly or fault of youth). As citizen-philosophers *qua* political subjects, they claim for themselves the "*right to make political mistakes*, just like anyone else."⁶ Prior to 1989 they preferred not to be bothered with talk about "the nation," portraying themselves as post-nationalists at best.

Allow me to reflect at some length on their post-Wall responses to the nation-reunified, which I can only evaluate in light of their favorite activity, protest. Hostilities in the Persian Gulf less than one year after the peaceful collapse of East Germany evoked a special crisis of identity among members of the 68-Generation, in particular among the Left. The Gulf War redefined as paradoxical two heretofore unchallengable value-premises of postwar German culture: first, that the citizens of the new Republic would never again voluntarily engage in barbaric acts of war, and secondly, that Germans must bear a special responsibility for preventing genocidal attacks against Jews world-wide.

The result was a palpable, painful division among the intellectual Left. Prominent pacifists such as Petra Kelly and Wolfgang Biermann (and Enzensberger) joined the ranks of the war's supporters [*die Bellizisten*], while other protest veterans such as Alice Schwarzer, Vera Wollenberger (and old-guard Günter Grass) assumed more traditional *Pazifisten* postures. Green-Minister Joschka Fischer expressed sympathy for the targets of Scud-missile assaults in Tel Aviv, while Hans Christian Ströbele offended many with the observation (while in Israel!) that such attacks were "the logical, almost imperative consequence of Israeli policy."

The identity crisis of the Left is at least partially grounded in the Sixty-Eighters' quixotic reaction to the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. As Markovits noted in the mid 1980s, the German Left evinces an ambivalent relation towards the state of Israel, the unquestioning embrace of which they interpret as their fathers' and mothers' failure to admit guilt and complicity under the Nazis. By identifying themselves with the FRG's official support of the Israeli state, New Leftists have argued, their elders sought to relinquish personal responsibility for the *Final Solution*: *Ergo*, the New Left's unquestioning support for the Palestinians, manifested by the

ever-present red/white or black/white scarves at each demonstration (which also fit neatly into their scheme of revolutionary third-world, national-liberation causes).

Now that the generation of founding fathers and mothers has begun to die out, however, the mantle of national guilt and moral responsibility falls directly on the shoulders of the successor generation. Having long ago exonerated itself from that historical-guilt burden ("*the blessing of having been born late*"), many grown-up leftists continue to blame Germany's faults on "the system" in which they themselves have now become prominent actors and agents of socialization. Reactions toward the Gulf War, especially the hair-raising responses of fundamentalists like Stroebele, cannot be divorced from the process of unification itself. Now in its forties, the aging Left is not only losing its ability to blame members of the founding-generation for its failure to "process" the Hitler legacy. The other half of the equation is that the very country the protest-professionals loved to hate and malign has ceased to exist as they knew it. The allegedly anti-fascist, socialist alternative next door (about which, in reality, they also knew very little) has been exposed as a sham. In fact, the dissolution of "the other Germany" has unleashed if not fostered new forces of right-wing extremism among youth groups, that is, among their own offspring. Now nothing stands between the Germans-West and the Old Reich, extending at least as far as the Oder-Neisse border.

Like it or not, the Long March Generation must become the transmitters of the whole of German history, instead of looking for others to whom they can assign blame. They must assume personal responsibility in order to pass an effective measure of historical remembrance and moral responsibility on to the next generation (their children). The "system" argument will not suffice to keep the memory of the Holocaust accurately alive. Ironically, many '68'ers have

themselves developed a sudden nostalgic attachment to the only (rump) state they have ever known--now that the FRG they found in such desperate need of liberation has also ceased to exist.

The fact that the post-nationalist intellectuals will continue to find it difficult to "close the book" on German history, or to eschew the mantle of personal responsibility for events past is reflected in their equally troubled reactions to civil war in the former Yugoslav Federation. I must further argue (although I have no "hard data" to offer at this time) that countless protest-veterans of the 1960s and 1970s find impossible to grasp that the very principles which had presented themselves as utopian alternatives to the barbarity of the Third Reich--namely, socialism and communism--could metamorphose almost overnight into the ultra-nationalist nightmare of their elders.

There is less to be said about--indeed there was little that could be said by--their generational counterparts in the GDR for whom the seminal event of the late Sixties was not an internal cultural, feminist, anti-war, "dare-more-democracy" (a la Willy Brandt) revolution but rather the crushing of the Prague Spring. This is the *Blocked Generation* in two respects: first, the "intellectual greying-eminence" could not be so quickly displaced, by virtue of the SED's monopolistic control over all cultural and media institutions. Secondly, the GDR found a rather easy solution to potential sources of criticism and dissent: it simply deported its problem-children to the West (some went more "willingly" than others: Wolf Biermann, Jürgen Fuchs, Monika Maron)--or allowed them to publish their most politically suspect works there, in exchange for hard currency taxes on royalties. Out of sight eventually meant out of mind, as far as indigenous responses to these rabble-rousers went, and the displaced GDR-dissidents increasingly

turned to a critique of West German society.

The final set of intellectual cohorts addressed here consists of the *Post-modernists of the West and the new Aesthetes of the East*. Bohemians we have always had with us, but these types appear to have acquired new significance as of the early 1980s. While the intellectual impetus for change seemed to emanate more strongly from the West through the 1960s and 1970s, up-and-coming Easterners played a more salient role in setting intellectual trends during the late 1980s and early 1990s. *Die Hineingeborenen* are those who entered a culture where everything had ostensibly been predetermined, consolidated, stripped of sincerity, *ausgeholt*, and increasingly impervious to change: thus their status and self-understanding as "ideology-weary post-modernists." Quite cosmopolitan yet curiously apolitical by nature, the New Age intellectuals silently began to disassociate themselves from the role of "morally engaged participants in the formation of informed public opinion," to borrow from Dietze. Preferring to express their political opposition by virtue of their apoliticism, they retreated to an aesthetic observation post, from which they appear to "intervene in public discussion only as interpreters of interpretation . . . life either comes to mean *too little* or art *too much*. . . . It produces no knowledge, at least not practical knowledge, but rather *Not-Knowledge*."⁷ Their "*radical privatization of the utopian momentum*" can be construed, respectively, as a defense against "the tyranny of the market" (West) or against "the tyranny of a decrepit regime." Less heavily mortgaged to German's political past, they have by and large, lost sight, of society as a collectivity--a loose configuration of universals and particularistics--and hence they may have even lost sight of the potential for collective action. Privatization and depoliticization have provided little protection against a number of intellectual backlash movements since unification,

however--even if the New Aesthetes themselves were not the first targets of assault.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE INTELLECTUAL: WAS BLEIBT?

The works of Christa Wolf embody the fate of "everywoman" (and "everyman") who personally witnessed World War II and clung to the hope that a *socialist Germany* would prove itself the all-encompassing moral alternative to its fascist predecessor. Born on March 18, 1939 in Landsberg/Warthe (East of the Oder), Christa Ihlenfeld "resettled" to Mecklenburg in 1945, moved to Bad Frankenhausen in 1947, completed her *Abitur* two years later and immediately joined the SED.

Wolf's literary success, added to her commitment to the anti-fascist, socialist cause, led to quick political recognition in a system hungry for new sources of cultural legitimacy. She served as a candidate-member of the Central Committee of the SED from 1963 to 1967, accounting in part for her role as a featured speaker at 2nd Bitterfeld Conference in 1964 (setting the parameters for a new "party line" on cultural policy between the VI. and VII. SED Congresses). In 1965 she addressed the 11. Plenum of the CC, voicing concern over the lowering of cultural standards and the party's lack of trust in artists, despite the ostensible consolidation of the GDR after 1961. She became a member of *PEN-Zentrum* (for Poets, Essayists and Novelists) of the GDR in 1965, paving the way for her later participation in PEN-International Congresses (in Yugoslavia, Stockholm and Hamburg). Her book *Juninach-mittag* appeared in 1967, followed one year later by *Nachdenken uber Christa T*, the work to which Wolf attributes greatest personal significance--characterized as a "dialogical" treatment: the narrator seeks political and moral relevance under "real-existing" socialism" in the life of a friend who died in 1963--whose biography evinces extraordinary parallels to Wolf's own.⁸

The next decade brought many direct confrontations between the Honecker regime and GDR intellectuals, rooted in the state's new strategy of quelling dissent by expelling outspoken artists to the West. Wolf was one of many signatories to an "Open Letter" protesting the forced exile of Wolf Biermann in 1976. Appearing the same year, *Kindheitsmuster* portrayed a young girl's search for a sense of personal responsibility, amidst a *Volk* that uses collective amnesia ("wo habt Ihr bloß alle gelebt?") to displace its need for amnesty, unable to recognize itself as an accomplice to the Third Reich. But the past, in Wolf's own prescient words, "is not dead; it is not even past."⁹

Christa Wolf is the only Eastern writer to have received virtually every major prize for literary achievement known to postwar Germany, East and West.¹⁰ It was only her receipt of the *Geschwister-Scholl-Award* in 1987 that appeared to generate controversy in 1987, insofar as her "resistance" to the Nazis had been more covert than overt in nature. The author participated in the 1981 East-West *Berliner Begegnung für Friedensförderung*, as well as in the second international meeting of writers for peace in 1987. Following unification she was accorded yet another honorary doctorate by the University of Hildesheim (1990).

Christa Wolf's role in *die Wende* of 1989 was indirect but far from insignificant. Together with other women writers, she helped to formulate the first critical resolution delivered to the government in the name of the *Schriftstellerverband* on September 14, 1989. In October she published two long articles in *Die Wochenpost* delivering a fundamental critique of the East German educational system under the titles, "Das haben wir nicht gelernt" and "Es tut weh zu wissen." Within days she received several hundred letters from readers [published as *Angepaßt oder mündig?*] whose reactions--ranging from gratitude to desperation, and to outrage--suggested

that Wolf had lifted the iron curtain many had drawn around their own passive acceptance of yet another authoritarian regime. She moreover assisted in organizing the November 4th demonstration in East Berlin which drew half a million participants, the largest protest gathering in the country's forty-year history. On November 8 (the day before the Wall opened), she appeared on East German television, urging would-be emigrants to remain and assist in rebuilding a democratic GDR. Ironically this *Appeal for our Land*, signed by several hundred artisans and writers, would not be published until November 28, 1989--the day FRG-Chancellor Kohl announced his "Ten Point Program for Germany," leading to unification.

The June 1990 publication of her text, *Was bleibt?* (reportedly written in 1979) was presented by Wolf not as an effort to justify her own "passive resistance" to the regime but as an attempt to empathize with victims of the system by demonstrating that she, too, had been the target of secret-police surveillance. Within days, select journalists (Marcel Reich-Ranicki of *Literaturmagazin*, Ulrich Greiner of *Die Zeit*, Frank Schirrmacher and Fritz Rudolf Fries of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*) launched a public assault on Wolf, characterizing her as the "state's poet-laureate" and the regime's "most prominent apologist." It is hardly coincidental that all those engaged in the post-mortem attack on the GDR writer were West German men, assailing not Wolf's literary merits but her "guilty conscience" over "*her hidden resistance plot . . . [as] sentimental and unbelievable.*" Only two female names figured in the entire debate, both of them Eastern German (Monika Maron is the second). As Helga Königsdorf observed at the 1990 Women in German Conference (Minneapolis), "*It is easier to behead a queen than to behead a king*" (e.g., Hermann Kant or Heiner Müller).

Wolf was also caught in the tidal-wave of allegations over *Stasi* collaboration. Reporting

the existence of an "informal co-worker" (IM) file, identifying her under the code-name *Margarete*, Fritz Raddatz (*Die Zeit*, January 1993) labeled Wolf one of the *Aufbau-Helfern eines Verfolgungssystems* ["construction workers of the persecution-regime"]. She and her husband gained access to their "Victim-File" [*Opfer-Akte*] at the *Gauck Behörde* in May 1992, where she was, in her words, "shocked to learn" she had been directly observed by the *Stasi* between 1955 and 1959, and classified as a "secret informer" (GI) from 1959 to 1962. According to the official documentation, she had been "*recruited but did not commit in her own hand-writing.*" Wolf attempted to process the "complicit" elements of her past during her 1993 stay at the Getty Institute. She submitted to a public review of her "files," and offered a record of her correspondence regarding those materials in the volume *Akteneinsicht*.

Long-time Western supporter Günter Grass and others found themselves in the unfortunate position of needing to defend Wolf not because they accepted her *Stasi* complicity *per se*, but because they interpreted the media offensive as an attempt to delegitimize an entire generation of those who had struggled to process or to keep alive the the memory of the fascist past.

The first wave of attack against cultural authorities as the shapers of national conscience had barely subsided when the second campaign began. At least Wolf Biermann's attack on "asshole Sasha Anderson" in October 1991 bore the semblance of an *Ossi/ex-Ossi* debate, but Schirmacher immediately took advantage of the opportunity to discredit an entire school of poets linked to a run-down section of East Berlin known as Prenzlauer Berg--and thus reaffirm the superiority of West German aesthetics ("*the myth of Prenzalauer Berg is dismissed . . . the final belief in a genuine GDR-Art is destroyed*"). As important as they may be in their own right, revelations about *Stasi* informers are the ground upon which another more essential battle

is being waged, namely, the struggle to (re) define the role of German intellectuals in public life and their future "involvement in shaping national experience and imagination" (Michael Geyer). Who, indeed, has the right to represent "the nation-united" in matters of moral responsibility?

A set of prominent "1989 revolutionaries" joined forces with a number of GDR expatriots (forced into exile against their will in the mid-1970s) in denouncing the literary significance of a group so apolitical; one suspects the actions of the former were an attempt to secure the historically unchallengeable nature of their own acts of political courage, refusal and persecution. This then provoked Günter Grass (West), Christoph Hein (East) and Stefan Heym (East) to counter-attack Biermann (whom Grass had sheltered in his house in the Neidstrasse during the 1970s) and Bärbel Bohley as "*character assassins*." Intellectuals of the first postwar generation seem to be motivated by a fear that the still-unforgivable Nazi Past is being quickly forgotten in the race to place new burdens of the Stasi-past on the shoulders of Eastern Germans (as suggested by Jürgen Fuchs' questionable *Gleichsetzung* or characterization of the Stasi-betrays as the "*Auschwitz of Souls*." Further, Bärbel Bohley: "*He who does not despair that peaceful family men were responsible for Auschwitz and does not despair that poets are Stasi-informers, is incapable of despair*"). They likewise fear that a universalized discrediting of any literary group could set a precedent for backlash against other "moral-resistance" groups. The all-or-nothing character of the debate [which I perceive to be so *typisch deutsch*], suggests that the right to lead the nation, or at least to define what the new German nation ought to be, is also an all-or-nothing proposition.

THE INTELLECTUALS DISUNIFIED, ALBEIT DEMOCRATICALLY DISPLACED

The greatest challenge facing the (bigger if not automatically better) Federal Republic is its need to **reforge a sense of national identity** from within, all of its day-to-day (but by no means undaunting) problems of administrative consolidation and economic transformation notwithstanding. Let us not confuse *de jure* (unified Germany) with a *de facto* united Germany; the fusion of Eastern and Western political culture is far from complete in several respects. Citizens in both the old and new *Länder* face a formidable psychological task, *viz.*, overcoming the four decades of mutually antagonistic propaganda dished out by their respective governments. The notion of *Feindbilder* [images of the enemy] sits deeper than either Easterners or Westerners may care to admit to pollsters. For too many of the "losers" of unification (e.g., millions of unemployed *Ossis*), the demise of the "enemy without" has given rise to a misguided search for a new "enemy within." (I offer as concrete evidence some 6000 acts of violence against foreigners and the disabled, added to the public's tendency to blame would-be asylum seekers for rising unemployment.)

It is moreover clear that the Germans unified must now find ways of coming to terms not with one but with two pasts. The questions of who was really to blame and who has already atoned for Third Reich atrocities, who precipitated the tensions and who paid the highest price for the Cold War, are viewed through very different lenses in the East and West. Each side will continue to draw different lessons from what appears to be a shared history for a decade or more. The processes of generational change now underway in the long-separated states may evince certain parallels, but they will not intersect for many citizens over 30 years of age; many in the East will be denied the chance to undertake "the long march through the institutions" for

which they were originally destined (for example, those who served as junior faculty and research staff at GDR universities).

As the onset of the Christa-Wolf-debacle (November 1990) and the commencement of the Sasha-Anderson-Affair (November 1991) suggest, the "communicative silencing" of intellectuals has been quite one-sided with regard to post-Wall discourse on guilt and complicity. This has not been a profound debate among intellectual peers but rather a contest between disempowered GDR literary figures and self-empowered FRG journalists. I believe there is an even more disturbing dimension to this wave of intellectual silencing, however. In addition to invalidating "the works of a lifetime" of specific individuals--(*"her literary significance is widely overrated and some of her books have already been forgotten,"* wrote Schirmmacher)--the "paradigm of Treason" smacks of a simultaneous effort to dismiss West German intellectuals on the Left as both politically duped and (unjustifiably) morally self-righteous (even though Günter Grass and Walter Jens were both resolute critics of Stalinism and the *Stasi*). This three-pronged attack enables the neo-conservative cultural moguls (I am tempted to say mongrels) to exonerate themselves from the history of division and the dequalifications of unification.

Both the Eastern protagonists and their Western antagonists seem to have lost sight of the fact that the relegated anti-fascism of the former and the clerical anti-communism of the latter were essentially two sides of the same coin, "a complimentary [sic] one sidedness which banished all contradictions from view."¹¹ Anti-nationalism under new labels after 1949 provided both sides with a form of self-legitimation divorced from a sustained, deliberate effort to comprehend the nationally-rooted, materially-driven, socio-cultural mechanisms that made Auschwitz possible, on the one hand. The need to structure their debate in terms of mutually

exclusive ideological premises led them to underestimate the measure of individual intolerance and acquiescence to authority that rendered Auschwitz probable, on the other. The alternative to communism is not nationalism but rather democracy, and such debates as we have witnessed over the last three years pay little homage to the pluralist foundation of democracy.¹²

History and memory are the things of which ideological trench warfare are made. In this respect I see the wholesale *Stasi* indictments as an attempt to preserve East Germany as "the other" for purposes of future historical recrimination/blame, while designating the old Federal Republic the "intellectual and political space" within which any future discourse on national identity must take place. Prior to 1989 the debate regarding *German national identity* consisted more often than not of "liturgical incantations" on the part of the Right, countered by "equally ritualistic taboos" on the Left. The debate itself centered primarily on the question as to whether or not a German nation still existed or, alternatively, whether it possessed any right to exist ever again. Now that the future has become the present, there is great confusion over the question as to the future form and content of national identity. Neither camp can continue to legitimize the mutually exclusive nature of its identity claims on the basis of what I will label, for lack of a pithier term, the provisionality of the context. Historically speaking, the Germans have never been particularly well known for their willingness to search for middle ground. It is nonetheless imperative that they recognize the re-configuration of *national identity*, first, as the outcome of an ongoing process; secondly, as an activity which needs to take place upon a field of competing discourses, and thirdly, that intellectuals, henceforth, will comprise but one group eligible to participate in the overarching debate regarding what it means to be a post-Wall German.

What is still missing from the core debate is the recognition of *nation* as a "negotiated

heterogeneity rather than homogeneity imposed from above."¹³ German nationhood can neither be construed as "an always fictional ethnic or cultural homogeneity," nor as a limited form of heterogeneity that posits cultural difference as a justification for expelling those who embody it.¹⁴

With mixed feelings, I accept Gabriele Dietze's diagnosis that what we are really witnessing is not the clash of irreconcilable intellectual cultures but rather *the death of the representative intellectual as the moral authority of the nation*.¹⁵ Caught up directly in a storm of allegedly "unstoppable progress," globalized through their consumption of information a la CNN, rendered verbose and arcane by media sound-bites and inter-active "virtual realities," the morally authoritative role of intellectuals has become a compensatory one at best. Once the avant-garde, German intellectuals are now behind the times (and I suspect the same is true of their counterparts world-wide). The *German Mandarins*, members of the *Aufbaugeneration*, and even the *Sixty-Eighters* did claim a special role for themselves, i.e. as groups who stood for and spoke for a "better Germany"--whether by virtue of their self-assumed ability to define national identity from above, or by way of the postwar generations' efforts to define what German national identity was not. What we see unfolding before us as a contemporary "national" movement in Germany is unreservedly anti-intellectual in character but also somewhat liberating at its core. For better or worse, members of the next generation have followed the do-it-yourself lead of the cohorts immediately preceding them by striking out to define national identity from below.

The function of literature, as Christa Wolf noted in a 1962 interview, is *ohne Hysterie, ohne Exultation und Suche nach dem Abwegigen die Wahrheit zu finden* ["to find the truth,

without hysteria, without exultation and without the search for circumvention"].¹⁶ The function of intellectuals in unified Germany, I would argue, ought to become that of inspiring others to search for the truth regarding the national pasts, of critiquing all acts of historical circumvention, and generating new utopias now that the old ones have lost their meaning. Very few appear to be up to that task at present.

Endnotes

1. Hauke Brunkhorst, "Views of the Intellectual. From German Mandarins to an aesthetic of existence," forthcoming, Michael Geyer, *Cultural Authority in Germany*, forthcoming, p. 1.
2. *Ibid*, p. 2.
3. Michael Prince?, "War, Defeat, and Occupation -- Historical Experience and National-Political Identity," paper presented at the Fourth Krefeld Symposium, *Reconstruction and Wiederaufbau in Germany and the United States in Comparative Perspective: 1865, 1945, and 1990*, May 20-23, 1993.
4. Albrecht Weber, *Deutsche Literatur in ihrer Zeit*, Bd. II: 1880 bis zur Gegenwart, Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1979, pp. 338-39.
5. John Borneman, "Education after the Cold War: Remembrance, Repetition, and Right-Wing Violence" in Geyer, *op. cit.*, p. 4
6. Brunkhorst, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.
8. Wolf moreover published a collection of essays under the title *Lesen und Schreiben* in 1972, followed by *Till Eulenspiegel* (together with husband Gerhard) in 1973 and *Unter den Linden* in 1974.
9. Subsequent publications included *Fortgesetz-ter Versuch* and *Kein Ort. Nirgends* (1979); *Geschlechtertausch*, with Sara Kirsch and Irmtraud Morgner (1980); *Kassandra* (1983); and a reaction to the Chernobyl accident under the title of *Störfall* (1987).
10. Among her many GDR honors are: the *Artistic Prize* of the City of Halle (1961); the *Heinrich-Mann-Prize*, extended by the Academy of Arts of the GDR (1963); the National Prize, III. Class for Art and Literature (1964); the *Theodor-Fontane-Prize* of the district of Potsdam (1972); appointment to the Academy of the Arts of the GDR (1976); receipt of the *National Prize, I. Class* for Art and Literature (1987). Awards conferred by the West include: the Literature Prize bestowed by the city-state of Bremen (1977); membership in the German Academy for Language and Poetry, Darmstadt (1979); the *Georg-Büchner-Prize* of the German Academy for Language and Literature (1980). In 1981 Ms. Wolf was named a member of the West-Berlin Academy of the Arts and invited to deliver the prestigious Lecture on Poetics at the Goethe University of Frankfurt in 1982. She accepted the Friedrich-Schiller-Memorial-Prize of Baden-Württemberg (1983), was granted an honorary doctorate by the University of Hamburg (1985) and selected for membership in that city's Free Academy of the Arts (1987).

11. Brunkhorst, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
12. *Ibid.*, citing German-Romanian Richard Wagner , p. 14.
13. Andreas Huyssen, "The Inevitability of Nation: German Intellectuals after Unification," October, 1993, p. 71.
14. *Ibid.*, "Nation, Race, and Immigration: German Identities after Unification," in Geyer, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
15. Gabriele Dietze, transl. Karen Randall, "Overcoming the Stasi Past in East and West Germany and the 'Death of the Representative Intellectual'," in Michael Geyer, *op. cit.*
16. Drescher, ed., *Akteneinsicht*, 1993 p. 8.