

## Extracts of the article

### »Uneasy about the Germans« by Arthur Miller

**D**o Germans accept responsibility for the crimes of the Nazi era? Is their repentance such that they can be trusted never to repeat the past? When people worry about the unification of Germany, these are the usual questions. But for me there is a deeper mystery, and it concerns the idea of nationhood itself in the German mind.

No one can hope to predict what course any country will take. I believe that for Germans, including those who are eager for unification, the future of German democracy is as much of an enigma as it is for the rest of us. They simply don't know. More precisely, they are almost sure it will turn out all right. But that's a big almost.

Does the Federal Republic of Germany arouse lofty democratic feelings in its citizens' minds, or is it a system that is simply a matter of historical convenience invented by foreigners? To be sure, this system has helped the nation to prosper as never before, but the issue is how deep the commitment is to its de-

mocratic precepts, how sacred they are, and if they will hold in hard times.

I have often sensed something factitious about German society in the minds of Germans, regardless of viewpoint. Discounting the zephyrs – or clouds – of guilt and resentment that obscure conversations with foreigners, especially Jewish liberals like me, it seems that the very reality of the German state is still not quite settled in their minds. I have never, for example, felt that Germans have very transcendent feelings toward the Federal Republic; it does not seem to have imbued them with sublime sensations, even among those who regard it as a triumph of German civic consciousness risen from the ruins of war.

In a word, the German ship, in the German mind, increasingly powerful and promising though it may be, seems to float slightly above the surface without displacing water. Again, I may get this impression because of the tendency of Germans to apologize for themselves implicitly, which in some is a form of secret boasting, given the incredible success of the German economy.

Of course, for the foreigner, Germany's civic failure is most perfectly expressed by the Holocaust and military aggressions of Hitler. But I have wondered whether, foreigners and their accusing attitudes on these counts apart, a different and less obvious historical experience is not more active in creating an uneasiness in them, an experience uniquely German.

The world, it seems to me, has no choice but to support the positive side of the split and to extend its hand to a democratic Germany. By giving it the recognition it deserves, German democracy can only be

strengthened, but meeting it with endless suspicion may finally wither its hopes.

It does not really do any good to remind Germans of those horrendous statistics if the purpose is simply to gratify an impulse to punish. But it is necessary never to forget what nationalistic blood just can come to, so that it will never happen again.

Likewise, German resentment at such reminders has to be understood. No one can live in a perpetual state of repentance without resentment. In the scale and profundity of its degradation Nazism has no equal in modern time, but each country has had some level of experience with contrition, some taste of it, as a repayment for oppression of other people. What if every nation guilty of persecution were to own up? Are we really prepared to believe in their remorse? And while penitence in the persecutors may be a moral necessity for those who survived victimization, it will not bring back the dead. So is it not infinitely more important that the descendants of persecutors demonstrate something more than contrition, namely political responsibility?

What do I care if a Nazi says he's sorry? I want to know what the Constitution and educational system of Germany are doing to defend democracy under possibly difficult future circumstances. That is important to me and to my children. It is equally important that democracy live not only in institutions but in the German heart. But in all candor how are we ever to know that it does, except as crises are faced in a democratic spirit?

The world has a right – its World War II dead have earned it the right – to reproach and criticize and make demands of Germans if and when they seem to revert to bad habits.

For a long time to come, the Germans are going to have to face the legacy of their last attempt to dominate other nations.

But there is another Germany – the Germany of high aspirations. It does truly exist, and it must be welcomed wholeheartedly in the hope that one day its permanent domination over the country will be unquestioned by any fair-minded person. In short, the time has come to look the worst in the eye but to hope for the best.

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**Extractos del artículo**  
**»Uneasy about the Germans«**  
**con Arthur Miller**

**A**ceptan los alemanes la responsabilidad de los crímenes de la época nazi? ¿Es su arrepentimiento tan sincero como para poder creerles que nunca más repetirán el pasado? El que esté preocupado con la unificación de Alemania, se plantea en general esta y otras preguntas similares. A mi me preocupa un misterio más profundo: la idea de la «nationhood» en la mente y en el alma de los alemanes.

Nadie puede presumir de poder predecir qué camino tomará un país. El futuro de la democracia alemana es, pienso yo, un enigma tanto para los alemanes, también para todos los que deliran en contra de la unificación, como para el resto del mundo. ¿Se implantó el despertar del orgulloso sentido democrático en las mentes de los ciudadanos de la República Federal Alemana o es simplemente un sistema de conveniencia histórica inventado por los extranjeros? Este sistema ha contribuido, con toda seguridad, a la formación del grado de bienestar, no conocido antes en la nación. Con

todo, el interrogante es hoy ¿hasta dónde llegan sus preceptos democráticos, si son sagrados y si pueden sobrevivir a los tiempos difíciles?

A menudo he tenido la impresión de que los alemanes tienen un comportamiento aparente hacia su tipo de sociedad. Si se tiene en cuenta el aura, – o la mancha –, de culpa y resentimiento que oscurece las conversaciones con extranjeros, especialmente con judíos liberales como yo, la verdadera realidad del estado alemán parece no haberse determinado todavía por completo en sus mentes. Yo, por ejemplo, nunca he tenido el sentimiento de que los alemanes estén poseídos de un sentido trascendental, de una sensación sublime, hacia la República Federal, tampoco todos aquellos que ven en el sistema un triunfo de la conciencia que se levanta sobre las ruinas de la guerra.

Resumiendo, el barco de la nación parece desplazarse con facilidad por entre las conciencias alemanas, sin mucho calado. Esta impresión también puede haber surgido en mí, dado que en el caso de los alemanes, ellos mismos se disculpan indirectamente, lo que para algunos resulta una manera disimulada de fanfarronear, confiados en el increíble éxito de la economía alemana.

Naturalmente, para los extranjeros, el Holocausto y las agresiones militares de Hitler suponen la más perfecta expresión del fracaso de una sociedad burguesa alemana. Aún así, me he preguntado con frecuencia, – la actitud acusadora de los extranjeros expuesta de una vez sobre este asunto –, si otra experiencia histórica, menos evidente, no hubiera motivado un malestar más fuerte, una experiencia exclusivamente alemana.

El mundo, creo yo, no tiene otra