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Germany After the Two States

A Conversation with Joachim Fest

E For a period of several decades the history of Germany was practically frozen by the decisions taken by the Allies at the end of World War II. But now the superpowers' reign seems to have come gradually to an end. They both have serious domestic problems that stem largely from an economic loss of weight, and their decision-making role in world affairs has substantially declined. The whole of Europe—but also Japan—has largely regained its capacity for deciding its own destiny. Do you think that Germany is in fact returning to its traditional historical role, as well in political terms?

Joachim Fest - What is happening on the political scene lends itself to some very ironical remarks. Take, for instance, the well-known article recently published by F. Fukuyama entitled "The End of History". It seemed indeed, before the events of 1989 in East and Central Europe, to present at least an interesting thesis. Today, it is evident that it was completely wrong. If one looks at developments in history, one can see phases when things evolve very rapidly and phases in which things slow down. As far as Germany and Europe were concerned, Hitler had caused an enormous acceleration in the pace of history—the last part of an acceleration which had started in the middle of the nineteenth century. Then suddenly, after his defeat, everything seemed to come to a standstill: there were the two superpowers, and the whole of Europe was under their wing. In Western Europe we were relieved whenever there was any minimal relaxation in their grip, when East Berliners were permitted to remain in the West for a few hours more, or when people over the age of 65 could cross the border once a year, and the

like. The movement of history was only visible through these very small improvements.

Each East European country had its own history. The satellite countries had lost their sovereignty, and therefore had almost no historical identity of their own. East Germany's history was in relation to Moscow and the Eastern bloc. But this has all changed from one day to the next. And since then things have kept moving at such a pace that while speaking, what one says is either obsolete or already history.

As far as Germany's coming back into history is concerned, I think that in a way what we are really doing is combining the two different histories of two countries. And it is my impression now that this stage of postwar German history is very new.

E
I *Do you mean we are in a completely new phase of history?*

Joachim Fest - Yes, exactly. The only other time we witnessed something similar was in the early postwar years, I would say up to 1947, when the Conference of Ministers-President of the *Länder* met in Munich. That conference ended in failure, which paved the way for the creation of the two German states. Now, just the other day the Minister-President of Bavaria proposed that such a Munich Conference be held again. The GDR no longer has any *Länder*, but there is strong pressure in East Germany to re-create them. It was as if we were trying to blot out the years between 1947 and 1990.

E
I *You seem to believe that in reality this is impossible, that the German people cannot start anew, as if those forty years had not passed, that something completely new is starting.*

Joachim Fest - Yes. We are entering uncharted territory, and nobody knows how things will evolve. There are so many barriers to overcome when combining these two countries, each with their individual structures, psychological, economical and political cultures, that the result will certainly be something new—at least if everything does not end up simply in a sort of *Anschluss*. But even then ...

E
I *In these years of ice there was, however, a strong cultural revolution in both halves of Germany.*

Joachim Fest - Not only cultural. One could even call it a revolution of civilisations. West Germany has become a country of Western culture, Americanised to a large extent, more or less like all Western European countries. East Germany combines Russian culture and traditional German culture. I visited Thuringen a fortnight ago. There one arrives in small hamlets where time seems to have stood still: little villages I used to see as a small boy, simple, rustic, the Germany of yesteryear. This does not mean that traditional values and culture have in fact survived in the GDR—there was nevertheless a revolution. But I am sure that some traditions have survived, although I do not know how strong they are or whether they will survive an eventual German reunification.

E *What you are describing is Western-style modernisation. But communism*
I *was also an attempt at modernisation.*

Joachim Fest - No, I would not say so. Communism, as Lenin said, was Soviet power plus electrification. In the GDR, beyond some visible structural changes mainly in the large cities, everything appears as it did in 1935.

E *In terms of mass psychology, however, there certainly must have been*
I *important changes. The fertility rate, for instance, has declined in the GDR almost as much as in the FRG. The historian Rosario Romeo, speaking about Italy of course, said that when he was young, womens' ideal for a man was the "courageous man"—embodied in the aircraft pilot. Today, their ideal is the "sensitive man". Could the same thing apply to Germany, in terms of an ideal lifestyle?*

Joachim Fest - I do not know. Perhaps the old ideals have survived much more in East Germany than here in West Germany. I am not familiar with the psychological make-up of those people.

E *Something that really struck me was that East Germany was the only*
I *country where people were surprised and offended to discover that the Communist rulers were corrupt. They took this very seriously. In other countries this was taken for granted.*

Joachim Fest - That is very German, I think. Germans are not cynical as regards politics: they have the mentality of a people which has been ruled for a long time in history by rather stern, paternalistic governments. So they are

always astonished to learn that politicians are corrupt. This is nevertheless only one point of view. Another is that this *naïvety*—at least for some followers of the former regime—is a sort of alibi, allowing those who had made concessions to the regime, who had compromised, to say that only those at the top of the system were corrupt, whereby the system itself was irreproachable.

E *A kind of conservative strategy which allows the incrimination of*
I *individuals but not of the system?*

Joachim Fest - Yes, whereas it was—and this should always be said—the system which was corrupt.

E *So in the end you believe that East Germans have probably changed less*
I *than West Germans ...*

Joachim Fest - In a way, yes. Some aspects of East Germany have changed totally—the new has completely replaced the old—while in some parts of the countryside time seems to have stood still. It is a very mixed and strange impression.

E *Could one say that the new united Germany which is re-emerging from*
I *the thaw of the postwar freeze has in some ways retained its roots in past problems and issues?*

Joachim Fest - I do not think this means past problems will re-emerge. Perhaps some will with the passing of time—but at this moment people in the East are so enthusiastic about Western lifestyle that they do not care too much what happens to their old way of life, let alone the Communist way of life. They just want to have what we have in the West. It is important to differentiate between the two driving forces of this movement. One is the wish for respect of human or civil rights, and the other is a wish for more consumer goods. It is very interesting to point out that the Communist ideology has always included the promise that together with freedom, an abundance of consumer goods would in due time be available. In this, communism totally failed to match its promises. Communism supported materialism, but only the West attained what Marx foresaw for the Communist world.

E *Now, moving to political problems, a new phase in history or a return to*
I *the past could mean that, following reunification, older political*

problems might reappear. First, the problem of a peace treaty—which is certainly a legacy of the past—and then the problem of Germany's borders and its role in the world.

Joachim Fest - Here there are several questions to examine, but let me say frankly and openly that today, there is no problem about the borders of Germany. The question of borders is first a legal one, and the settlement of legal issues requires a peace treaty or some kind of formal declaration. In the absence of that, our constitution does not allow the West German Chancellor to speak for the non-existing whole of Germany and to accept the borders as they stand today. From a political point of view, however, it is a hardly disputable fact that no political leader could today mobilise West German public opinion on this question of borders—I think Chancellor Kohl did not stress this second aspect sufficiently. Even the Republicans did not manage to gain much public support by claiming that Germany's borders should return to where they were in 1937. In today's Germany, the question of borders simply does not exist. The great majority of German people is reasonable enough to see that this situation can no longer be altered. But I believe that with time, borders will become less significant—this is already so with the countries of Western Europe.



Workers of the world: unite!

On top of that, let me put forward a personal point of view. My family on my father's side comes from the east, from the eastern side of the Oder: *Neumark*, part of old Prussia. It is an area gained by Prussia around 1654; today it is in Poland—legally speaking, in the Polish Occupied Zone. But I have never been there, and I feel no special attachment to it, although now I hope to be able to visit. Germany and France fought for a long time over Alsace and yet now it is no longer an issue. I hope the same thing will take place in the East.

E *Could your separation of the legal and political aspects of the border issue be considered an explanation for the contradictory behaviour of the West German authorities in recent years? I am referring to the fact that on one side, they never officially renounced the borders of 1937, but at the same time have allowed the entry of ethnic Germans from the territories east of the Oder-Neisse, and this could have been interpreted as meaning that West Germany had in fact abandoned the hope of ever recovering them. Welcoming its people almost signified the giving up of the country itself.*

Joachim Fest - No West German government ever really intended to open the country's doors to German people from other East European countries. This was an impossibility. However, given the fact that any German arriving from the GDR could become a citizen of the Federal Republic, people coming from other East European countries were tempted to claim the same privilege by saying they were second or third generation ethnic Germans, belonging to small German enclaves. And these people could not be refused entry. How could they be, when we accepted Sri Lankans, South Africans and others. They could fall back on the right to asylum. Oskar Lafontaine was the only one to say that this preferential treatment of Germans was an obsessive wish for a "Germany for all the Germans".

One cannot deny that this influx of the so-called *Aussiedlers* has created some difficult problems. Many of those people come from an almost medieval world into the modern world. Cultural integration problems are inevitable. Most of the people who arrive from Eastern bloc countries do not even understand the language of the country to which they are claiming the right to belong, and have to start by learning German. They have no notion, for example, of what a computer is: in many cases not even of what a typewriter is. So quite a lot of conflicts could arise from this in West Germany. Yet integration might be rapid in the end. I always wonder at the speed at which, after the war, 11 or 12 million people were successfully integrated into West Germany. This

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achievement is often ignored by the rest of the world, but it is of historical importance. Of course, the problem of cultural integration did not exist then, because they were all Germans. It is different now.

E *Basically, you see this question of the ethnic Germans of Central and Eastern Europe as a kind of humanitarian problem, with no real political significance. This is quite interesting and shows how differently things are seen politically from outside Germany and from inside Germany. For instance, some three months ago Gorbachev hinted that the Königsberg triangle could become a kind of German free investment zone and he seemed sure the West German investors would jump at the opportunity. But the reaction in the FRG was totally different, and very, very cautious.*

Joachim Fest - There is no desire for revenge in the Federal Republic. Although it may not always seem like it, the Germans are happy the way they are: their sometimes gloomy looks are to compensate the feeling of self-satisfaction they have.

E *Are they bashful about showing to the rest of the world how lucky they are?*

Joachim Fest - Yes, I think so.

E *About one year ago a cover of The Economist showed a Germany without Angst. This was a great novelty.*

Joachim Fest - Yes, *Angst* used to be a typically German phenomenon and it still is. It has to do with history, the complexes of an encircled country. But this is a huge topic in itself.

E *What this adds up to is that there is no example to be found in the past that can show us what the future holds.*

Joachim Fest - No. Never before have people who have lived in enclaves outside of Germany for three to four hundred years come back to their roots. This did not happen with the Italians who were in Africa, nor with the French. The English colonialists did return, but only from short postings abroad. The case of the German *Aussiedlers* from Eastern Europe is entirely different: they have been away for generations.

Joachim Fest is co-Editor of *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. A very well known historian, his principal publications are *Hitler* and *The Face of the Third Reich*. Most recent are *Die unwissenden Magier: Über Thomas u. Heinrich Mann* and *Im Gegenlicht: Eine italienische Reise*

E *May we now move to West Germany, and look at some questions on West German domestic politics and the interrelation of West and East German domestic politics? My first question would be about the CDU, which was in a way born with the Federal Republic and is essentially a phenomenon of West German politics. Do you foresee any problems for the CDU in the framework of a unified Germany?*

Joachim Fest - First, let me add a word on the birth of the CDU. You are correct that its history began alongside that of the Federal Republic. Nevertheless, the idea was born in the time of the rise of the Nazis, when people from all sides—the Protestant and Catholic churches, north and south—came together despite old conflicts, with one aim in mind—the overthrowing of Hitler.

In the 1930's, once Hitler had come to power, these people that earlier had been at odds with one another were pushed to join forces. They had, however, already started to get together during the Weimar Republic. My father was one of the so-called *Reichsbanner*—a movement to fight the Nazis, consisting of the left wing of the Centre Party, the trade unions and the SPD. The Communists, of course, were never invited. The aim of the *Reichsbanner* was to defend the republic, and the Communists were considered to be enemies of the republic. Their fight was mainly against the Nazis but also against the Communists. Their aim was to provide some protection for republican activities, meetings, et cetera—an alternative to the Nazist SA and to the Communist para-military organisations.

E *A sort of "Garde de la République"?*

Joachim Fest - Yes. These were the origins of the CDU, though the CDU as such had not been thought up at that stage. But the contacts thus created between the Catholic Centre Party, the unions and the Social-Democrats continued tentatively throughout the 1930's and were even intensified: it was really in the concentration camps, in the resistance circles, that the idea of a bourgeois party capable of establishing a democratic Germany was born. In fact, many founders came from the concentration camps.

E *So the original idea was not a West German one, though it developed in*
I *West Germany?*

Joachim Fest - That is correct. Jacob Kaiser or Andreas Hermes came from Berlin or the surrounding area, more or less from the East of Germany. Others, like Konrad Adenauer, came from the West. When the country was divided, in 1948-49, the CDU was also split. In the East, the party was forcibly integrated into the Communist-dominated bloc, while those who could refuse and survive founded the CDU in exile. This was based in Berlin and formed a special wing of the CDU, particularly interested in such matters as reunification.

E *During this period of development in the West, was the CDU*
I *predominantly Catholic?*

Joachim Fest - The CSU in Bavaria, yes, and there the church tried to establish some influence. But Adenauer himself was very much against allowing the church any leverage in German politics. For example, he did not want Cardinal Frings, then the Archbishop of Cologne, to interfere in political matters. Although a Catholic in personal belief and inspiration, in his political life, Adenauer was for all practical purposes anti-clerical. The church was not allowed any say in political matters. He did of course hope that the church would speak of the CDU as the party of the Catholics, but he never made any compromises.

E *It is interesting to see how the Protestant Church seems to have more of*
I *a guilt complex than the Catholic Church for not having sufficiently opposed the Nazis. This is partly the reason behind church activism in favour of the peace movement in the East. So one could wonder whether the possible reunification of Germany or, in any case, political changes in Germany as a whole, might lead to problems not for the church itself, but for the church's relationship to politics.*

Joachim Fest - Today, West Germany is approximately 50 per cent Catholic and 50 per cent Protestant. It is very equal. Should Germany be reunified, then Protestants would be in the majority. I do not know if this would have any consequences, as Germany is a very secularised country, I believe that only about 10 per cent of Catholics are practising, and even less Protestants. Therefore I cannot imagine that any such problems would arise. There was a time when whenever a new political or social movement or institution was born, people used to check (almost as a Pavlovian reaction) how many Catholics and how many Protestants were involved. This question is no longer asked. It might possibly happen in some parts of Bavaria, Niedersachsen or Westphalia, but otherwise it is absolutely insignificant.

E
I *Still, Bavaria is now fifteen per cent Protestant.*

Joachim Fest - Yes, this is the result of postwar migration from East to West.

E
I *Do you think the Protestant Church in the GDR tried, through its activities, to overcome its guilt complex for not having fought Nazism?*

Joachim Fest - Perhaps, but I am not sure. It is still important for the people to know that the church will provide asylum and that the state cannot interfere. The church is still perceived as a shelter. But apart from playing this role, the church also made concessions to the Communist regime. One cannot blame them for this; it is very easy to make moral judgments when one lives outside of a Communist dictatorship. I do not judge those that made concessions, as long as they did not in the process commit criminal acts themselves.

E
I *It is going to be interesting to see what type of role the East German Protestant Church will try to play from now on. It is quite clear that the peace movement which provided the main framework for its political activity has been debased by the dramatic improvements that have recently occurred in East-West relations. And the same can be said of the church's role of providing a forum for the opposition. This has become unnecessary since the Wall was opened. After November 9, the East Germans were to be found window shopping in the Kurfürstendamm and not in the churches.*

Joachim Fest - I am not sure what the role of the church is today. I think that in East Germany the proportion of church-goers is perhaps a little higher than it is in West Germany. Partly because in East Germany the church gained prestige

through such activities as described earlier. But I believe that in the event of German reunification, the church in the East will rapidly lose followers, as has happened already in our society.

E *So you believe that in any event, the church's role is bound to decline, creating no real political problems?*
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Joachim Fest - Even though East Germany is the heart of German Protestantism, I do not really know to what extent the Protestant Church plays a political role.

E *Was the emphasis laid on the 500th anniversary of Luther by the Honecker regime then just an attempt at building an historical background for the East German state, an attempt of no significance to what we have been discussing?*
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Joachim Fest - The East German state simply wanted to play on the prestige of Luther, using him as a symbol of East German pride, as they did with Goethe, Frederick the Great, and only some years back even with Bismarck. These historical personalities were integrated into an invented history and used as tools in the attempt to build up a special GDR identity.

E *So do you envisage any problems for the CDU in the framework of a reunified Germany?*
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Joachim Fest - As long as the CDU is thought of as being a Catholic party, there is no doubt that the balance will change. In the event of reunification, the Social-Democrats would probably be by far the strongest party. There are, however, other questions to be raised. For instance, what would people think of the Socialist element of Social Democracy? The Social-Democrats are not Socialists in the Marxist, or even the Bernstein sense of the word, but they are nevertheless a party whose ancestral roots lie with ideologues like Marx and Lassalle. And there are in East Germany many people who refuse to have anything to do with that ideology as a whole. For the moment, nobody knows if the Social-Democrats are going to cling to that ideology—maybe we will see on March 18, or later.

E *These perspectives that seem to favour the SPD more than the CDU are rather in contradiction with the lines of the various political parties*
I

about the process of reunification, whereas the Christian Democrats are much more openly in favour than the Social-Democrats. Kohl's approach seems very interesting, as he starts from the idea of a contractual arrangement between the two Germanys, and has an element of confederalism to his approach.

Joachim Fest - Yes, but I believed that if Chancellor Kohl were to deliver his speech of November 25 again today, he would put forward something slightly different—today he would openly speak of reunification.

E_I *This would be even more divergent from the majority in the SPD.*

Joachim Fest - No, not all of them. Willy Brandt's approach is identical.

E_I *Is Brandt's position not something of an anomaly?*

Joachim Fest - Yes, but an anomaly that completely changed the SPD. The attitude of the party is very contradictory, and I do not know which position will finally become predominant. The man who seems to be the emerging leader, Oskar Lafontaine, is totally indifferent to reunification—he is more or less a populist. Willy Brandt, on the other hand, after having thought for a certain time that all hopes of reunification had to be abandoned for the foreseeable future, has entirely changed his stance and is now promoter of German reunification. Many of the Social-Democrats are following suit, as he is the strongest and most prestigious personality among them. As to what their heartfelt convictions are, I cannot say. I do not know whether they will finally become convinced, believing that doubts about reunification really exist among the voters, and follow Lafontaine. He believes the cost of reunification would be very high and is trying to make an appeal to what I would call the “welfare chauvinism” of the West German middle class.

E_I *Is the Saar region, where Oskar La Fontaine is Minister-President, not one with particular economic problems?*

Joachim Fest - Only to some extent. The general standard of living there is very much the same as in the rest of the Federal Republic. No real conclusion can be reached on the basis of that interpretation. Lafontaine is simply interested in making himself heard. However, Willy Brandt has recently discovered his own form of patriotism—something that was probably always there but had been slightly repressed for political reasons. I believe his stance

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today is more realistic and I think that is probably where his great power of conviction lies. Willy Brandt is presently going through a period of revival. He has become in a way the prophet of German reunification, the wise old man, the forefather of the idea.

E *May this be enough to purge the SDP of the heavily negative heritage left behind by previous policies that have lead to the signing of common documents, and even permanent committees, with the SED?*

Joachim Fest - Yes. But all this is based on his personal prestige. I do not know what the SPD would be without Brandt, how the German people would feel about the SPD. This is an element of fragility in the situation of the Social-Democrats, although I think that some, within a small leading circle of the party, feel the same way as he does, that reunification is essential. What belongs together has to come together—to use their own words. He has been the main voice for these feelings, and it is my impression that many German people, across the political spectrum, think in the same way.

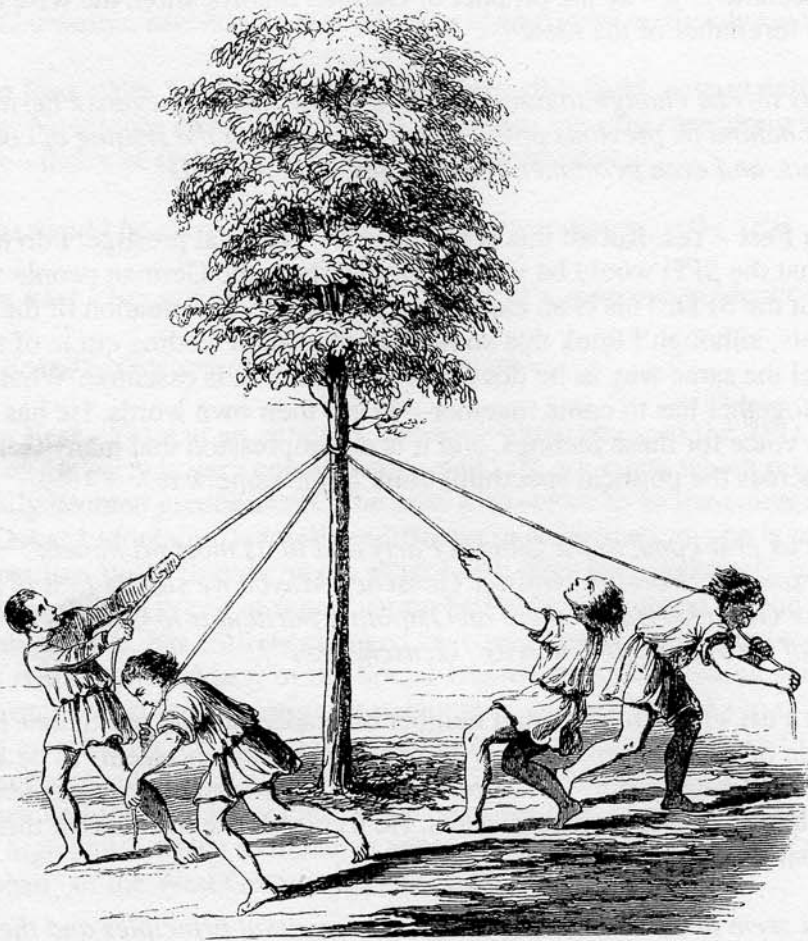
E *Let us now come to the Liberal Party and to its most prominent personality, Foreign Minister Genscher. Maybe we should first of all try to analyse Genscherism. Is there an Ostpolitik particular to Genscher? Can one talk of such a phenomenon as "Genscherism"?*

Joachim Fest - No. Only a small number of academics and politicians have any notion of what that may mean. To me, "Genscherism" seems to be a synonym of "pragmatism". It is a reflection of Germany's very complicated position between the two superpowers. He tries to make the most of this difficult situation, and often succeeds.

E *You seem to be saying that he has some general principles and then navigates at sight.*

Joachim Fest - Yes, indeed.

E *If we may now leave aside the political scene of the Federal Republic, I would like to pose a question about East Germany. Within the entire bloc of ex satellite states and the USSR itself, the political pendulum, in reaction to so many years of Communist rule, is swinging to the other extreme. We are seeing the same phenomenon which at the end of the French*



The weakness of division

E Revolution lead to the Restauration. What would such a move towards
I the extreme right mean for East Germany?

Joachim Fest - This is a danger we cannot exclude, and must not be neglected. It is important, however, to bear in mind that one cannot compare the Revolution of 1789 with that of 1989. There are many differences, despite certain similarities. One similarity is that it is indeed a "revolution", but in a

limited sense of the word—it is the replacement of an old elite by a new one, of a professional power bureaucracy lead by an elite with no political experience. One of the most remarkable cases is that of Vaclav Havel, who moved directly from prison to power—there are many similarly anomalous careers. For instance, the minister for economic affairs in Poland, who recently visited Germany, was in prison for something like nine years before becoming minister.

What is happening in the East has some features of revolution, but has nothing to do with our old notion of insurrection and violence or with the concept of left or right. The main difference is to be found somewhere else; it lies in the fact that the revolutions of 1789, 1848 and 1917 were driven by utopia, a new ideal for the future, while today in Eastern Europe the people want the present—civil rights, material goods, the right to life as such. I have met people there who say: “We only have this one life and we do not want promises for the future, we want what is already available to so many”. This is why lots of East Germans are still coming to the West. One person said to me the other day: “I have lived under socialism for forty years, I have given away forty years of



The power of joined forces

my life. Now I want to live decently whatever time is left to me. I have not got enough time to wait ten or fifteen years for the reconstruction of my country; I want it now". That is why this person has decided to leave, as soon as the elections have taken place. He wants the opportunity to express his anger by voting against the SED, before going.

We have to try to understand this attitude and this refusal of ideology in any shape or form. Utopia, in its modern incarnation, has failed. The utopias of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were fantastic ideas about the organisation of an ideal state. But during the period of the Enlightenment, utopia moved from being a fable to near reality, and this fired hopes throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Then Hitler changed utopia into a nightmare, and that is when we see the beginning of its collapse. Today we see the Communists obliged to acknowledge that their utopia, as well, has failed, that neither the "new man" nor the promised society of plenty, classlessness and leisure ever materialised. Their standard of living did not rise much above that of those in the Third World. This was the demise of communism. Therefore what is happening today is not only important in the historical context: we are at a sort of turning point. Of course, the seeking of utopia is probably inherent to man.

E
I *So this longing may return?*

Joachim Fest - It will return, but not for quite some time yet. Approximately two years ago, Vaclav Havel wrote an article in which he said that the whole utopian concept had proved to the people in the East to be only a cruel disaster and that they no longer want to hear promises of "new tomorrows". It is an uprising against the very idea of "future".

E
I *In Western Europe, however, the situation seems different. The "pan-European utopia" has taken root. And I cannot refrain from posing you a question about your vision of the future role of Germany in the world, and more precisely in Europe. The perspective of German reunification has completely changed the face of the European situation, and might have made the West European attempt at political integration a much more complicated endeavour. As you probably know, one of the prophets of Europe, Altiero Spinelli, became a federalist because he thought Europe had to be unified in order to tame the tendency of the European nations towards continuing along the war-path that had led to two successive disasters. This of course has not*

been true the last forty years because the danger of war no longer came from European nationalism, and the maintenance of peace no longer depended on the will of Europe. Do you think that the changes we are witnessing today might take Europe back to the centre of world politics, in the sense that conflicts and a threat to peace could once again emanate from our continent? Are we abandoning the Europe of Yalta, only to see again the Europe of Danzig or Sarajevo?

Joachim Fest - No, not at all. I think the whole vocabulary of this political discourse to be heard so frequently in Europe today is absolutely anachronistic. In this respect, Andreotti, Mitterrand during his New Year's address, Margaret Thatcher: all use obsolete concepts and phrases. These leaders express a fear of "German hegemony", yet I believe the word "hegemony" itself has become anachronistic. It derives from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when it meant either economic dominance or military supremacy, the latter implying not policy by war, but the use of military superiority as a means of exerting pressure. In this final decade of the twentieth century, however, the ration of military forces and the conditions of world politics have changed substantially. And as far as economic dominance is concerned, in the event of Europe becoming a true common market where everybody is on an equal footing, it becomes obsolete as well. Anybody can give aid to Poland. I think the Germans have already given the Poles several billion marks, maybe more, and are strongly engaged in continuing aid. This pushes our European partners to contradictory behaviour. First, we are told that it is up to us to give aid to these countries, then we are criticised for doing so, and it is in the context of this criticism that the notion of "German hegemony" is raised. If the British, for instance, were really afraid of Germany acquiring economic dominance in Poland, they have only to do the same, as could everybody. But Britain has given approximately 30 million pounds—a ridiculous sum. It is true that we have had special links with Poland, and we also have special duties dating from the war with that country. Historically, relations between the British and the Poles, the French and the Czechs have been very strong, actually better than those of Germany. They are free to use those links.

In any case, I repeat: all of this is anachronistic. On the one side, the concept of hegemony is obsolete, and on the other, should any European partner continue to believe that it is alive and kicking, this partner has the possibility to counteract this supposed German hegemony, simply by taking full advantage of the freedom provided by our open market.