

Manfred Stassen

# THE TWILIGHT OF THE IDOLS

of Bondage, Independence, Empowerment, and Freedom

14th von Pochhammer Memorial Lecture, New Delhi, October  
Sponsored by the Federation of Indo-German Societies (  
and the India International Centre (IIC)

Ladies and gentlemen,

My text is indebted to Plato and, as the title indicates, to Nietzsche; to the former, for the substance, to the latter for the method of inquiry. For, as Nietzsche says, "there are more idols in the world than realities".

My context is the contemporary celebratory mood in the two parts of the world with which we are concerned here : exactly 50 years of Indian Independence, nearly 50 years of the New and recently United Germany, alleged political success stories, both - albeit with a different plot - on the arduous road to Freedom and Sovereignty, respectively.

My subtext is the role that education and the owners of the means of production in the public sphere, the intellectuals and the politicians, have played - or failed to play - in those developments to date.

Let us begin by listening to the age-old story of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave", from the Seventh Book of "The Republic", which I shall paraphrase for the purpose of our deliberations here this evening in the following way :

"A group of prisoners has been living since childhood in a cave with their necks and feet bound in such a way that, facing a wall, they can only see straight ahead. Above and behind them, but unknown to them, are an artificial -  
c i a l source of light, a wall on which artificial -  
c i a l o b j e c t s are being paraded, and the people who parade them.

All the prisoners perceive are the shadows of themselves and of the artificial objects that are projected onto the wall in front of them, as well as the echoes of the voices of the paraders or puppeteers which, of necessity, they attribute to the shadows. The prisoners pass their time playing memory and guessing games as to the sequences and patterns in which the shadows pass, and they hold out prizes for, and bestow power upon, those with the best divinations and prognoses.

One day, one of the prisoners is by nature ("physei") freed of his shackles sufficiently so as to be able to turn his head and recognize the origins of the shadows and the mechanism of projection. Asked whether what he now sees he would acknowledge to be "more real" than the shadows he considered to be reality before, the partially freed prisoner, being somewhat blinded by looking into the artificial light and dazzled by the inundation of new and physically painful sensory perceptions, denies this and declares the new reality an illusion.

The next day, the partially freed prisoner is being dragged by force up the way of the cave towards its entrance and out into the open where the sudden brightness of the sunlight at first prevents him from seeing the objects of which the artefacts in the cave were but the reflection. After a period of adjustment - during which he views their reflections in water - he begins to see the real objects and the sun itself as the real source of all light.

The first reaction of the man with his new insight into the reality of the real world is happiness at his own fate, and pity for his erstwhile companions in the cave.

And now there are two possibilities : Either the man resolves never to go back down into the cave, even if he may reasonably expect to become powerful and honored among the cave dwellers, or he does go down, coerced or voluntarily, to seek such power and honor, and/or to tell about the real world outside the cave, or both.

In the first instance of no return, the parable ends here, and it can be read as a success story with a happy, if selfishly individualistic end.

In the second instance, the man would be struck by near blindness again, this time by the sudden impact of the darkness of the cave, he would be unable to compete with the cave dwellers in their divinations and prognoses and become the laughing stock of the community. He would be the living proof that going up is not worth it, that it only corrupts your eyes and, should he attempt to free them and drag them all the way up the cave to the entrance, they would kill him."

THE	FOUR	LEVELS	OF	TRUTH	AND	OF	POLITICAL	IDENTITY
I								
ICONIC	REALITY	IMPOSED	IDENTITY	NATION	AS	OBJECT	OF	HISTORY
Idols	Shadows	Imagin.	Myth	BONDAGE				ALIENATION
Icons	Artif.Obj.	Trust	Religion	IN-DEPEND.				EMANCIPATION
II								
ENLIGHT.	REALITY	CONSTR.	IDENTITY	NATION	AS	SUBJECT	OF	HISTORY
Data	Math.obj.	Thought	Science	FREEDOM	FROM...			EMPOWERMENT
Blueprints	Forms	Intellection	Justice	FREEDOM TO...				SOVEREIGNTY

According to Plato, there are these f o u r progressive stages of dis-covery of the truth (a-letheia), to which f o u r ways of knowing, of un-covering that which is hidden, correspond. For individuals as well as nation-states, a distinct political praxis and a concomitant political identity can be correlated to each of these four stages .

Our discourse tonight will attempt to apply this Platonic scheme to a national history, that of Germany in this century, in order to make these four stages of political praxis and identity resonate, a n d to reconstruct the invariably v i o l e n t story of the t r a n s i t i o n s from one to the other.

PART ONE : ICONIC REALITY - IMPOSED IDENTITIES - NATION AS OBJECT  
OF HISTORY

I. The Shadow World of Idols

Societies living in indigenously inflicted states of bondage - such as in dictatorships and other totalitarian or fascist regimes - reduce their citizens to cave-dwellers par excellence: their universe is a narrowly circumscribed, hermetic habitat with little light and no discernible exit, their mobility is as restricted as their vision, their fascination with the objects of their vision is total, as the claim to the truth of what they see is fundamentalist and fanatic. Part of the fascination is the picture quality of their visible universe - the heavily controlled and carefully manipulated "film" of events, the spectacular pageantry of idols that plays havoc with the imagination of the viewer - part of the fanaticism which makes them prone to kill for the universal validity of their worlds and its values, is their one-dimensional simplicity.

Seeing but the shadows of themselves and others, homogeneity of race, cultural origin, and tradition is unquestioningly assumed, conformity of behaviour and aspiration naturally stipulated, dissent and diversity shunned, otherness exploited, excluded and, ultimately, eliminated. The best astrologer in this zodiacal

universe of signs, signals, symbols, and simulations becomes the strong man to whom the task of perpetuating the show, at least for a thousand years, and of interpreting the meaning of the pictures, is entrusted. The power of the idols is so seductive as to entail the i d o l a t r y of the puppeteer.

The interpretation of the pictures is the stuff that m y t h s are made of. The invocation, by those in power, of mythology is tantamount to the enlisting of a dormant cultural past, enshrined in the national epics, for the orchestration of a bright national future. The pristine purity of the warrior world of yesteryear does not fail to have its pied-piper effect on the spell-bound populace. Mythic violence on a massive scale, invariably divinely sanctioned and deemed "necessary" for the erstwhile national cause, lowers the present threshold of scruples built up during centuries of an evolving civilization, and ultimately renders eliminationist scenarios morally palatable, including fratricide and genocide.

Dictatorships, totalitarian regimes, and fascist societies are commonly run by a relatively small power elite, usually a self-appointed, only occasionally elected, "nomenclatura", themselves frequently only marionettes in the hands of the puppeteers of international capital and organized crime, or both.

In essence, they are internally colonized/occupied societies.

These societies have in common with externally colonized/occupied people - who live in a superimposed state of bondage - that they are not the subjects of their history, but the objects. Their identity is not theirs, they are defined by what is alien to them. The degree of a l i e n a t i o n and of victimization may vary according the different classes of society : collaborators and profiteers from assimilation with the alien powers may have found their true identity at last, others may have a split identity and pay for it with their sanity, if not their lives.

Colonized identities without a certain degree of internalization of the identity of the colonizer are not possible. This is precisely where the hideousness of usurpation of power over people lies : as the masters print your money, they impregnate your identity and mint your social mettle in the process.

It is this alienated identity, the lack of selfhood, the shadowy existence of being one's own idol, which, if perceived as increasingly painful by the majority of the citizens in a totalitarian regime or a colonized people, will sooner or later lead to the formation of ideological counterforces : The weapons of criticism will lead to the criticism of weapons. Yet the doctrines of inner and outer emigration or non-violence, developed by the intellectual leaders of the society, cannot replace the material forces needed to overcome an oppressive rule. It is only when the criticism of weapons, when the ideologies and doctrines have gripped the masses that they will become material forces capable, ultimately, of overcoming the material forces of the oppressor.



The master is, for his very definition and existence, dependent upon the definition, the existence, and the acquiescence of the slave. The denial, by the slave, of the master's status as master and of his own as slave, and the end of the slave's behaviour as a slave, ends the master's role and rule.

The pedagogy of resistance is usually entrusted to the educational elite of a society, and that elite is frequently trained at the oppressor's schools and hence conversant with his language and strategies of oppression. Where no such elite exists, or where it adopts the collective posture of silence, the society is doomed.

The Case of Germany : Stage I

The German people, the people of "poets and thinkers", in 1933, had relinquished their sovereignty to a low caste of self-appointed astrologers and diviners of the signs of the future, with a typical cave-dwellers' mentality, led by a foreign high-school drop-out turned wall-paper painter - Adolf Hitler. The pied-piper quality of his message, enhanced by the heavy Germanic symbolism and pageantry of Wagnerian opera, was not lost on the victims of both the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 and the wreckage caused by the collapse of international capitalism on Black Friday in 1929 : Prosperity and National Greatness through imperialist expansion into the East, a n d purification of the Aryan master race through the state-run, systematic, industrial extermination of the Jews, the perceived diabolical enemies par excellence, killers of the Christian God a n d allegedly in charge of both international high finance and Bolshevism.

Within a few years after the take-over by the Nazis in 1933, Germany, once the Mecca of science, technology and higher learning in its universities, with Berlin in the "Roaring Twenties" being the hub of culture and mass entertainment in Europe, had become a cave : The idols of National Socialism were paraded before its dwellers; in 1936, during the Berlin Olympics, also, and for the last time, before the rest of the world.

There were but few attempts to loosen the shackles of the people to enable them to turn their heads - all instances of resistance to the regime, however nobly or naively conceived, failed miserably. The educational elite, where it was not an outright accomplice to the regime - as some of the best, like Heidegger, unfortunately were - fled into silence. Only those whose immune system made them resistant to the Nazi temptation - the Jewish intellectuals, the socialists of all colors - and who emigrated early enough to escape the Holocaust, made it to the cave's entrance and out into the "light" or, rather, for most, into the grey and dimly lit corners of exile.

The liberation of the German masses from this self-imposed bondage had to come from the outside, and at the price of partition : Through unparalleled violence in an all-out war, and through a super-imposed, American re-education program in the West, and a subsumption under Soviet tutelage and communist indoctrination in the East.

For the German people, the end of WW II on May 8, 1945 was, therefore, not a day of celebration, and not one of total dejection either, but rather one of liberation. As former German Federal President Richard von Weizsaecker has put it in a speech on May 8, 1985 - forty years after the event - commemorating the day of the Germans' total capitulation : For the Germans, this day will always be a day of remembrance rather than of rejoicing, but also a day of thanksgiving, because liberation from the cave of the Nazis opened the way for the inclusion of Germany, once again, into the family of civilized nations.

## II. The Artificial World of Icons

A people who brought about its own liberation from the bondage of living in a cave where others determine the horizons and the degree of intellectual and physical mobility, will naturally feel a sense of pride that gives them a new sense of identity. They may even refer to the heroic individuals who led the masses in the struggle, as their "freedom fighters". Other peoples who had the labor of liberation done for them - uninvited and, initially, also unwelcome - have a harder time at reconstituting their collective psychological health and at finding a new identity.

But let us not be fooled by the semantic closeness of the terms "liberation/liberty" and "freedom". "In-dependence" is a long way away from "Freedom", it is "but a step, an opening of opportunity to ... greater triumphs and achievements", to "redeem the tryst with destiny".

When partition is, furthermore, not only the endured outcome of the liberation struggle, but the condition for its success and endurance, the question of identity becomes further complicated.

If it was alienation that characterized the identity of bonded people, then it is e m a n c i p a t i o n that characterizes the identity of people independent of bondage.

The impregnation of an alien identity onto a people's own leaves a long-lasting effect on the mind and the sensory perception : the vision of the world, long trained through the only - foreign - lenses available, will be blurred without any lenses at all, and the manufacturing of new artificial lenses for indigenous consumption will be guided by the borrowed technology of the former rulers or present liberators. Those liberated into an independent world, find themselves dependent on the world liberated from and/or on that of the liberators : In articulating their new identity, they are forced to use the "old", alien or contaminated, language or an entirely new one. Whichever language they are forced to use, it is not the "house" of their "being". Everywhere they look, whatever they speak of, everything in-dependent has the taste, the smell, and the touch of dependence.

The overburdening continuous presence of the "dependent", turns the in-dependent into a burden of its own. The "in" of independence does not as yet constitute a positive identity, in neither part of the partitioned national entity. To have escaped the super-imposed identity of the alienated "other" that was the former ruler or usurper, only led to a feeling of identity as "not t h a t other". Individuals and peoples alike, however, cannot live with a negative identity.

Where the intellectual elite fails to provide a positive identity, or at least one strong enough to survive, other sources for such an identity will be tapped.

In the attempt at arriving at a positive identity, during this emancipatory stage of national development, people look for guidance to manufacture an identity for themselves. Having overcome - by their own strength or with the help of others - the idolized state of bondage of the first circle of the cave, they turn around and face the icons that offer themselves to them in the newly gained stage of enlightenment : partition of national unity - or new national unities - on the basis of religion or narrow (exclusive) political doctrines.

In recorded history to date, religions and narrow political doctrines have left a bloody trail of division, divisiveness, irreconcilability, and intransigence : they turn wars into civil wars, and genocide into mass fratricide. The examples from religion based identities and from identities based on narrow doctrines - from the Christian Crusades against the Sarracenes via the Inquisition against the alleged heretics, to the genocide of the Armenians by the Turks, and from the Stalinist purges via the eliminationist antisemitism of the Nazis to the massacres of the Khmer Rouges in Cambodia - show that they are capable of gripping the masses; they are more suggestive of free choice and compatibility than colonialisation and other forms of oppression, because of their indigenous attire. Religions are part of a community's, doctrines part of a party's or a movement's identity : the veneration of their icons leads to communalist or party-political rule, detrimental to a politics of national unity or of national reconciliation, in states with a multi-ethnic composition.

It is no longer the imagination of the people that is played upon - as was the case in the idolized circle of the cave - but their trust (pistis) in the high priests and commissars of the respective religions and doctrines.

The identities formed are exclusive identities, led by the mullahs and ayatollahs or the self-appointed "ayatollitahs" such as the Taliban, who defend their fundamentalist exclusivity with military or paramilitary forces.

## The Case of Germany, Stage Two

The history of post-WW II Germany, from 1945/49 to 1989/90, is one of an imposed dual identity, based on the narrow and mutually exclusive doctrines of the Cold War.

West Germany, the successor state to Nazi Germany, and the pet ally of the Western block, led by the US, originally had a hard time freeing itself from the idols of the Nazi past. The story of the "Zero Hour" ("Stunde Null") is of mythical character. But in accepting the Marshall Plan money for an unprecedented post-war reconstruction effort, as well as a US-inspired Basic Law, (we are still waiting for a Constitution !), gradually grew into the artificial, iconic identity of a truncated country with "restrained sovereignty", on probation as it were, until the probation officers, the victors of the war and erstwhile occupiers, would give it a clean bill of democratic health. The language in which it articulated its new identity was a vaguely domesticated "bureaucratese" of the old days, seasoned with a shot of American English.

The religion it adopted was that of Western style capitalism, but not in its orthodox variety. The forces of a market economy were restrained by a social element : Social Market Economy became the hallmark of "Modell Deutschland", the Western European powerhouse and showcase in the Western warehouse of the Cold War. The high priests of West German success were the bankers, the large bank houses in Germany's "Mainhattan" the new religion's cathedrals, the DM became the icon of choice for identification with the state by the masses, erstwhile patriotism, and sometime chauvinism, were replaced by "DM-Nationalism".



East Germany, established in 1949 as the anti-fascist ally of the Soviet Union - the smaller but "better" Germany in the moral bookkeeping of nations to whom the memory of the Holocaust is more than a footnote of history - was to be the first socialist state on German soil. It became an involuntary part of the Soviet prison house of nations, paid heavy war reparations to its socialist brotherland and was severely punished by 40 years of enslavement for having lost the war and having wound up, at its end, on the wrong side of the political dividing lines decided upon at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences.

Its religion became what was known as "really existing socialism", a caricature of the original idea, neither Marxist nor Leninist, Stalinist at first, later a stalwart of the Warsaw Pact and a showcase and prime example for the possible success of the socialist model when coupled with German ingenuity and discipline: The GDR as the People's Republic of Prussia. Half way through this experiment, it felt that it had to wall itself in, to be shielded against the nefarious influences of the decadent capitalist West.

Its high priests and commissars were Germans persecuted by the Nazis, returned from Soviet exile, with a clean record as to contamination by fascism, who wanted to realize their dreams of the 20s and 30s, at least in a portion of Germany : the Communist revolution in an advanced industrialized country. But it turned out to be like in the Brechtian adage : Imagine, there is a revolution and nobody notices ? The people of the GDR were resigned to the inevitable, but they did nothing to build a nation with an identity of its own.

[Revolutions, in Germany, because of bad weather, take place in Philosophy and Music, not in Politics !]

The moral of the story is that it will not do to have but a borrowed or a negative identity : a half-a-German is not a German, neither is a Western or an Eastern one, a capitalist or a socialist, a proto-fascist or an antifascist. Erich Fried, the leftist German poet who lived in a London exile put it to the point :

A fascist  
who is  
Nothing more than a fascist  
Is perhaps  
A fascist.  
But an anti-fascist  
who is  
Nothing more than  
An anti-fascist  
Is perhaps  
No anti-fascist.

Neither side was the subject of its history. The decisions affecting the destinies of the two Germanys were made elsewhere, in Washington and Moscow. Attempts in the early years in the West to steer a political course in favor of unification rather than of unconditional integration into the Western camp, were silenced by political defamation of the intellectuals and politicians who proposed such a course, as well as by providing more real affluence to the West German masses. Their part of the cave had become really cozy. The reference to German unification, when it

was not threatening to become a possibility, had degenerated to a pious mantra in Sunday speeches by Western politicians of all hues - for the East Germans, this was not a foreseeable option. Their retreat into the involuntary circle of the communist cave was total, until, in the mid-1980s, the shadows on their wall became bright and lively and "other" : the end of jamming of Western television signals in East Germany afforded them to see an alternative world, and nothing has been the same, ever since.

Since the early 1970s, West German "Ostpolitik", intended to normalize relations between West Germany and its Eastern neighbors, and to open up a dialogue with East Germany, was an attempt at emancipation from the US and its politics of deterrence and confrontation towards the Eastern block. This emancipatory impetus led, at first, to the official legitimization of a second German state - which was thereby greatly helped in emancipating itself from the tutelage of the Soviet Union - and eventually paved the way to unification through accession of two semi-sovereign states to each other.

PART TWO : Enlightened Reality/Constructed Identities/Nation as  
the Subject of History

III. The Scientific World of Data

In the previous two stages of the story of some nations' exodus out of their respective caves, we were dealing with the worlds of idols and icons, of man-made pictures believed to be made by the gods or at least to be strong signals of a divinely ordained order, be it karma, providence or the dialectic. The times were those of an almost mythical pre-history and that of a new-found or a re-emphasized old religion.

The Platonic dialogue tells about the power of attraction that these idols and icons have on the masses, of their opium effect on the senses and minds of the consumers. Violence is needed to drag them away from their daily dosage. He who would attempt to go back down into the opium dens of their religious shrines to show them a way to another, a higher reality, will take his life into his own hands. We have evidence, however, that it is not so much that the masses do not want to see the light, it is their political leaders who have a stake in the status quo that will prevent their assent. History is full of political assassinations, and politically motivated condemnations to death, of potential guides out of the cave by the self-appointed intermediaries of the masses : the philosopher Socrates who postulated that there must be a reason for what people say and do, the political renegade Jesus who fought the Jewish theocracy of his day, Jean-Paul Marat who wanted to extend the achievements

of the French Revolution beyond the bourgeoisie, Gandhiji who thought that freedom was not really freedom unless it was freedom for all, the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King who wanted to extend civil rights to the people of color, Sadat and Rabin who wanted to end the age-old feud between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine (et cetera).

Politically agitated masses are also liable to kill for what has grown dear to their hearts, for what has become second nature to them, for the preservation of their homogeneity. To leave that "couth" cave of idols and icons is like leaving the womb for the uncouth, the cold, the brightly lit, the real world.

Only the best from among them will stand up to the challenge of leaving the cave and to return, even at the risk of being killed. But who, in a democracy, are the best? And what strategies would they have to adopt in order to avoid being killed?

The first order of recognition is that the best are not the exclusive property of any class or caste. The "aristoi" in a democracy are not the members of the old aristocracy or theocracy of a nation, but the champions of secularism and egalitarianism. Rank, station, and privilege have been replaced by education and skills in social engineering, by charisma, and the ability of a reasoned, systematic, and all-inclusive form of nation building.

When scientific analysis replaces astrology, when cool political assessment of the first and foremost needs of a country overcomes the predominance of patronage and favoritism; when the common wheel is placed above personal gain, then the hour of high noon for the technocrats has come. The twilight of the idols and icons is the dawn of freedom. And a people can begin to perceive itself as the subject of its own history, and begin to act that way.

But the freedom they bring, is but the first form of freedom, a freedom from ... This freedom from oppression by the old aristocracy, from the non-secular forces of division, from corruption, from the tutelage of superpowers and block leaders is an important step in the right direction and, in many cases, a tremendous achievement against formidable odds - but a first step only.

The scientific-technocratic phase of political power and of nation-building on the basis of democracy and equality, makes possible, and imperative, a politics of empowerment of the weak and hitherto underprivileged sectors of society : the lower classes and castes, the people in the villages and the tribes in the jungles, the women everywhere. Empowerment of the masses, not suppression, physical and mental alimentation, not starvation, is the best life insurance for the returnee to the cave, the charismatic, educated, technocratic politician and teacher.

Freedom will henceforth also mean freedom f r o m hunger, freedom f r o m illiteracy, freedom f r o m disease. A body politic is healthy only when all parts are healthy. It is not possible for the u n d e r privileged, the u n d e r powered, and the u . n d e r classes, to pull themselves up from under the massive layers of prejudice, social and political exclusion, and the denial of basic material goods.

A national identity is, of necessity, an inclusive identity. We are a nation only, if t h e y are part of our political, social, and economic universe. The politics of inclusive national identity is freedom f r o m sectarianism, factionalism, parochialism, and communalism - all divisive forces that try to make a virtue out of the vicious politics of diversity. To turn the gift of diversity into the cornerstone for democratic unity is the order of the day. But, it is not a given, it needs to be constructed, and the construction is hard labor.

### The Case of Germany - Stage III

Political power in the two Germanys after WW II had always been secular ; their two "religions", social market economy in the framework of international capitalism, and "really existing socialism", in the framework of the international communist movement, were thoroughly secular religions. The power elites of the ruling classes on either side were a mixture of charismatic leaders and technocrats. Both systems guaranteed, as a minimum, freedom from hunger and many other kinds of want. The Western part afforded its citizens total freedom of speech and of movement, the Eastern part understood its restrictive policy as freedom from contamination by the decadence of the class enemy.

Neither society was the subject of its own history. 40 years of diametrically opposed political socialisation apart from one another - almost two generations - had eroded their sense of belonging together. Their constructs were artificial.

No spy had come in from the cold to tell the Germans that they would soon have to live together again in one state. In the secret vaults of all the Ministries in Bonn we had blueprints for when the R u s s i a n s would be coming, through the Fulda Gap - the "Verteidigungsfall" - but we had absolutely no ready-to-follow scenarios for when the G e r m a n s would be coming, through a gap in the Berlin Wall - the "Vereinigungsfall". For the first time in German history, it seemed as if a revolution, albeit a velvet one, would actually happen a n d be successful, on German soil.



With breath-taking speed, the technocrats put together a blueprint for unification, the masses in East Germany who had started out by demonstrating in favor of power for "the" people, shifted their emphasis quickly to power for "one" people. Without the military back up by the Soviet occupation forces, and faced with hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens in the streets or fleeing to the West via Hungary and Tchechoslovakia, the East German system imploded.

The initial euphoria over unification - the smallest Germany there ever was and, therefore, it was no r e - unification ! - was soon overshadowed by perceptions of a two-class society ("Them and Us"), by massive unemployment, by outbreaks of xenophobia against foreigners with a long record of residency in Germany, as well as against the millions of asylum-seekers who came to Germany through the now open Iron Curtain. A massive e m p o w e r m e n t program was initiated by the Government, to the tune of some DM 1 trillion of transfer payments from the West to the East over the decade following unification in 1990, to equalize the standard of living in both parts of Germany. When divided, we had no problem with the idea of unity. But now, that we are united, we have problems with the concept of dividing up the goods. It was hard to get used to the idea that we in the Western part of Germany are only now paying reparations for the lost war : except that we are paying them to our own people rather than to the victors of the war. "What belongs together will eventually also grow together" (Willy Brandt) - there is little doubt about that in anybody's mind today.

Unification also brought full sovereignty back to the Germans. For the first time since the 1933, the people were the subject of their own history again. Freedom from the tutelage of the four victors of WW II meant, however, to take responsibility for one's own fate, one's own defense, one's own position in the community of nations. Suddenly, the costs of national defense rose sharply, as the Americans withdrew a considerable portion of their forces stationed on German soil, and Germany was asked to participate in UN missions etc. Coming as it did in the middle of a grave economic recession, a structural crisis of late capitalism, and of globalisation - i.e. the erstwhile benefactors are fast becoming fierce competitors on the world market - the regaining of sovereignty has been a mixed blessing for the Germans in these past seven years. They are "somebody" again, but they do not as yet know who they really are ("Wir sind wieder wer, aber wir wissen nicht, wer wir wieder sind !").

Identity construction has to do with memory, in Germany's case specifically also with the labor of mourning. Commemoration is thus filled with political symbolism. Which city the country chooses for its capital, with all the memories it may invoke at home and abroad, after whom it names and re-names its streets and squares, the monuments it erects, all these are elements of symbolic politics that constitute the parameters of a constructed national identity.

V. The Blueprints for the Future - The Social World of Justice  
vs. Globalisation

The first phase of life out of the cave, after the idols and icons are left behind, and the sober world of scientific analysis has led to the construction of a new national identity and the foundations for a healthy body politic, is a phase in which the light of truth and justice is only perceptible as reflected in water, as the allegory has it. The vision is there, the path is clear, but the reality of a just state is still blurred. A final and no less violent turnaround must ensue : after the will to implement the measures recognised as necessary comes the will to power, i.e. after the will to life, the will to survival ("nach der Sicherung der Lebensmittel kommt die Versicherung der Ueberlebensmittel"). This last step is no less than the step from a politics of "freedom from..." to a politics of "freedom to ...".

Survival has a national and three international components. Nationally, it means the recognition of diversity through a policy of respect vis-a-vis the different sub-identities in a society : Freedom f r o m religious sectarianism and party-political factionalism is turned into freedom t o building a multi-cultural society based on tolerance and consensus. It is not a matter of choice, and it is not a pious wish : there is no alternative to accepting one's body politic as a multi-cultural society in the 21st century. Where countries are not yet inherently multi-cultural - or where they fight it tooth and nail (Helmuth Kohl : "Wir sind kein Einwanderungsland !"), global migration of as yet unprecedented proportions will eventually

overrun the last bastions of ethnic and cultural homogeneity. And the construction of national identities on the basis of ethnic and cultural diversity will become a necessity if we do not want to turn every country into a modern Yugoslavia.

Internationally, survival means, first, the recognition of the end of the autarky of the nation state. The nation state draws its power and legitimacy not only from history and tradition, as well as the identification of its people with its basic principles, usually enshrined in its constitution, but also from its ability to feed, clothe, and house its people, to defend its national boundaries, and to ensure the life of the offspring of its population, i.e. of future generations. No state is currently able to do all that alone : With the exception perhaps of the only superpower remaining, no other nation is currently autark or likely to become so. That means that not only does the sovereignty of each nation state end where the sovereignty of the other begins, it means that the identity of the future nation state is intimately entwined with the necessity of constructing supra-national identities. The freedom necessary to fuel the will to survival will mean freedom to choose one's identity outside and beyond the confines of nationality. Nation-building that ignores this simple fact of the situation in which we find ourselves at the end of the second millenium, and that rallies all the people's energies around an outdated nationalism, even chauvinism, is tantamount to re-introducing the idols and icons of the caves of yesteryear.

Internationally, survival means, second, freedom to protect the environment and to make use of inexhaustible energy resources, against the business interests of multi-national oil and other power corporations. To achieve this, it would mean to gain support for a shift from an anthropocentric to a planetary ethics. Again, there is no choice : for the first time in our history, we can no longer predict the consequences of our actions, nor view them as they unfold. Not everything that is good for mankind now, is good for the planet that sustains the life of mankind now, and for future generations.

The growth of the destructive forces against the environment is exponential, not linear. I was reminded of that exponential growth of destruction when I was standing, this summer, at the pond of water lilies in Monet's garden in Giverny outside of Paris : the gardner explained, that the water lilies on the pond double every day. First, there was one, then two, the next day four and so forth. When I was there, the pond was half covered. The next day, the pond would be fully covered by water lilies, and the water would no longer be visible. - That is our situation today with regard to the protection of the environment: the environment is half destroyed, tomorrow the exponential growth doubling the destruction will complete the job, and the planet will have become uninhabitable. For it is not water lilies with which we are collectively covering the planet, but our own waste in which we will eventually suffocate, unless we wake up in time.

Internationally, survival means, thirdly, freedom to protect mankind from the onslaught of economic globalisation. The capitulation of national and international politics before the anti-democratic, multi-national "diktat" of transnational high finance and the casino capitalism of currency speculators that blackmail and hold hostage entire nations and, when the going gets rough, force the weakened nation states to bail out their private profits with public funds, must be stopped through a concerted effort of all nations interested in the well-being of their citizens. The new idols of globalisation : downsizing, outsourcing, privatization, and lean management, to enhance the "shareholder value" that determines the success or failure of entire national economies, must be smashed in favor of the the restoration of the dignity of labor of a national work force and the autonomy of a nation over its budget. This is possible only through international cooperation and solidarity of the (still) sovereign nation states.

#### The Case of Germany - Stage IV

In Germany, we have struggled with the concept of the nation state, and it has been an ironic and, for some, painful experience that, at the very moment that we regained sovereignty through unification, we had to hang it up again in the cloak room of the European Union in Brussels.

German unification is unthinkable without the idea of a European Union. Our allies would never have agreed to it, had there not been the prospect of containing the might of a unified Germany in the heart of Europe through international treaties and commitments. If NATO had been formed to keep the Americans up, the Germans down, and the Russians out, then the European Union is clearly intended to be the limited and carefully controlled playing ground for potential German hegemonial games.

If the Treaty of Maastricht derails, much more is at stake than the European Monetary Union (EMU) - the acronym sounds much like an Australian bird that does not fly - because a multi-national structure for the containment of unified Germany would be lost. This is why the French bend over backwards to accommodate the Germans, and this is why even the British - who still say that they are going to Europe when they go to France (and who will announce that, when there is fog in the channel, that the continent is isolated) - will ultimately join in.

Germany has adopted a sternly environmentalist policy. Our industries are beginning to prove to the rest of the world that ecologically sound production is profitable in the long run. We have convinced the UN to house its Environmental Protection Agency in Bonn, and we shall see new impulses coming from the Germans in the field of environmental protection, both on the technical and on the legal end of the spectrum.

The "Modell Deutschland", the post-war success story of Germany's social market economy, capitalism with a human face, is being dismantled by the forces of post-wall transfer payments to the East as well as by post-cold war globalisation. As a nation heavily dependent on exports, we are forced to play the game that seems to be the only game in town : the rat race for first position in the global markets. We are damned if we do, and damned if we don't - play that game : a truly double bind and a trap, if there ever was one.

The way out is the internationalisation of politics to offset both transnational finance - a still legalized form of anarchy - and international organized crime, outlawed nominally, but ubiquitous in the so-called First and Second Worlds, and destructive of political stability and democratic rule everywhere (see the recent developments in South East Asia). European monetary union, spearheaded by Germany and France, will be an attempt at restoring calm and stability to the international markets and sovereignty of the European people over their economic and political destinies.



## Conclusion

The story of the exodus from the cave, of the iconoclasm of the idols and icons, of the emancipation and empowerment of the tremendous resources at the heart of every society, has been a story of violent changes brought about by cataclysmic events - such as wars and revolutions - political, economic, as well as technological - but invariably also by individuals with a vision and a mission.

We have used a Platonic framework to tell that story, and we have told it more or less with one or two national histories in mind.

The Platonic framework suggests that, in order to turn around a society, men and women in that society must be turned around. The emphasis here is clearly on e d u c a t i o n .

E m p o w e r m e n t is, first and foremost, e d u c a -  
t i o n , i.e. empowerment to be educated. All other forms of  
empowerment - to be housed, fed, and clothed, to be the mistress  
of your own body, to have and hold a job, to do your own banking  
etc. - need education as support structure. Education in general,  
but such empowering education in particular, is inherently  
s u b v e r s i v e : It changes the relations of power in a  
society, e.g. that of the empowered portion of the masses to  
their state, and it threatens the status quo. It is, therefore,  
not popular with any regime. But it is the only antidote against  
slipping back into the cave; the only way to promote secularism,  
cosmopolitanism, tolerance, and solidarity - to sustain life in  
the daylight of a humane coexistence in the world.

Education is the only progressive and indigenous self-corrective instrument that a state has. Instead of being reduced to a life-long absorption of other peoples' technological and social advances, to copying models that were developed elsewhere and for other realities, how much better would it not be to develop an indigenous educational system that would produce empowered people to engineer their own future and to engage in the production of knowledge rather than in merely adapting knowledge that was produced abroad ?

Any society that is sure of itself - i.e. that can afford the necessary degree of subversiveness that education implies - will implement such education and give it its best people and fullest support.

Of, course, the question of education raises the question of who is to be educated and for what, and who the teachers should be.

The first part of the question is relatively easy : Education is effective only if it is universal, like voting, and if it is ubiquitously enforced, like paying taxes. Everybody should have access to high quality education. The curriculum that follows from the above cannot be restricted to imparting knowledge and learning by rote, but is to enable autonomous thinking, encourage dissent and innovation in academic matters as well as fostering a spirit of civic responsibility and role modelling in the social sphere.

The second part is more complicated : Obviously, the best minds from all segments of society should take over this fundamental task and the noblest that a society can possibly assign to itself to survive. Considerable incentives should be offered to them to undertake this task, and their social prestige should be in keeping with their noble and indispensable mission. Self-selection for the job - which is customary in most democracies - should be augmented by laws and state incentives, a combination of coercion and persuasion to make them return to the cave : service in the schools as an alternative to military service, plus scholarships and freedom from tuition payments in return for years of service in the public school systems and other such schemes might be appropriate measures to arrive at a teaching faculty recruited from among the best, and capable of serving the national and future international agenda.

Countries that allow their educational systems to decay, that fail to produce role models for civic virtues and cannot produce the teachers for their masses, as well as for their future leaders, will not survive. The story that there is no money for education in the state's coffers is a myth. If all the money the state is entitled to where in the right place rightly to be used, there would be no problem in the countries we are talking about. If those who have a considerable taxable income, actually paid income tax, and if we closed down Switzerland, Monaco, and the off-shore money laundering outfits in the Carribean to international trading, there would be more money available than is necessary to sustain a state-of-the-art educational elite.

The commercialisation of education - the reduction of knowledge and sound judgment to a merchandise in the supermarket of "new and improved" consumer goods - is the worst form of abdication of a government before its responsibility to its citizens and to the survival of the nation as a whole. To call for the private sector to take over the responsibility for part of the educational effort is possible only where private education has a long tradition of tested civic responsibility and excellence. It is out of the question in countries where this tradition is weak or does not exist at all, and certainly in the current climate of globalised, cut-throat competition, with its tested civic indifference.

There is a sign on the building of the Deutsche Bank in Munich that reads : "Aus Ideen werden Maerkte !" ("Ideas will be turned into markets !"). I propose to make a new sign out of this which should be held up against the globalizers who act as the new opium dealers in the global village : "Aus Maerkten werden Ideen !" ("Markets will provide new ideas !"). The only positive impact the free flow of capital and information has, is that, if correctly used and by the right people, it is liable to promote global enlightenment rather than global "tittytainment" (see below), so that knowledge is no longer an item of counterband, a smuggler's good with possible lethal consequences for the bearer, but as free as computer chips, television sets, and liquor.

We need committed teachers to strengthen our immune system against the onslaught of the new pied-pipers of globalisation. The champions of globalisation tell us that we shall all live

happily in a global village. At a recent meeting of the captains of industry and finance in San Francisco - studded with some academics such as my colleague at the School of Advanced International Studies of The Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C. (SAIS), Z. Brzezinski - they divided up the citizens of that global village into a 20:80 society : 20 % of the global population will do the work of running the show, and 80% will be entertained by watching the show being run. Brzesinski coined the phrase of "tittytainment" for this new edition of "panem et circenses" - "Bread and Games" of the ancient, and I might add, decadent, Rome : the 80% systematically unemployed will be kept happy by enough milk - not necessarily honey also - from the "tits" of the earth, as well as by entertainment, the new opium provided by the Rupert Murdochs, Ted Turners, and Bill Gateses who are the new messiahs of this age. This vision of a brave new world is a vision of the cave revisited : shadows artificially produced on the wall which now is a computer or television screen, simulating a reality that the puppeteers want the masses to take for the only reality there is.

The intellectuals, that is all of us in this audience, have a chance of belonging to the 20% puppeteers who will run the show of the future global cave. We are, alas, also the only ones who can still prevent this relapse into the cave from happening.

The best city, according to Plato, does not cater only to the baser needs of our senses and physical appetites, in fact such a city would be one for swine. As a philosopher, as "cynic", I prefer a city for the dogs.