

a state of complete disrepair, is fully restored, and there are thousands of other examples like this. The countryside is beautiful and cities like Weimar and Dresden have become real tourist attractions.

I think it is all in the mind. It will probably take another generation for the two formerly separated Germanys to fully grow together and for the gap in the minds of the people to close completely so that no one talks of “Ossies” or “Wessies” any longer.

As things went very fast everywhere it did not take long to build up a sizable business for ABB in East Germany, based on a full sales organization and several manufacturing plants. This became an integral part of the domestic German business of ABB.

I felt my job was done. There was no longer a need for a special emissary in East Germany. So early in 1993 I returned to the USA, my new home country. But I wasn't yet ready to retire. I had the opportunity to work as a business consultant with several U.S. companies, also serving on company boards of directors. Finally, I fully retired at the age of seventy-five.

REFLECTIONS

Looking back on the twentieth century one can say it was a century of wars. It started with the First World War, followed by World War II and then the Cold War. My parents lived through all three. For them it was like a seventy-five-year war interrupted only by short intervals of peace—and as it turned out, a shaky peace. After World War I it was the years of the Weimar Republic with its rampant inflation at the beginning and the political instability at the end. This led to the Nazi era in what they called the Third Reich, or the Thousand-Year Reich. Well, it lasted only twelve years and ended with the almost total destruction of Germany at the end of the Second World War. The tumultuous postwar period was followed by the Cold War, which my parents mainly experienced on the wrong side of the front, in East Germany, the most Stalinist regime of the Eastern Bloc.

Looking back, I only seem to remember my grandparents as old people. But when I check the years I realize how young they were when first confronted with war. Both my grandfathers were born shortly after Prussia and other German states were merged into the German Reich in 1871. This in itself was accomplished by war, three wars to be exact, all instigated by Prussia which emerged as the victor, but which in the end paid a very heavy price.

It marked the end of the powerful Prussian state by forming the unstable German Reich, which ended with World War I.

The first of the three wars was with Denmark in 1864, followed by the war with Austria and Saxony in 1866 (called the “German” War) and finally the war with the “archenemy” France, ending in total victory at Sedan. This was actually the last war Germany won. The victory brought about the creation of the German Reich with the Prussian king becoming the first Kaiser, Wilhelm I. The architect of all this, Chancellor Bismarck, arranged a great celebration in the Palace of Versailles. This also marked a turning point in the nineteenth century, which was first dominated by the powers of the British Empire but, in the later part, a newly united Germany raised its ugly head and became more and more menacing.

Germany was kept in a shaky balance with Russia and the Habsburg Empire. Bismarck was the only politician able to control this delicate balance. When the last German Kaiser, Wilhelm II, fired him, the balance went out of control, leading to the catastrophe of the First World War. “That’s when the lights went out in Europe.”

This was a “European Tragedy” which led to an even bigger tragedy, because as the eminent British historian John Keegan states, “The Second World War, when

it came in 1939, was unquestionably the outcome of the First, and in large measure its continuation.” (John Keegan, *The First World War*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1999, p. 9)

Compared to many of our friends and neighbors, our family was very fortunate. We lost only two family members in the two world wars, my mother’s father in the first and my uncle Otto, the older brother of my mother, in the second.

My father was not yet forty, when he returned from the war. I still think it was a miracle he survived, and also that he did not spend years in a Russian prisoner of war camp, like so many of his comrades, many of whom did not return until the mid-fifties, if at all. The day my father came home is one of the most memorable and happiest days of my life.

I am glad that our family was able to escape from East Germany. I was the first to leave via West Berlin. My sister and her husband escaped via the same route a week before the Wall was erected. Years later we were able to get our parents out so they could spend the rest of their lives in freedom in West Germany.

We saw the collapse of the Eastern Bloc at the end of the twentieth century and with it the end of the Cold War. But I cannot forget the lesson that socialism, in the extreme form that I personally witnessed in East Germany, does not work. The widely propagated “Achievements of Socialism” were an illusion. They

were nothing but empty slogans and pure propaganda by Eastern Bloc ideologists. Unfortunately, the ideology of socialism is like a siren song and it did not stop at the borders of the Eastern Bloc. Certain elements of it were creeping in to the societies and economies of some Western Nations, like Germany, France and Scandinavian countries, leading to some slowdown in economic growth and inflexibility in the labor markets, which in turn resulted in relatively high rates of unemployment. These countries are now struggling to rid themselves of too much socialism, but I see the danger of some of its fatal attraction reaching parts of the American intellectual and political society. In my observation it was always the great strength of America, as a relatively young country, to be free from the ideology of communism and socialism so prevalent in Old Europe with its roots in the nineteenth century teachings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and their followers.

Where I see the credo of capitalism in opportunity and job creation, the major aim of socialism seems to be security and job preservation. Socialism easily leads to a policy dictated by envy; envy that somebody earns more than the other, envy between rich and poor, envy between the haves and the have-nots. Unfortunately, this could lead to some efforts of redistribution of wealth in form of taxes and welfare payments, to make everybody equally rich or, more likely, equally poor. This basically goes against human nature.

During the last century we saw the collision of countervailing powers and contradictions like

- Socialism vs. Capitalism,
- Planned vs. Market,
- Ideology vs. Pragmatism,
- Collective vs. Self Interest,
- Central vs. De-Central,
- Idealism vs. Realism,
- Control vs. Freedom,
- Pluralism vs. Individualism,
- Barbarism vs. Humanism.

Not everywhere in the world did the forces of good prevail. We still see major conflicts and human suffering, with the flames of war burning in various regions.

The twentieth century was clearly America's century. America was the savior of Europe by being the driving force of victory in all three great wars: World Wars I and II, and the Cold War.

I still lived in Germany during the Korean and Vietnam wars. Europe seemed to be more of a bystander

to these conflicts in the Far East. America suffered great losses. While the memory of the Korean War seems to fade, the trauma of Vietnam is still fresh in the minds of the American people.

Now at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century, we must fight a new war, the war with radical Islamic fundamentalism. It will be a long war. Again, America is at the forefront of this war, but in this crucial conflict Europe cannot remain a bystander. To prevail in this conflict is the greatest challenge for Western civilization. Do the Western powers, the politicians and the people, have the conviction and stamina to fight this war to the end? That is the crucial question for the twenty-first century.