The Federal Republic of Germany has been in existence for fifty years. Since May 23, 1949, the "Basic Law" has been in force, so called in conscious modesty so as to avoid the term "constitution." At the first meeting of the Parliamentary Council, the first legislative organ formed by Land parliament members to lay down the principles of the law, Carlo Schmid had this to say: "It is not our mission to make a constitution for Germany or the west of Germany. Nor are we here to create a state. All we can do is to formulate a basic law for a state fragment."

Mr. Schmid was then the most eminent representative of the political party of which I have been a member for almost forty years, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) that is now again in government.

This state fragment has become a successful state, no doubt of that. True, there is a small set of trendy people in Berlin who have adopted the habit of criticizing the Bonn Republic by calling it a "doll's house", but this is pure nonsense. By and large, the small town of Bonn, situated at the bottom of a not overly large valley framed by the Rhine River and the Kottenforst Hills, has brought forth policies that were cautious without over-rating the strength of the country. Foreign policy was guided by the principle of consistent attachment to the West, and it was followed by Konrad Adenauer as assiduously as by Willy Brandt, Helmut Schmidt, and Helmut Kohl. Material success, on the other hand, was based on the secret of focusing on a market economy with a number of social checks and balances (Sozialmarktwirtschaft). The fact that the ruling elite had turned away once and for all from Wilhelminian authoritarianism as well as from totalitarian dictatorship was marked by the introduction of legal constraints for the power of the state. To be sure, the Bonn Republic made no appearance in world politics, it waged no wars, and it no longer had any yearnings for hegemonic power. Those who call it a doll's house for that reason must have suppressed, destroyed, upset and isolated what the German nation was in 1945. Adenauer made his peace with the West, Brandt with the East, and Kohl pushed the integration of Europe's biggest nation state into the federation of European states as far as it would go. Although I do criticize some developments that went wrong here and there, I am satisfied with the Bonn Republic, and I am proud of its soundness and lack of pretension.

Now I must admit that I belong to one of the three core generations of the Bonn state. Its foundations were laid by those men and women who brought with them the experience of the Weimar Republic. They were followed by the war generation, and until very recently, the scene

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was dominated by those who had not been old enough to participate actively in the Second World War but had been fully alive to the misery of the Nazi era and the War years--those who were born between 1927 and 1940. I am one of the last remnants of that group. I am sixty now. When I was a child, I listened to people talking about concentration camps, I spent many nights sitting in mortal terror in a cellar as the bombs fell, I was expelled from my home country of Bohemia, I know the meaning of not having enough to eat, I consciously experienced the reconstruction of the country, and I finally served the state for 26 years as a member of its parliament and government and as a leading official of the SPD. Small wonder, then, that I should defend the Bonn Republic.

Having said that, it is not my intention to deceive the United States citizens whom I have the honor of addressing today into believing that everything is all right. Germany has managed to return to the "community of nations," as we somewhat ponderously put it. It has created a powerful--although by now somewhat ossified--economy. It has become an average Western democracy. If we look back to 1945, when it all began, these achievements appear great indeed. If we look forward to 2020, however, there are many risks ahead. We are good at chemistry as well as the automotive, electrical, and mechanical engineering fields, but we do not do so well in high-speed supply sectors like computer hardware and software, the internet, the media, and biotechnology. While our social state is comfortable, it is becoming increasingly unaffordable. Our constitution, which is that of a multi-party state, operates slowly, and often appears remote to the citizen. The unification of the two parts of Germany is an awkward process. In a word: We need to change a great deal to remain moderately successful. While I defend the Bonn Republic, I am aware that Bonn's legacy is not plentiful enough to feed Berlin for a long time. As our Federal President Roman Herzog said, "Germany needs to pull itself together." Everybody is talking of such a jolt, but there has been none so far.

Permit me to formulate briefly and bluntly six theses on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Federal Republic of Germany. While these are certainly controversial among my fellow countrymen, they are the product of a lot of experience from a variety of perspectives.

One: After the reunification in 1990, Germany once again became a nation state, the biggest in Europe. But our neighbors have not forgotten how arrogantly the elites of the Kaiser's Empire fought for supremacy in the First World War, nor have they forgotten the criminal energy of the Nazis and the Holocaust in the Second. It would be fateful, therefore, if the European Union were to choke on the eastern enlargement (which could easily happen), leaving Germany to caper around on its own, acting, for instance, the role of the leading power in a novel kind of Central Europe. To most European states, integration into a European structure is advantageous, the only conceivable exceptions being Great Britain and Switzerland. To Germany, however, this integration is vital.

Two: The Basic Law of the Federal Republic was conceived by members of the Weimar generation who had experienced Hitler's rise to power and the polarization of the forces of the radical right and left. This is why the Parliamentary Council feared the people. The Basic Law had laid all power in the hands of representatives, especially the political parties. Added to that, an extremely complex federalist system was set up which makes the Constitution of the Federal Republic the slowest to operate in Europe. Changes as profound as those implemented by the governments of Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair in Great Britain and by the Reagan administration in the United States would be unthinkable in Germany. Our country is ruled by shady coalition committees that are continually constrained to negotiate shady compromises with our second parliamentary chamber, the Federal Council (Bundesrat). The consequence of this is that the Constitutional Court abrogates to itself more things than it should, which, in turn, ultimately "dampens legislative resolution." This can not work out in the long run. What we need is a reform of federalism that accords their own rights to the Länder while reducing the complexities of political interaction. We further need election laws that enable clear majorities to emerge--something like a (possibly modified) majority voting system--and enhance the rights
of individual citizens vis-à-vis the political parties. I propose to have the Federal President
directly elected by the people, to enhance the President's authority moderately, and to introduce
the processes of popular initiative and plebiscite at the Federal level. But there are not many
chances that these ideas will receive majority support in the foreseeable future.

Three: It is both irresponsible and untenable to promise a return to full employment
under the digital capitalism of the twenty-first century. What will emerge--in Germany as well as
elsewhere--is a two-thirds society, in which two out of three people will be prosperous but will
need to lead fast, mobile and flexible lives under high pressure. One third of society--the last
third, as I call it--will either fail to obtain a competitive job or will drop out. In this situation, I
believe it is necessary to shelve a great many social-policy projects, so as to obtain funds for
securing the basic livelihood of the last third. Germany cannot live with the same stark contrast
between up and down, between the newly rich and the homeless that you have in California.
This is why we need to renew our economic and social policy, to reduce the cost of the social
state, to concentrate on the provision of basic social services, and to render our labor market
more flexible. Unfortunately, the laws of side-line employment and phantom self-employment
that the Federal Republic has just pushed through parliament are a step in the wrong direction.

Four: So far, our success in bringing together the two parts of Germany after more than
forty years of separation has been highly fragmentary. The reasons for this are many and varied.
First, the West has been too rigorous in promoting its own constitution, its philosophy, and its
elite to positions of power. On the other hand, the East has been cleared out. The more vigorous
among its citizens had either fled the country, or they had joined the Communists--which makes
them outcasts today. The President of the Federal Constitutional Court coolly commented on the
situation as follows:

There is still not much evidence of a feeling of togetherness motivated by constitutional
patriotism. Opinion polls reveal considerable differences in the way in which democracy is
appreciated in the two parts of Germany. In the new Länder, it is quite obvious that only a
minority of citizens is satisfied with the Federal Republic's brand of democracy. Yes more
dissatisfaction becomes evident if the point at issue is the way in which democracy actually
works in Germany. What is most remarkable from the demoscopic angle is the amount of
reserve shown toward the principles of freedom and democracy. In sharp contrast to the old
Länder, the citizens of the new Länder still consider maximum equality preferable to freedom.
What is more, this tendency has gathered momentum in recent years. Along the same lines, it
was found that a clear majority of the people living in the new Länder demand more of the social
state. They are more dissatisfied with its benefits than the citizens of the old Länder of the
Federal Republic, believing that social security today is not as good as it was in the GDR before
the transformation.

I have been living in the East for two and a half years, and I should like to warn everyone
against underrating these conflicts. First, the West must come to terms with the need to
continue its (massive) transfer payments to the East for another decade and a half. Second, we
should begin telling one another the truth. Third, everything needs to be done to promote an
intermingling of elites. To permit the East to become a Messogiorno, a backward, faintly
ridiculous, benighted, and half-despised part of Germany, would be to incur the risk of a
populist uprising emerging from there.

Five: From the Federal Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary on down, the current
Federal Government is composed of so-called sixty-eighters (baby boomers in American terms).
This political generation is characterized by one thing--political failure, which they suffered
because almost all of their earlier political demands were nonsense. They were wrong to resist
the market economy, and in foreign policy they failed to understand the Eastern bloc as it
existed at the time. The outer habit of the German society changed in 1968, maybe not for the
better, but certainly for what was coming. This emerges quite clearly if we compare the Germans
of the West and the East. To the former, 1968 was a year of mythical experience, but not to the
latter. Stereotypes centuries old were then abandoned in relations between children and parents, superiors and inferiors, men and women. Of course, we might join the famous social scientist and opinion expert Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in describing this as a destruction of old virtues. But what is the use of the working virtues of industrialism in an era of digital capitalism in which one of three employees has no proper contract? Bill Gates is a member of the sneaker generation—even though he no longer wears sneakers. The distance that separates him from Fritz Berg or Alfred Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach, the exponents of the German economy in the 1950s, is as great as that between Venus and Mars. But it is Bill Gates who holds power now, or at least enough of it; not the steel barons of yesterday. The roots of both feminism and the ecology movement go back to the cultural revolution of 1968, when new standards and norms of civilization were rehearsed.

My conclusion from this analysis is that the Germans must reconsider again their conventions about up and down, their hierarchies, and their rigid organizational structures. The future will be controlled not by industrial giants founded in 1870 but by upstarts. Politics will be motivated not by centrist parties and trade unions but by flexible shop stewards and new political initiatives operating on the Internet. Germans are capable, industrious, and well organized, but at the same time they are still too formal, too bent on security, too perfectionist, and too bureaucratic. They need to improve.

Six: Industrialized societies are moving towards digital capitalism. You may choose to call what is emerging a society of knowledge—it is all the same to me. At all events, while knowledge will not be absolutely dominant, it will be the most important resource. People will need to learn all their lives. School and university curricula will have to adopt continuously to the swiftly changing practice of life. This is why educational policy, today a fringe field look after by political adolescents and aging semi-intellectuals, will become a first-rate concern.

Let me talk about universities, for this is the part of the educational system that I know best. Your typical German university is no worse and may even be somewhat better than the American average. But there is no German university which in all its parts counts among the world's best institutions today. We cannot compete with Stanford, Princeton, Harvard, Carnegie-Mellon, the Zurich ETH, or the London School of Economics, and we will have to pay for this dearly. I love the United States, and I have visited the country on frequent occasions. I can well understand that young people who wish to get on go to the top institutions. And if those happen to be in the United States, they have no alternative but to go there. But permit me to say quite frankly that as far as the future of the European social state is concerned, it will be problematic if the future chairmen of European corporate boards learn their trade from U.S. style re-engineering processes, mergers, and business plans. The Germans must be out of their senses to invest as little intelligence, reform-mindedness, and money in their universities as they do today.

My time is short. The Bonn Republic has been a success. The political class of Germany should try to transfer that success to Berlin. Nevertheless, a new era will be rung on; that is inevitable. We had a Weimar Republic, which was later followed by the Bonn Republic; consequently there will be a Berlin Republic as well. It is impossible to say as yet whether it will exceed the Bonn Republic in beauty, stupidity, success or failure. But one thing is for certain: Something new will happen, and it will be linked to the name of the new capital, Berlin. Such is life.

I resist the urge to emphasize "normalization" that is followed by the trendy set I mentioned earlier. Let us for the sake of argument assume that somebody who has killed half his family is freed on probation after twenty years in prison. All the same, people in a bar will fall silent as soon as he comes in by the door. He will remain a marked man, maybe not forever, but certainly for a long time. For the same reason, normalizing the Germans is not as easy as all that,
and those who believe that they are normal merely because they take a shooting part in a war that may be necessary but is certainly ill considered and badly prepared like the Kosovo War, are certainly shooting very wide of the mark.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the Federal Republic of Germany, let me say the following: The Germans have worked their way back into the international community, but there is no reason for complacency. In the era of Federal Chancellor Brandt, long since deceased, whose close associate I was in the 1980s, a famous slogan made the rounds:

"If you want to live in safety tomorrow, you need to fight for reforms right now."

This is even more true today than it was in 1972.