



United Germany

Debating Processes and Prospects

Edited by
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 berghahn
NEW YORK • OXFORD
www.berghahnbooks.com

NQ 7290 737



Published in 2013 by

Berghahn Books

www.berghahnbooks.com

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

United Germany : debating processes and prospects / edited by Konrad H. Jarausch.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-85745-972-5 (hardback : alk. paper) —

ISBN 978-0-85745-973-2 (institutional ebook)

1. Germany—History—Unification, 1990. 2. Germany—Politics and government—1990— 3. Germany—Economic conditions—1990— 4. Germany—Social conditions—1990— I. Jarausch, Konrad Hugo.

DD290.25.U57 2013

943.087'8—dc23

2013005551

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Printed in the United States on acid-free paper

ISBN 978-0-85745-972-5 (hardback)

ISBN 978-0-85745-973-2 (institutional ebook)

HU/iv/2014 - 34995

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Preface

A quarter century after the fall of the Wall, politicians, journalists, and scholars are still debating its chief consequence—German unification. On the one hand, during its twentieth anniversary the government led by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) celebrated the restoration of the national state, the progress of inner unity, and the lifting of the Iron Curtain that reconnected Europe. In newspaper articles, television specials, and exhibitions, former dissidents also sought to recapture the courage of the opposition movement that overthrew the dictatorship of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) in order to memorialize "the peaceful revolution." On the other hand, opposition parties like Die Linke and the Greens denounced unification as a takeover of the East and decried the economic crisis that had produced mass unemployment, focusing on its negative consequences. At the same time, many displaced Eastern intellectuals continue to resent Western arrogance, cultivate a nostalgic image of the solidarity of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and stress the lingering psychological divide.

In order to reflect these conflicting evaluations, this volume includes a diverse group of contributors who represent a wide range of experiential and analytical positions. Though there is some disagreement within each camp, the key difference between the optimists and the pessimists stems from each writer's role in the events, which tends to color his or her judgment. In spite of minor self-criticisms, Western commentators generally view unification positively, since they see it as a confirmation of the Federal Republic's democratic market economy. While appreciating many of the gains, Eastern observers tend to judge the result rather critically because they are more aware of the losses incurred in the process. Finally, American scholars have the luxury of viewing events from a transatlantic distance, which allows them to formulate a more dispassionate judgment. By discussing one theme from three different perspectives, this volume