

'The two entities' from Le Figaro (3 October 1990)

Caption: On 3 October 1990, the French daily newspaper Le Figaro speculates on the possible consequences of German reunification for the operation of the European Communities.

Source: Le Figaro. 03.10.1990, n° 14 340. Paris: Le Figaro. "Les deux unités ", auteur:J. F-P. , p. 1.

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The two entities

As of midnight, the two Germanys are now one. We are witnessing the re-birth of a great power at the heart of the continent. With 80 million people and significant industrial and financial potential, its emergence is an event of major significance. Is this a good thing?

Some people have their doubts. They see it as a necessary evil and the price to be paid for the collapse of Communism and the liberation of the enslaved people of Central and Eastern Europe.

They are wrong. There are two great merits to German unification. It restores the peace in Europe which was threatened by the division of the continent and by Germany being split into two rival camps that, sooner or later, might well have traded armed blows. It makes it possible to move towards European union. Until now, Germans had every right to fear that, as the Community grew, it would end by cutting them off from the GDR.

So let us have no regret in closing this chapter on a divided Germany. Let us look to the future, with neither blind pessimism nor naivety.

It is a good thing that the new Germany has come about by the GDR joining the Bonn Republic. In so doing, it challenges neither the German Constitution nor its alliances. This ensures continuity. It means that it is firmly entrenched in the West.

But let us have no illusions. We should not mistake the new Germany for an enlarged Federal Republic. It will be different: sovereign, powerful and at the heart of things. It will undergo a shift eastwards. It will be more Protestant, more German. For some time to come, it will be self-absorbed because of the problems involved in rebuilding East Germany.

Hence, the key question for us is: will the new Germany distance itself from the European Community? Now that it can go it alone in Europe, and with the eastwards pull, will it be willing in future to accept the Community's constraints? The same question applies to Germany's partners who might fear its dominating a structure that had, to date, successfully maintained a balance between its main partners.

These fears are not unfounded. But, to date, nothing has happened to justify them. The President of the Bundesbank is giving monetary union the cold shoulder. But Chancellor Helmut Kohl's commitment to Europe is stronger than ever. So is Franco-German determination, as was shown by the recent Munich Summit. The threat of Balkanisation that hangs over Europe is clearly perceived, as is the fact that only the Twelve can stop it happening.

For the moment, all the signs are that the two entities are mutually supportive. Europe makes things easier for Germany, while Germany speeds up the European process. Is this just knee-jerk optimism? Not necessarily. At all events, it is up to France to make it happen.

Jean François-Poncet