CHAPTER XXXVIII

The Germanies in the 1960's

The decade which has elapsed since the first edition of this book has not been as tumultuous for Germany as for some of the other major nations. There has been nothing comparable to the series of strikes and moments of political unrest that culminated in the fall of President de Gaulle in France. There has not been the sort of shift of policy caused by the overthrow of Khrushchev in the U.S.S.R. There were not the dismal years of racial conflict and political assassination combined with the horror of the Vietnam war, that has made this decade one of the most turbulent in the history of the United States. Germany's successes and the problems she still faces are on the whole the same ones that existed at the beginning of the period. Then, the position of Berlin, the division of Germany, the relation between the Federal Republic and the Communist Bloc, especially the U.S.S.R., the relation of Germany and her armed forces to NATO, and the problems of the Common Market, were uppermost in the minds of German leadership. Today, the same matters are uppermost; one difference, however, is that now the leadership is in the hands of the Social Democratic party instead of the Christian Democratic Union. Ten years ago the world was marveling at the Wirtschaftswunder ("economic miracle") by which the shattered Germany of 1945 had regained her prosperity and productivity at a level even higher than before the war. Now that miracle continues, even if some of its forms are different, as was witnessed by the revaluation upward of the mark, a tribute to its stability and value.

In early 1961 the German political parties were preparing for the election, to be held in September, of the fourth Bundestag of the Federal Republic. For the twelve years of its existence the republic had been governed by Konrad Adenauer as chancellor; for those years the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) had been the dominant party. Indeed, during the last eight of those years it had commanded a clear, if small, majority in the legislature. Adenauer was eighty-five years old, but
seemed in extraordinarily robust health. However, there were increasing
criticisms of him, of his handling of foreign affairs, which seemed more
and more to fall under the spell of de Gaulle, and of his progressively
more autocratic attitudes. It was no secret that there was real animosity
between Adenauer and Ludwig Erhard, vice-chancellor and minister of
economics, the man most identified with the economic miracle. Erhard
never forgave Adenauer his refusal to step down as chancellor in 1959
and accept election to the presidency of the republic. Adenauer, how-
ever, made no gesture in the direction of retirement and made it clear
that he intended to contest the coming election as his party's candidate
to succeed himself.

The Social Democratic party (SPD) was obviously bored at having
sat on the sidelines as the opposition party during the years since 1949.
It was in a dilemma. As a revisionist Marxist party it had to pay lip
service to such doctrines as the nationalization of industry, which now
looked old-fashioned. Certainly, the economic miracle had developed in
an atmosphere of almost complete private enterprise. Who was going to
vote against prosperity? One remembers Al Smith's sarcastic remark
about the New Deal, "Who is going to kill Santa Claus?" The leaders
of the party determined to change its image in the public eye. They had
harped too much on doctrine and not depended enough on personality.
Erich Ollenhauer, the successor of Schumacher, was a dull and colorless
person. Someone new was needed. Accordingly, the party announced
that although Ollenhauer would remain chairman, Willy Brandt would
be the candidate for chancellor. The party wanted to take on a new look,
to get rid of its Marxist impedimenta, and offer a new type of platform.

As burgomaster of Berlin, Brandt had been in the public eye for some
time and had made an attractive impression. His very appearance of a
bright-eyed, vigorous, youngish man, contrasted with the icy rigidity of
der Alte, Adenauer. Brandt's life had been adventurous. Born in 1913
in Lübeck, the illegitimate child of a poor working girl, Brandt's real
name was Herbert Karl Frahm. He excelled at school, became interested
in politics, and drifted into the socialist circle dominated by the party
leader, Julius Leber, who encouraged the boy to write a number of
articles which appeared under the pen name of Willy Brandt. A few
days after Hitler became chancellor Brandt was involved in a rally pro-
testing the arrest of Leber by the Nazis. He escaped to Norway and re-
mained there until the German occupation in 1940. He eluded detection
by donning a Norwegian army uniform and made his way to Sweden,
where he lived until the end of the war. As a Norwegian citizen he was
sent as a liaison representative to Berlin to work with the Control Com-
mission. In 1947 he gave up his Norwegian citizenship and again became
a German, a follower of Ernest Reuter, later mayor of Berlin, and as before identified himself with the socialist cause. After the Allied airlift of 1948-49 he became West Berlin’s representative with the Bonn government and in 1956 a national figure, when he single-handedly prevented probable bloodshed as Berlin youths were rushing toward the borders of East Berlin to protest Soviet intervention in the revolt in Budapest.

Brandt’s background is thus immaculately anti-Nazi. However, there were several aspects of it that did not appeal to traditional Germans. One was his illegitimate birth, another his forswearing, even if only temporarily, his German citizenship. The SPD undertook a campaign to build up Brandt’s popularity. He had speaking engagements all over Germany and traveled to the United States in the spring of 1961, where he made several speeches and was received privately in the White House by President John Kennedy. As it turned out, this effort was hardly necessary; in that year there was no need to be anything other than burgomaster of Berlin to achieve not only national but international fame.

During 1960 and early 1961 the exodus from East Germany to West Germany had continued at the rate of approximately 200,000 persons a year. That had been about the figure ever since 1949, except for 1953, the year of the June 17 riot in East Berlin, when the number reached over 330,000, and for 1959, the year of Khrushchev’s visit to the United States and the apparent East-West détente, when it dropped to less than 150,000. Sources vary, but it seems clear that between two and a half to three and a half million people departed in fifteen years from a territory whose total population at the outset was about eighteen million. To make matters worse an estimated 75 percent of the refugees were under forty-five years of age—the prime labor force of any society.

This exodus created an immense problem for the East German government of Walter Ulbricht and his Communist followers. They felt a strong sense of competition with the Federal Republic and realized they were completely failing to provide their people with more than the most meager life, while across the border the miracle was in full operation. Tourists were always appalled by the differences between the two Berlins. In the East gaggles of housewives lined up before the gloomy HO stores. (HO, the abbreviation for Handels Organisation—commercial organization—were the official state food stores where ration coupons were honored.) On even the showplace street, now the Frankfurteralleé, the goods in shop windows were shoddy and the prices high. (I once gave a pretty waitress on that street an inordinately high tip in West German money because she looked so forlorn. Alas, she was never able
to spend it because I gave it to her on August 12, 1961.) Yet reports indicated that East Berlin was better off than once great cities like Dresden, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Halle, and Chemnitz (the latter now re-named Karl Marx Stadt).

There were two main causes for this impoverishment of life in East Germany. One, of course, was the delivery of huge shipments of manufactures to the Soviet Union. More important was the appalling labor shortage, which was increased every day as the exodus went on. It reached such a point that the East German government actually offered rewards to villages from which there were no defections.

Since the zone borders were so closely patrolled, almost all of the defections went through Berlin. The subways and the elevated trains ran without hindrance across the sector boundaries. At many spots one needed only to walk across the street. Thousands of East Berlin residents commuted over to the West every day to go to work. (On the evening of August 12, 1961, I talked with one of these commuters, a young man who had come with a friend to a West Berlin beer hall. The friend both lived and worked in the West. While we were chatting he pleaded with the commuter to move to the West, but he replied that he would never be able to find as nice an apartment there as he had in the East, because of the housing shortage. His friend offered him the use of a room in his own apartment until he could find a suitable place. As we parted the young man from the West said, “Well, at least you’re coming to my place tonight. You’ve drunk far too much beer to take the long trip back to yours.” If the invitation was accepted that youth woke up with only the clothes he had on, his job, and a chance to make a new life in the West; if not, he woke up with his possessions, no job, and an indefinite span of years ahead of him in Ulbricht Germany).

In July, 1961, the rate of defections went up sharply, partly in reply to Khrushchev’s demand that all Berlin receive “free city” status, partly to a growing fear that East Germany would bar the exit route through Berlin. As many as 1,500 a day swamped the Marienfelde barracks, where the refugees were processed before they were flown to West Germany. In that month more than 30,000 crossed the border; during the first eleven days of August, 16,500 crossed, and the East Germans began to use violent methods to stop the flow. Perhaps half of those trying to cross were turned back in one way or another; Ulbricht spoke of the commuter traffic as the “slave trade”; the subways and elevated trains stopped running. Finally, in the early dawn hours of Sunday, August 13, East German tanks and armored vehicles brought thousands of soldiers to the sector border stretching across the heart of Berlin. They erected barricades of concrete and barbed wire that sealed off the
The Germanies in the 1960's

461

population of East Berlin from the Western world. The Berlin Wall had come into existence.

During the next months the temporary barricades became a permanent wall of concrete blocks topped with barbed-wire entanglements and backing on cleared spaces. In some spots where buildings were right on the border, windows and doors were blocked up or the buildings destroyed. A few carefully manned ports of entry remained through which foreigners and West Germans — after a careful check — might pass, but never West Berliners or residents of East Germany. Thousands of families and friends were thus effectively separated on the grounds that West Berlin was an island of capitalist, imperialist wickedness dangerous to good Communist orthodoxy. Naturally, the flood of defectors was reduced to a trickle, but even so hundreds of people, mostly athletic young men, still tried to escape. Many were killed in the effort, a good many reached safety by a variety of extremely ingenious methods; no one will know how many were arrested or wounded or killed before the Westerners knew of them. A new frightening chapter was added to the long literature of escape.

The reaction to the placing of the wall was immediate but nonviolent. On August 13 Adenauer stated that the Easterners had violated the rights of the four occupying powers in Berlin and also human rights as defined by the United Nations. A few days later he addressed the Bundestag in the same vein. In Berlin itself Burgomaster Brandt made a similar statement. The United States, Great Britain, and France expressed their sense of outrage and sent their ambassadors to Berlin to observe the situation on the spot. President Kennedy sent Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson to Bonn and Berlin as a gesture of American support, and not long afterward General Lucius Clay visited the old capital. Some troops were added to the American garrison in Berlin and in November the Americans ostentatiously drove American army vehicles across the sector border to indicate that they still possessed their original right to do so. In the East in September the Ulbricht government announced greater factory production goals. The labor force having been secured, it was possible to apply pressure. Thus, there was a tacit acceptance of the situation, and Berliners, both East and West, learned to live in their new world.

The Bundestag elections were held on September 17, just a month after the Berlin Wall went up. There was not really a great difference between the two major parties. Both spoke the same about the Berlin crisis; both stressed their alignment with the West; the SPD did not say much about nationalization or planning. The CDU stressed that it had governed as a team, and thus underplayed the role of the aged leader. The SPD
capitalized on the charm of Brandt and his role in Berlin. The FDP (Free Democratic Party) hoped to get enough votes to be invited into a coalition government. It declared that Germany should not tie herself so completely to the Western powers, but should adopt a more independent posture.

Of thirty-seven and a half million eligible voters, about 87.5 percent voted. The CDU–CSU combination dropped 5 percent from its 1957 tiny clear majority to 45.3 percent. (The Christian Social Union, headed by Franz Josef Strauss, is the Bavarian sister party of the CDU.) The SPD increased its vote about 5 percent from 31.8 to 36.3 percent. The FDP polled 12.7 percent, also up 5 percent from 1957. The splinter parties were negligible. What emerged was that the CDU could no longer govern alone, but had to build a coalition.

Some have interpreted this result as a personal attack on Adenauer, either for his age, his failure to take a stronger position in the Berlin crisis, or his animosity toward Erhard. In any event the month between the election and the meeting of the new Bundestag was filled with political maneuvering. It appeared that the FDP was not willing to cooperate in an Adenauer government. The old man supposedly retaliated by threatening a "great" coalition with the SPD rather than the expected coalition with the FDP. In the end the FDP was persuaded to enter a government headed by Adenauer, with the understanding that he would resign in 1963. Five members of the FDP received ministerial appointments. The most important shift was in the Foreign Office, where Gerhard Schröder replaced Heinrich von Brentano. Adenauer announced that there would be no change in German foreign policy and promptly departed for Washington to confer with President Kennedy.

The year 1962 did not produce much political excitement until near its end, though there were indications that the economic miracle had passed its first phase of spectacular acceleration. The increase in gross national product was lessening and the government announced that it planned further economies in the budget. In November a crisis developed out of the "Spiegel affair." Der Spiegel is a very popular weekly news magazine, patterned more or less after the American Time or Newsweek. Early in the month the government ordered a tough police crackdown on the management and buildings of this magazine, which it accused of having published classified military information—so serious a divulgence that it could be defined as treason. The leader in this action was Franz Josef Strauss, minister of defense and leader of the CSU, who had often been criticized by the magazine. Immediately, an uproar occurred in the Bundestag and among the general public, accusing the government of dictatorial handling of the matter, remi-
niscent of the Nazi days. Chancellor Adenauer, who seemed to have drifted almost blindly into the affair, was in Washington, where he gave a speech to the National Press Club defending the existence of freedom of the press in Germany. A few days later on his return home he defended the government’s action as having been justified and legally carried out. However, the FDP members of the government were not satisfied and resigned, thus threatening the stability of the regime. The SPD refused to talk about a coalition, and the CDU members of the government also announced their willingness to resign. In fact it was Strauss who was sacrificed when he realized that his CSU supporters were not willing to defeat the government in order to keep him in office. In mid-December Adenauer announced a new slate of ministers, keeping all of the old important ones, including the FDP members, but omitting Strauss, who was replaced by Kai Uwe von Hassel, minister president of Schleswig-Holstein.

In the field of foreign affairs most emphasis was on support for Great Britain’s application to join the Common Market and on consolidating the warm relationship with France. President Lübke had paid an epoch-making state visit to Paris in 1961. Adenauer followed this with a similar one in 1962 and a few months later President de Gaulle returned the courtesy with a state visit to several cities in the Federal Republic. In the early weeks of 1963 Adenauer, Schröder, von Hassel, and others signed a far-reaching agreement in Paris to put Franco-German friendship on a permanent basis. This agreement called for frequent meetings of French and German officials at all levels from the summit down. It called for prior consultation on all important matters of foreign policy, cooperation in public information, economic policy, education, youth affairs, and military policy, even to the extent of exchange of troops and financing armament projects. All of this was to be done within the framework of the European Economic Community, whose other members were to be kept informed of the stages of Franco-German cooperation. Unfortunately for Adenauer the meeting of the Common Market held almost simultaneously in Brussels decided that the time was not ripe for British membership. This was in effect a veto by the French of British participation, which the Germans had been supporting for some time. This took some of the edge off the agreement with France. Adenauer said on February 6, “Cooperation between France and Germany is no substitute for European integration. Let me place particular emphasis on this.” Nevertheless, the chancellor pursued his policy of close relations with France and the agreement was ratified by the Bundestag in May.

The other important step in foreign policy in 1963 was the signature of an agreement with Poland calling for considerable trade between the
two countries and setting up a trade mission in Warsaw. The government insisted that this did not infringe the so-called Hallstein doctrine (no relations with countries that recognized East Germany); at least it was the first long-term trade agreement with a member of the Eastern Bloc.

In late June Germany was excited by a three-day visit of President Kennedy to Cologne, Bonn, Berlin, and Frankfurt. His Berlin address has become famous. The most celebrated sentences from it were: "Two thousand years ago, the proudest boast was 'I am a Roman'—'Civis Romanus sum.' Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is 'Ich bin ein Berliner.'"

The resignation of Chancellor Adenauer was the major domestic event of 1963. Ludwig Erhard loomed as his obvious successor, but was opposed by the Old Man, who did not feel he had the proper qualifications. In February Erhard said, "I would be ready to accept a call to the chancellorship if my party and the Bundestag so decided." Adenauer made no public comment on this, but on April 19 he said on a broadcast, "I have often said that I will seek my retirement in October or November, 1963. What I have declared will remain unchanged." Shortly thereafter the parliamentary group of the Christian Democrats met to decide the question of the succession. Adenauer suggested that three men besides Erhard would be suitable; among the three were former Foreign Minister von Brentano and Schröder. As all three refused the suggestion, Adenauer was defeated and Erhard was elected by a vote of 159 to 47. Adenauer's comment was, "I bear no personal animosity toward Professor Erhard, but my opinion is that he is not a suitable man to be chancellor." Erhard, in his speech following the nomination said, "I am particularly grateful that even though it was known that the federal chancellor doubted the wisdom of my nomination, he stated that he wants to place at my disposal his wealth of experience." Thus, a very awkward situation was plastered over.

The actual shift of power did not take place until mid-October. At this time Erhard announced his policies, including at the outset a warm testimonial to the outgoing chancellor. He did not offer anything revolutionary, but promised a continuance of Adenauer's policies—stressing his Western orientation, his support of the special relationship with France, but also of the entry of Great Britain into the Common Market. Thus, the Federal Republic received its second chancellor, a sixty-six-year-old Protestant from northern Bavaria, whose nickname was der Dicke ("the fat one"). Erhard had been for fourteen years minister of economics under Adenauer and latterly vice-chancellor in addition.
Konrad Adenauer, who had exercised the executive power in Germany for longer than anyone since Bismarck, survived for three and a half years, dying at the age of ninety-one in April, 1967. He was given a magnificent funeral in Cologne cathedral, an event which produced _inter alia_ the unplanned spectacle of President Luebke standing in apparent blessing over the clasped hands of Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Charles de Gaulle.

As 1964 opened there was a minor thaw in the relations between the two Germanies caused by the Eastern government's issuance of passes for West Berliners to visit their relatives in the East during the holiday season. About 1,300,000 took advantage of this privilege. As the year went on there were some reunions between East Germans and their Western relatives, people with spouses in the West were permitted to join them, a few economically unproductive persons were allowed to move West, and the East even sold some people to the West, but these constituted very small fissures in the wall.

Heinrich Luebke was reelected as president of the republic in July, 1964, for his second and last term. The SPD elected Willy Brandt as its chairman to succeed Erich Ollenhauer, who had recently died. In East Germany Premier Otto Grotewohl, who had long been ill, died, and was replaced by Willi Stoph, who thus became a possible successor to Walter Ulbricht.

On the whole 1964 was a peaceful year politically for Germany, except that dissension arose in the leadership of the CDU. The gradual estrangement of the United States and France was at the root of this. Rumor had it that Erhard, on a visit to Paris, was offered by de Gaulle the choice between Paris and Washington. Adenauer was angry that Erhard did not accept the more intimate relationship with France offered by the French president. Franz Josef Strauss sided with the former chancellor in this and threatened open criticism at a meeting of his Bavarian party. Erhard avoided this by a confrontation with Adenauer, but the friction remained, with Adenauer and Strauss lined up against Erhard and Schröder. This division boded ill for the election year that lay ahead.

The endemic crisis in the Middle East impinged on the similar one in the two parts of Germany when in February, 1965, President Nasser of the United Arab Republic invited Walter Ulbricht to Cairo as an honored guest. If this was a step toward Egyptian recognition of East Germany, it constituted a threat to the Hallstein doctrine, Nasser accused Germany, quite accurately, of providing arms to Israel. Erhard promptly lashed out at Nasser, inviting his attention to the special re-
relationship which Germany had incurred toward Israel and the Jewish world as a result of Hitler's persecution. He said, "Anyone who treats Ulbricht as the head of a sovereign nation is coming to terms with those who divide the German people. That is a hostile act." He reminded Nasser of the huge shipments of arms from the Soviet Union to the Arabs and compared them with the small quantities Germany had sent to Israel. He placed his support squarely behind the Hallstein doctrine and also reminded Nasser of the very considerable economic aid that West Germany had granted to Egypt. Some days later, after thorough discussion of the whole problem, Erhard announced that Germany would cancel all further economic assistance to Egypt and that she also would seek to open diplomatic relations with Israel. However, he did promise to cease the shipment of arms to Israel and to convert the remaining deliveries to other types of goods. This program was greeted by widespread attacks on German embassies in Arab capitals.

Israel was not completely happy at this development. It saw the German action as a slap at Nasser for reasons of German policy rather than as a gesture of friendship toward itself. Furthermore, Israel deplored the fact that the twenty-year statute of limitations on the apprehension of Nazi war criminals would run out in May, 1965. Many Germans had been alarmed about this, too. On March 25 the Bundestag extended the period four and a half years to end on December 31, 1969. After much discussion Israel decided to accept West Germany's invitation and in May an exchange of letters between Erhard and Premier Levi Eshkol of Israel established normal diplomatic relations between the two states. Egypt did not recognize East Germany. Ten Arab nations broke relations with West Germany.

Other events of that spring that affected the German political scene included the meeting of the Bundestag for one day in Berlin with only token protest from the Russians and the East Germans, the final vindication of Der Spiegel on the grounds that it had not published military secrets, and the state visit of Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh, the first such visit of a British monarch to Germany since before World War I.

The election campaign of 1965, although the candidates were very active and gave a great many speeches, was listless. The two major parties were at one on many of the main issues, such as reunification and the Western alignment. The voting occurred on September 19 and both the CDU/CSU and the SPD received increases in votes over 1961, while the FDP lost votes. However, the CDU did not receive an absolute majority of votes cast, so there had to be another coalition government. One of the quirks of German parliamentary life has been that the little
FDP never gathers many votes, but is usually able to wield the balance of power.

In the negotiations following the elections, Franz Josef Strauss tried to make a comeback. His CSU had won a higher proportion of votes in Bavaria than the CDU did in the rest of the Federal Republic. Strauss wanted to get rid of Erich Mende, head of the FDP, as vice-chancellor and minister for all-German affairs. However, the FDP would not enter the cabinet without its leader. There was also friction between Adenauer, still the chairman of the CDU, and Schröder, but Erhard reappointed both Schröder and Mende. The new government was elected on October 20. It set to work immediately and in order to balance the budget initiated a program of sharp economy and reduced expenditures in all phases of government.

At about the same time elections were held in East Germany. These were different: 246,000 candidates stood for 204,000 positions; since only a few candidates were defeated there were 40,000 more victors than jobs for them to hold. Not long afterward a trade agreement was announced between East Germany and the Soviet Union by which East Germany for the next five years promised to reserve 50 percent of its exports, mostly machinery and manufactured goods, for the U.S.S.R. Among the exports were to be three hundred merchant ships, to be furnished at prices lower than Western nations would probably have paid. Russia promised large deliveries of oil, iron, and other raw materials. This treaty, apparently undesirable from the German point of view, may have been the reason for the suicide—one hour before the agreement had to be signed—of Dr. Erich Apel, State Commissioner of Planning in East Germany.

As a result of the elections of 1965 Willy Brandt decided to resign his seat in the Bundestag and to return actively to his post in Berlin. He further announced that he would not be a candidate for chancellor in the 1969 election; however, he did not relinquish his post as chairman of the SPD. It was from that vantage point that he was responsible in the spring of 1966 for some very unexpected developments in the direction of reunification.

It had been Walter Ulbricht’s custom to send a piously worded letter each year to the SPD leadership in the West calling for the “reunification of the working class.” For years the letter had been simply consigned to the files. This year the SPD decided to frame an answer suggesting that the East make its position clearer by removing restrictions on travel, on cultural exchanges, etc. To everyone’s surprise this reply was published widely in the East German newspapers together with an Eastern rejoinder. There was great enthusiasm in East Germany at this turn of
events. The next suggestion was that there should be an exchange of lecturers. Brandt and the two SPD vice-chairman, Herbert Wehner and Fritz Erler, offered to speak at an SED rally in Karl Marx Stadt (Chemnitz) and in return offered to invite representatives from the East to speak at a SPD meeting in Hanover. Much of the credit for this seems to belong to Wehner, an ex-Communist who had become disenchanted with Soviet domination in Germany. He felt that there were alternatives to the current irreconcilable policies of the West German government.

The government seems to have been taken by surprise by these developments. Erhard called a meeting of all parties and issued a statement with several stipulated points:

1) Political meetings with individuals and groups from the Soviet-occupied zone cannot be an end in itself, but must be oriented by the aim of the reunification of Germany as a democratic constitutional state. The Federal Republic continues to maintain that it alone represents the German people. Therefore, the rulers of the Soviet Zone cannot be interlocutors of the freely elected German government. 2) Since the aim of this argumentation can be nothing else than reunification, it must not serve to enhance the established power system in the Zone but to consolidate the Germans, to inform them, and to strengthen democratic awareness. 3) On the road to reunification humanitarian easements must be demanded and attained for the inhabitants of the Soviet Zone—in particular freedom of movement, freedom of information, and a revision of the politically oriented judicial system; these easements will not be begged for as acts of grace on the part of the regime nor will they be paid for by political concessions.

Erhard later stated that if Brandt took part in such meetings he would be doing so not as the burgomaster of Berlin but as chairman of the SPD. The Bundestag was even presented with a bill calling for the exchange of newspapers between the two areas.

In the end nothing came of the project. Although various dates were set, there was constant postponement from the East. Finally, in July the Eastern government called off the exchange on the grounds that the safe conduct offered by the West was not sufficient.

The summer of 1966 witnessed for the first time a serious recession in the economic prosperity that Germany had become used to for seventeen years. There had been some hint of reduced activity the previous year when Erhard had sliced the budget and warned of economic sacrifices. Now there was a decline in production and a rise in unemployment. The government and private industry were competing for scarce and expensive capital. When the Bundestag met in September the government placed before it some draft laws, involving changes in the Basic Law, therefore requiring a two-thirds majority. These provisions would give the government power to limit credits sought by local and state govern-
ments as well as the federal government, temporarily and with consent of the Bundestag. There was agreement that something must be done immediately to stabilize the economy but no agreement on what should be done. The FDP was in favor of the project, but the SPD had reservations.

Almost immediately after handing this draft to the Bundestag, Erhard left to confer in Washington with President Johnson. He wanted to make sure that many United States troops would not be withdrawn from Germany on account of Vietnam and also to inform the American government that Germany needed concessions about means of payment of the “offset” agreements by which Germany helped to support American (and British) troops in Germany by buying military equipment. He found American opinion generally sympathetic to a delayed purchase agreement and to Germany’s concern that her purchases be not exclusively military.

The simple fact was that Germany did not have enough financial resources to meet her commitments and also face the largest budget in the history of the Federal Republic. Where was the money to come from in a nation which was violently opposed to any new taxes?

Erhard returned from the United States to find a chaotic political situation. The FDP were adamant against new taxes. Within his own party he had lost most of his popularity. Of the leaders only Schröder supported him. As usual, the still influential nonagenarian Adenauer was opposed to him and was supporting Eugen Gerstenmaier, president of the Bundestag, as his successor.

The FDP precipitated the final crisis on October 27 by withdrawing its members from the coalition government on the grounds that the position taken by its party convention forbade it to agree to new taxes. Thus, for the first time the republic had a minority government. The next day, the upper house, the Bundesrat, turned down the laws that Erhard had asked for in September. A further straw in the wind was the increase in votes given to the SPD in a state election in Hesse, with a corresponding loss for the CDU. Erhard had to try to form a majority government with either the FDP or the SPD. The chances for success were slight. On November 2 he announced that he would not permit the prospect of a majority to fail because of dispute over himself as an individual. This statement gave the CDU a free hand to pick someone else as its candidate for chancellor in a new government.

The CDU spent a week of political maneuvering, and it was clear that Erhard was out of the running. Four principal candidates emerged: Gerstenmaier, Gerhard Schröder, Rainer Barzel, deputy leader of the party and floor leader in the Bundestag, and Kurt Georg Kiesinger,
minister president of Baden-Württemberg. Gerstenmaier withdrew his name. When Franz Josef Strauss announced that the CSU would vote for Kiesinger, the result was hardly in doubt. Three ballots were taken. The final one gave 137 votes to Kiesinger, 81 to Schröder, and 26 to Barzel.

Sixty-two-year-old Kiesinger had the advantage of having few enemies. He was a Swabian who had served in the Foreign Office. In 1949 he was elected to the Bundestag and became chairman of its foreign affairs committee. Since 1958 he had been minister president of Baden-Württemberg. A problem developed when it emerged that he had joined the Nazi party in 1933, although he had been inactive after 1934. During the war he had held a minor position in the radio section of Ribbentrop’s Foreign Office. Kiesinger, however, was able to live down his past.

The next few weeks were spent in arranging combinations of parties to constitute the next coalition, with the result that on December 1 a new “grand” coalition of CDU/CSU and SPD was announced with Kiesinger as chancellor and Brandt as vice-chancellor and foreign minister. This unprecedented coalition gave the government more than two-thirds of the votes of the Bundestag with only the small FDP in opposition. Some felt that the urgent economic and perhaps constitutional measures demanded by the current crisis called for a large working majority. Some of the well-known names in the new coalition were Wehner as minister of all-German affairs, Schröder for defence, and Strauss as minister of finance. Ironically enough, within a few weeks Strauss took the step that had toppled the Erhard cabinet: he raised excise taxes on gasoline and tobacco.

Kiesinger’s foreign policy statement contained nothing particularly new. It emphasized the importance to Germany of both France and the United States. It also stated a desire for better relations with the Soviet Union. The most interesting aspect of the program was the way in which Kiesinger smiled toward the eastern European nations, particularly Poland and Czechoslovakia. This, one might guess, betrayed Brandt’s influence. A year later Brandt said, “I call the Grand Coalition neither a marriage of love nor a shotgun marriage, but a question of practical politics.” That is perhaps as good a summation of it as any.

Although it is too soon to make any judgment of the Kiesinger-Brandt government (1966–69), it had certain aspects which marked a turning point in the history of the Federal Republic. They can perhaps be summed up by saying that while the Adenauer and Erhard governments were doctrinaire, the Kiesinger period was pragmatic and flexible. The new government did not approach each problem with a ready-made
formula, but experimented with new ideas. The new ways did not always lead to concrete results, but they were not always failures. Two areas in which this type of approach can be best described are (1) economic developments and (2) relations with eastern Europe, particularly with East Germany.

The fight to pull Germany out of the economic doldrums of 1966 was led by the Social Democratic minister of economics, Professor Karl Schiller. The major problems were unemployment and decreased production. The philosophy used to fight these problems was that of Lord Keynes, an anticyclical counterweight against a declining business cycle, with government spending and eased credits where needed. This resembles the old “pump-priming” doctrine of the American New Deal days, also based on Keynes’s theories. The budget presented in 1967 called for some new taxes, for reduced government spending on some things, but increased spending, mostly based on borrowing, to stimulate business and industry and move the economy out of its stagnation. This policy met with a good measure of success, and it was not long before the economic statistics took on a more favorable look.

Kiesinger was quoted early in his tenure of office as saying, “We view the reshaping of our relations with the East as the supreme challenge of our generation.” From the very outset he and Brandt devoted their attention to Eastern affairs. The first and most concrete result of this policy was the announcement as early as January 31, 1967, of mutual diplomatic recognition by Germany and Romania. The German government gave great publicity to this achievement and indicated that it hoped to expand its relationships all over the East, noting, however, that full relationship with Poland would have to await a peace treaty and that Czechoslovakia was also a special case. Normal relations with Yugoslavia were resumed in 1968.

The most interesting aspect of this development is that it was a negation of the Hallstein doctrine, for, of course, both Romania and Yugoslavia recognized East Germany. When questioned, Kiesinger and Brandt both slid around this question, refusing to disavow the earlier philosophy, but pointing with pride to the new relationships. Here again one sees the change of course, the move from the doctrinaire to the pragmatic.

This policy was even clearer with respect to East Germany. In April Kiesinger conveyed to the SED a message which outlined sixteen ways in which friction between the two parts of Germany could be reduced. They were practical in character and avoided such matters as mutual recognition, free elections, and the sort of philosophic approach that earlier governments had stressed. Among them were such things as facili-
tation of the receipt of medicines, border-pass regulations, improvement of postal and telephone connections, free inner-German athletic contacts, and scientific and technical cooperation. The first sulky reaction from the Eastern press was that the points should have been forwarded to the “government” rather than the party. However, as will be seen in the sequel, the East paid attention.

On May 10 Willi Stoph, minister president of the D.D.R. (German Democratic Republic) took the almost unprecedented step of addressing a personal communication to Kiesinger. Stoph took what Kiesinger referred to as an “all or nothing” attitude and called for the legal recognition of the division of Germany. In his reply on June 13, Kiesinger said, “The reality which you and I must recognize is the will of the Germans to be one people.” He continued: “I therefore propose that emissaries, to be nominated by you and me, should begin talks without political preconditions on the practical problems of the co-existence of the Germans, as contained in my declaration of April 12.” In August the Federal Republic announced that it would take part in the Leipzig Fair for the first time since 1961.

Stopf replied to Kiesinger’s letter on September 18. He proposed that officials should make technical arrangements for a meeting between himself and Kiesinger either in East Berlin or in Bonn. However, he stipulated various maximalist points such as the recognition of the Oder-Neisse border, recognition of West Berlin as “an independent political unit,” and enclosed a draft for “a treaty on the creation and fostering of normal relations between the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany.” This did not look very hopeful.

Kiesinger replied promptly on September 29:

"Polementics will get us nowhere. Sovereignty attaches to the German people alone, and we are convinced that this people desires to live united in one state. This national will should determine our actions.

The right of self-determination is undisputed among the peoples of the world. The day will come when this right can no longer be denied the German people either.

But he left the door open for further approach from the East.

No real distance was traversed by this exchange. The correspondents were talking about two completely separate series of proposals. However, it was far from the attitudes of Adenauer and Erhard, who spoke only of the “Soviet zone,” refused to act as if the Ulbricht government existed, and insisted that only the Federal Republic could speak for Germany.

A case could be made to prove that Kiesinger’s advances toward East Germany and Eastern Europe succeeded only in making the Ulbricht
government more intransigent toward West Germany. The political
overtures to the Communist countries and the very extensive trade agree-
ments which the Federal Republic made with all of them (except Al-
bania) were in a sense poaching on Ulbricht’s preserve. He and his
government were enraged to see their allies being lured into the orbit of
Bonn. He was also conscious of the desire for reunification among his
own people and thus tried everything possible to counteract the magnet
of the West. There was no question that East Germany had advanced
a great deal since the wall went up in 1961 and the loss of workers was
curbed. By now East Germany was the ninth industrial country in the
world. The economy was advancing about 4 percent a year and the East
Germans enjoyed the highest standard of living of any Communist
country. The East German government felt that it could point with pride
to its achievements and deride its neighbor to the West. Hence, for in-
stance, banners proclaimed, “Nothing unites us with imperialist West
Germany,” and a government official said, “The word Germany is only
a geographical concept.” (One wonders if he knew he was paraphrasing
Mettelnich!) A newspaper announced “Social developments in the Ger-
man Democratic Republic and West Germany are so different that it is
no longer possible to speak of one German national language.” The East
Germans may have had more respect for the old tough Adenauer line.

A clear example of the more rigorous line taken in East Germany was
the new constitution for the D.D.R., which was approved by referendum
in April, 1968. Among its provisions are the following: The Council of
State can veto any decisions by any other government branches including
the courts. East Germany has the responsibility to lead the rest of Ger-
many “into a future of peace and Socialism.” Freedom of movement is
confined to the country’s boundaries. There is no mention of freedom of
artistic expression, academic pursuits, or scientific inquiry, nor is there
any mention of the rights of churches. One article pledges “all-round
col-operation” with the Soviet Union and other Socialist states “accord-
ing to the principles of Socialist internationalism” and “in the interests
of the preservation of peace.” It would be impossible to imagine a more
imposing framework for Communist totalitarianism.

The Kiesinger government seemed to lose some of its élan in 1968.
Possibly the major cause for this was the curtain of resistance which it
had encountered in the East. Except for the diplomatic successes in
Romania and Yugoslavia, there was little to show for the effort to win
the East, and the massive shadow of the Soviet Union was just as
menacing as ever. The greatest success of the regime was in the fight
against the economic decline. Minister Schiller stated in April that Ger-
many had emerged from the recession. The budget presented in Sep-
tember for 1969 was larger than for the preceding year, but the increases were for development rather than “anticyclic.” The economy was said to be showing healthy, normal growth.

German attention was occupied in 1968 by a variety of issues, mostly unrelated and mostly unconnected with the immediate processes of government. Of these probably the least important was the attempt to smear President Luebke by accusing him of having designed and constructed concentration camps during the war. The president gave a radio address detailing his activities in the Weimar and Hitler years and successfully refuted the charges.

More startling potentially was the notoriety surrounding the right-wing National Democratic Party (NPD) which alarmed the world as a possible neo-Nazi growth. This party was organized in 1965 from several right-wing splinter groups. Its leader was Adolf von Thadden, whose first name did not make people more at ease. While posing as a defender of the Bonn Basic Law and keeping carefully within legal bounds, the party announced tenets which were questionable at the least. It called for the return of German lands lost in the war, the rejection of war guilt, the removal of the United States as a military force in Europe, and in general what it called “moral regeneration” (a phrase unattractively similar to some of the Nazi slogans). It used as symbols such things as the first stanza of the Deutschlandlied, officially banned in the Federal Republic. The appeal of the NPD, as with the Nazis, was largely to German youth, which was particularly restive in 1968. In six states elections the party averaged almost 7 percent of the vote and elected a number of members to state parliaments. Abroad, especially in the Soviet Union, great attention was paid to this group as a resurgent Nazi party. In Germany opinion was divided. Some, including Herbert Wehner, wanted to ban the party. Kiesinger, who had favored a change in the electoral law so that one party could more easily achieve a clear majority, wanted to watch and wait. As will be seen, the NPD, in spite of an active campaign, did not elect a single member to the Bundestag in 1969.

There were internal changes in the FDP, which held its convention in February, 1968. Erich Mende, who had been chairman for some years and had served in the Erhard government, retired from politics to enter private business. He was succeeded by Walter Scheel, who startled his audience by saying, “On German soil there is a second German state. The thing is to start normal relations with East Germany, without denying that for us it is not foreign but German.” Scheel’s election was certainly a step toward the government that took office in the autumn of 1969.
Germany, like other countries, was beset by student unrest and rioting in the spring of 1968. There is no question that the German universities remained closer to the nineteenth century ethos than the rest of German society. They have been power houses of authoritarian discipline and outmoded attitudes. Naturally and rightly, large numbers of students objected to these conditions and wanted reform. Leadership in the student movement was taken by the SDS (Socialist League of German students), originally allied with the SPD, but expelled from the party in 1960. This group became infected with the same sort of radicalism and nihilism familiar in the United States, combined with the usual hatred of the "establishment" and the usual doctrine of violence.

The riots of April, 1968, followed the attempted murder of (Red) Rudi Dutschke, an SDS leader in Berlin. During four days of rioting at least two persons were killed. The general attitude of government leaders was that dissent and reform were good but that violence was not. Reform of the universities seems to have progressed rapidly. Student militancy remains an urgent problem in Germany as elsewhere.

A legacy from the Nazi period was the question of the statute of limitations running on Nazi criminals. Originally, the twenty-year period was to end in 1965, but it was extended to December 31, 1969, on the theory that Germany was not entirely legally free until 1950. However, it was becoming clear that by no means all prosecutions for Nazi murders would be completed in the courts by that time. In August, 1968, Minister of Justice Gustav Heinemann, who was soon to be elected president of the Federal Republic, made a strong plea for abolishing the statute for murder and genocide. In the following spring the cabinet agreed and placed the necessary bill before the Bundestag.

The same old niggling bickering continued between the two halves of Germany. After the student rioting in Berlin the East Germans made access to the city by land more difficult by establishing a system of visas for which a charge was made. In 1969 they tried to prevent the presidential election from being held in Berlin, as it had been three times before. Confrontations and expressions of opinion continued at all levels, but the upshot was that the situation remained unchanged in essentials except for increasing trade between the two parts of Germany. A change is not likely as long as the Soviet Union does not change.

The principal political events of 1969 were two major elections, one for the presidency and one for the new Bundestag. President Luebke announced in 1968 that he would retire from the presidency a few months earlier than the regular expiration of his term so that the two elections would be more widely spaced. Accordingly, the Federal Convention met in Berlin on March 5, in spite of the threats of the Eastern
government. There were two candidates for the presidency. The CDU nominated Gerhard Schröder, then minister of defense, while the SPD named Gustav Heinemann, minister of justice. Heinemann was elected on the third ballot by a vote of 512 to 506, thanks to the fact that most of the FDP delegates voted for him, a presage of the future. Heinemann has a reputation as a liberal. At the outset he was a member of the CDU but broke with Adenauer over the question of German rearmament, which he thought wrecked the chances of German reunification because the Soviets were from then on uncompromisingly suspicious of the Federal Republic. He later joined the SPD and served as minister of justice in the Kiesinger government. There was some thought that he might not stay in the ceremonial background as completely as Heuss and Luebke had done.

The far more important Bundestag elections were set for September 28. In April Brandt offered as a sort of SPD motto the idea of replacing "East-West confrontation in Europe with East-West co-operation." At the same time Karl Schiller, the minister of economics, called for a steady rise in the gross national product.

The campaign was hotly waged with new types of electioneering adopted, as for example, addresses through a megaphone to bathers on a northern beach, stopping ladies on the street to present a rose and then to discuss politics. It was predicted that the independent vote might be decisive but that the election would be very close.

In the results, the CDU/CSU combination received 46.1 percent as compared with 47.6 percent in 1965; the SPD received 42.7 percent as compared with 39.3 percent; the FDP received 5.8 percent as compared with 9.5 percent. The NDP received 4.3 percent, too few to qualify for seats in the Bundestag. Once again there was no absolute majority and once again the FDP, with barely enough votes to assure membership in the Bundestag, was able to decide Germany's political fate for the next four years. Surely this is an ironic commentary on the democratic process.

It took less than a week for the parties to come to terms. The FDP threw its votes to the SPD, so that for the first time in Bonn's history a socialist became chancellor. This solution was credited by many to Walter Scheel, the new chairman of the FDP, who was reputed to be well to the left of his predecessor, Erich Mende. Scheel received the vice-chancellorship and the Foreign Office. Two other members of the FDP entered the cabinet. Dr. Schiller remained as the SPD minister of economics. Helmut Schmidt, one of the deputy chairmen of the party, became minister of justice. The other deputy chairman, Herbert Wehnert, was notable by his absence from the government list. The ministry
of all-German affairs was renamed the ministry for inner-German relations, an interesting piece of semantics. Some of the members of the government were new names to the public at large, while others, especially the ones named above, were well known. Brandt announced that his would be a government of domestic reform and of continuity in foreign policy.

After the inauguration of Willy Brandt’s government nothing dramatic occurred and it seemed that nothing spectacular was likely to occur in the near future. Internally, the government was to make a few changes and reforms. The economy seemed to be sound and the democratic philosophy stable. As far as foreign affairs are concerned, the Federal Republic did not have much room in which to maneuver. As long as the Soviet Union maintained its attitudes, West Germany would remain in approximately the same position. The heartbreaking events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 made that abundantly clear.

When I completed the first edition of this book almost ten years ago, I expressed a sentiment of “moderate optimism” about Germany. I have no reason to change that assessment, unless it be to use a more positive word than “moderate.” West Germany is now the major economic power in Europe. In its political life it has shown a degree of democratic sophistication unmatched in earlier German history. “Moderate” optimism is clearly too meager a phrase.