

Editorial

Even though it appeared that after the fall of the Iron Curtain democracy would gradually triumph all over the world, it again became the object of serious debates and polemics. In some places discussions focus on the question whether it can settle down throughout the world, in other places the question arises what risks are in store in countries, which have lived in a democratic system for decades. Some people seem to overlook existing historical experiences accumulated with democracy which clearly demonstrate that it is, above all, the outcome of a definitive civilization development, founded on a number of prerequisites. One of these is the formation of a national or supranational identity of a given national or supranational community. Without this democracy is no more than a set of specific institutional structures and mechanisms that may not survive the first major upheaval. Identity contains an adapted past and a vision of the future, a history of brilliance and suffering, a mature attitude towards certain values and a number of other factors. Nowadays there exist democrats in the West – we may even call them cultural Marxists – who do not even realize how important a sound national identity is for a stable democracy which would not have the kind of large holes which we find in Emmenthal cheese. The problem of German expellees at the end of the war or shortly after it from Eastern and Central Europe can serve as an example. The German public began to realize this marginalized and suppressed problem affecting some twelve million people which was buried for many decades – it affected mainly old people, women and children who were driven from their homes as a group and many were even murdered in the process. They gradually became part of the German national identity not as protagonists but as victims of defeated National Socialism. The result is a project to establish a Centre Against Expulsion in Berlin which would have the task of analysing these processes – and this is important – in a European context. The German Minister of Foreign Affairs Fischer recently opposed this and pointed out that the Germans would do better if they realized what they themselves had brought upon themselves; a memorial recalling national self-destruction was put up. These are remarkable unpremeditated words – since it is evident that no nation, no matter in which part of the world, can live forever in an atmosphere of suppressing substantial portions of its history. This year for the first time in the history of German democracy (!) the uprising of the East German working people against Stalinism in June 1953 was remembered in a dignified manner. Moreover, German expellees did not live up to Stalin's expectation, they did not become a tool of the continuing devastation of post-war Germany, but rather a constructive force with a significant role in creating a society of prosperity and social security, in other words, of that which is nowadays perceived by the government of Mrs Schröder and Fischer. Would it not be appropriate to ask why post-war German society was revived and restored so rapidly both economically and socially rather than attacking the Centre, and whether all this was not determined to a large extent by confidence in a better future, by efforts to overcome suffering and by faith in an economic and political system?

– *The Editors* –