GD™

Geborener Deutscher®

A Newsletter for German-Born Adoptees and Their Birth/Adoptive Families

Volume III, Number 3 *(Issue #8)* *September 14, 1990*

"Am I German or American?"

Some German-Born Adoptees Confront the Question of Dual Nationality

by William L. Gage

There are three basic means by which an individual acquires citizenship: (1) *jus soli* ("right of the soil," i.e. by virtue of being born within the geopolitical boundaries of a country); (2) *jus sanguinis* ("right of blood," i.e. by being born to parents who are themselves citizens of a country); and (3) naturalization (a term used generally to refer to any acquisition of citizenship subsequent to birth).

Countries vary as to whether they recognize *jus soli*, *jus sanguinis* or both means of birth-acquired citizenship. The United States recognizes both. Most every country also allows foreign-born individuals to become citizens thereof through the process of naturalization. Such post-birth acquisition of citizenship usually entails that the petitioner meet certain specific requirements, such as a minimum period of residency within the country, and often includes the swearing of allegiance to the country of naturalization and/or the renunciation of any former allegiances, *e.g.*, in order to be naturalized. Typically, there is no distinction drawn between naturalized citizens and citizens-by-birth with respect to the rights, privileges and responsibilities associated with citizenship.

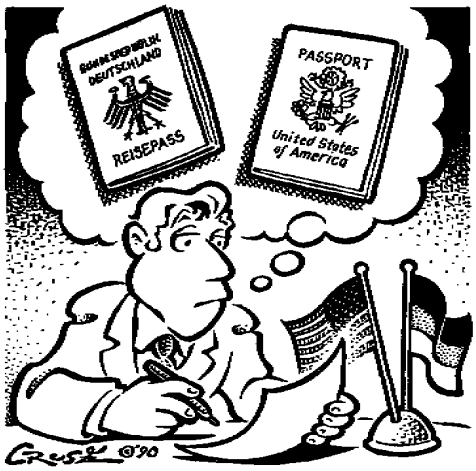


Illustration by Howard Cruse

Dual nationality is a long-recognized international legal concept that arises when an individual obtains citizenship in more than one country under any of the foregoing principles. An example of one means of obtaining dual nationality is when a child is born to parents who hold citizenship in different countries; another example is when a child of a mother who is a citizen of one country that recognizes *jus sanguinis* citizenship is born in another country that recognizes *jus soli* citizenship (e.g., when a foreign national gives birth on U.S. soil, the child is considered to be a U.S. citizen). In both these cases, the obtainment of dual-national status is deemed, under U.S. law, to be "involuntary."

Another means of acquiring dual nationality is by naturalization. Under U.S. law, however §§ 349(a)(1) and (2) of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, as amended], such "voluntary" acquisition of dual-national status via naturalization in a foreign country could be construed as an act designed to renounce one's U.S. citizenship and, as such, an individual could face the possibility of involuntary expatriation (loss of citizenship) as a result. (Thus is drawn the distinction between "voluntary" and "involuntary" acquisition of dual nationality.)

The German-born adoptee is, quite obviously, a German citizen at birth under *both* principles of birth-acquired nationality (assuming, of course, that his/her birth mother was a German national and the birth occurred on German soil). The question then becomes, whether that nationality is lost by virtue of adoption by foreign nationals and/or any subsequent naturalization process in the adopting parents' country-of-citizenship. According to Therese ***(cont. on pg. 4, col. 1)***

Search Workshop

On German Social Workers & the Need for Hands-On Involvement

Over the years since I began my search for my birth parents, I have encountered, both personally and indirectly, via third-party reports, a range of reactions from German adoption social workers to requests for information and assistance from searching German-born adoptees living in the United States. In my own case, for example, I encountered a most obliging and cooperative individual in the person of Frau Stoffer of the *Frankfurter Adoptionsvermittlung*. Too, when my search extended to Hannover, for the purpose of locating my brother, of whose existence I had learned initially from Frau Stoffer, I encountered another accommodating and helpful social worker who made direct contact with my brother, Frank, in order to solicit his advice and consent to provide me with information about him. Of course, Frank could have just as easily refused as acquiesced, but the social worker nonetheless did take the time and effort to make contact, and that, above all, was the more important factor. Absent the cooperation and assistance of German adoption social workers, the search-and-reunion process becomes ever more difficult, given the barriers of both distance and language typically encountered by searching foreign-born adoptees [*See also, the article by Dr. Martin Textor, on page 2.* – **Ed.**].

Take the case of my own inquiry after my older sister, Eleonore, of whose existence I also learned initially from Frau Stoffer. When informed of my siblings' existences, I was also told where I might write for more information. As related above, my inquiry after Frank met with quick success; unfortunately, the people charged with keeping the records of my sister's adoption were far less interested in my desire to contact her, and after receiving a terse letter stating that they had no record of my sister's adoption, all further efforts at communication failed. No one would even answer my letters.

Another example of a less-than-cooperative attitude is consistently displayed by one particular German adoption social worker in Fürth, a town not far from Nürnberg in the German state of Bavaria (near what was/is the border between East and West Germany). Rather than ignoring requests for information from searching adoptees, this person would write (relatively long) letters whose sole purpose appears to be to discourage or dissuade the adoptee from his/her search activity, primarily through the use of the old think-about-the-trouble-you-could-cause-your-birth-mother-by-reappearing-in-her-life anti-search argument. When an individual would respond by trying to make clear how important searching can be for some, and to direct this individual to German-language literature that could help with such clarification, ***(continued on next page)***

Geborener Deutscher is published periodically by William L. Gage, who is solely responsible for its content. Readers are encouraged to submit relevant material, including articles, letters and/or photographs, for publication herein. Material submitted for publication should be sent to **William L. Gage, 2300 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11229 USA**. All material submitted for publication becomes the property of *Geborener Deutscher* and cannot be returned, except by written request. The publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. Subscriptions are FREE: to individuals upon written request; and to search-and-support groups, either upon written request or upon other notice of their existence.

Copyright © 1990 William L. Gage ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

the social worker in question would reply yet again, this time with a distinctly condescending tone, as if insulted that anyone would dare to imply that s/he didn't know his/her business (as an adoption social worker). At least, in this case, one's correspondence doesn't go unanswered (although it might be better if it did)!

But one should also not be lulled into a false sense of security by the appearance of cooperation and helpfulness. When I asked of Frau Stoffer what I thought was a simple and quite straightforward service, i.e. to photocopy my adoption file and send the copy to me, I was informed that it was "against policy." I still don't know if the policy in question was the *Jugendamt*'s, the *Adoptionsvermittlung*'s or Frau Stoffer's, but the result is the same in all cases, so I'm not sure that it much matters. It seems reasonable to me, at least, however, that even if the policy were institutional rather than personal, an exception might conceivably be made for those for whom a trip to the *Adoptionsvermittlung* would entail excessive or burdensome costs in both time and money, such as is the case with a German-born adoptee living in the United States.

In lieu of a photocopy of my file, Frau Stoffer reviewed the file and reported on the facts and data contained therein. Thus it was that I discovered that I have two older siblings, their birth dates and places, plus a few other sundry facts about my origins (*e.g.*, that my mother allegedly named me after my father, and that he was indeed an American serviceman, as I had always imagined to be the case). Two specific items contained in my file, however, escaped mention, and when I discovered these items in the file when I reviewed it myself, I was rather annoyed and dismayed. First was a copy of a letter written to my (then-prospective adoptive) parents, in English, which contained many specific details about my birth mother (which it would have been nice to know, and which the existence of the letter implied it would have been possible to know, even before I'd begun to search!). I had thought that my parents had given me all the documents in their possession related to my adoption, yet, when I questioned them about this letter (the original of which should have been sent to them in England), they could not recall having received it, nor could they explain why it was missing if they had (other than to speculate that it may have been misplaced in the course of their travels in those days).

The second item of information which escaped mention by Frau Stoffer, and, comparatively, by far the more important piece of data, was the name of my birth father. As most searching adoptees do, I imagined that I would learn of my father through my mother, she being the person most likely to have any knowledge of him. So, when I learned that my mother had died in 1976, I thought the chances of my ever finding out who my birth father was, let alone searching for him, were nil. Yet, as I paged through my file, noting, for example, how "rootless" my mother appeared to be – based upon the apparent difficulty the social workers of the period had in corresponding with her regarding her intentions for the disposition of her two children then in the care of the *Jugendamt*, myself and Eleonore – I came across a form with spaces for various pieces of information about my birth parents. For my mother, virtually all were filled in; and for my father, almost none – as one might expect. Apparently, however, my mother had, when asked, named my father, and a dutiful and conscientious social worker had noted the name for the record, as well as the fact that the named individual refused to acknowledge his alleged paternity (don't they always?). More than in the case of the letter to my parents, I felt righteously indignant that this bit of information apparently had been deliberately withheld.

Finally, a brief story to further illustrate the usefulness of a personal review of the adoption file by the adoptee. As stated earlier, the social worker in Hannover, my brother's reported birthplace, was very helpful and actually took the time to make contact with Frank to solicit his permission to transmit his name and address to me. But, as also stated earlier, it was possible for me to have encountered resistance in Hannover, or indifference, if not outright hostility (even though the law states that a German adoptee aged 16 years or more is entitled to access his/her adoption records, the social worker still stands as a potential hindrance or barrier to the free exercise of this legal entitlement). I was, therefore, happy to discover, in the course of my review of the file, that my birth mother had once used my brother's adoptive parents' address as a mail-drop. Thus, had I encountered such resistance, hostility or indifference on the part of the social worker in Hannover, I still could have located my brother through his adoptive parents: for, while I could not have known beforehand that they were the adoptive parents of two of my siblings, I certainly would have pursued every available avenue of inquiry, and it would have been quite reasonable for me to contact people who apparently had known my birth mother around the time of my birth. – ***WLG***

Attitudes of German Social Workers Toward Searching Adoptees

by Martin R. Textor

In contrast to adoptees living in Germany, German-born adoptees in the United States are nearly totally dependent upon the cooperation of German social workers if they want to trace their German birth parent(s). Therefore, the attitudes of German social workers toward searching adoptees is of great importance in determining whether the *Jugendamt* or church-run agency which originally handled the placement will support searching adoptees in their search efforts; whether they will only answer the adoptees' letter(s) – and, if so, how; or whether they will just "file it and forget it."

At the beginning of 1990, I sent questionnaires to 117 social workers who are responsible for the adoptive placement of children in 83 *Jugendämter* or church-run agencies in the Free State of Bavaria. Among the questions were several which addressed the social worker's attitudes toward searching adult adoptees.

Approximately one-half of the sample reported having contact with adult adoptees (related either to a search for birth parents or other adoption-related problems) "less than once a year." Another 44% reported such contacts "between 1 and 6 times per year." Six percent reported search- or other adoption-related contacts with adult adoptees "between 7 and 12 times per year." Nearly half of the social workers questioned expressed the opinion that adult adoptees are in great need of counseling.

Addressing their attitudes regarding searching adoptees specifically, 60% of the respondents felt that social workers should do everything within their power to help an adoptee over the age of 16 to find his/her birth parents. Only 5% felt that social workers have no such responsibility to searching adult adoptees, while the remainder (35%) chose a position between these two extremes.

Approximately half the respondents felt that social workers should communicate all available information in the agency's files to searching adult adoptees; 14% felt that no information should be given while, as before, 35% chose a more moderate position.

When asked if social workers should contact a birth parent on the request of a searching adult adoptee, 30% said that this should be up to the social worker, while 43% said that no such contact should be initiated; twenty-seven percent said "partly."

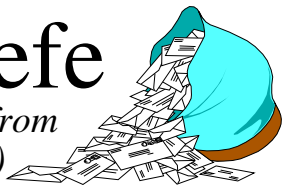
It is important to note that 93% of the respondents considered searching to be completely natural; none viewed it as "abnormal." While only 3.5% viewed searching as symptomatic of some psychological problem (63% felt it is not), none viewed searching as indicative of some problem with the adoptive parents (90% answered "No").

Finally, more than a third of the respondents favored allowing birth parents to contact their child as soon as the child reached the age of 18; less than a third were against such contact; and only 11% felt that the birth parents' anonymity should be better protected.

In summary, at least two-thirds of the Bavarian social workers questioned have generally positive attitudes toward searching adoptees, and regard their behavior as normal. A majority appear willing to inform searching adoptees about their origins and even to assist them in locating and/or contacting the birth parent(s). It would seem, therefore, reasonable for a searching German-born adult adoptee to expect at least some help from German social workers if they seek their assistance in searching for birth parents in Germany. ***Ende***

Dr. Martin R. Textor works at the Staatsinstitut für Frühpädagogik und Familienforschung, Arabellastraße 1, 8000 München 81.

Briefe



(Letters from Readers)

We strongly encourage readers to write in response to any materials published in GD. The opinions expressed in letters published herein are the authors' own, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editor. Letters may be edited for clarity and/or brevity.

June 26, 1990

Dear Mr. Gage:

Today I received my copy of the newsletter *ABC* ("The Adoption Birth Connection"), published by Jo-Anne Swanson. There I read the letter from Kathy Hearne originally published by you [*In* GD *Issue #6, pg. 3.* – **Ed.**].

I am a birth mother currently searching for the infant daughter I relinquished 20 years ago. The letter from Kathy Hearne was dramatically expressed and left me in deep thought. You see, I have always agonized over the notion that, just maybe, my daughter's adoption didn't work out well for her, for similar reasons cited in Kathy's letter. This is one reason why I am desperately seeking my daughter Kristina. The search group has finally come up with a name and they are tracing her current location/status now – but this may take 1-2 months.

I would really appreciate receiving your newsletter. For the past year I have been ordering books, video and audio tapes, educational materials, etc., devouring all the insight I can possibly ***(cont. on pg. 4, col. 1)***

The Myth of German Efficiency

by Michael & Jennifer Meyer

© 1990 Newsweek, Inc.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
From the July 30, 1990 issue of *Newsweek*
Reprinted with permission.

Time and efficiency: the diptych of German virtue. It's a cliché. Just as the mere word *mañana* brands Latins as slow and unreliable, jokes ask how many Poles or Irish it takes to change a light bulb. Globe-trotting sophisticates know that dinner at eight means nine in Madrid and half past in London. Here in Germany, you can be the last guest if you show up at five after. Social promptness is only one of a host of traits that have given Germans a reputation for efficiency unrivaled since Alexander the Great made short work of the world before his 33rd birthday.

Is it deserved? Even as the Teutonic industrial machine rolls along like a supercharged BMW, there are signs that German efficiency is not all it's cracked up to be. Yes, West Germany is Europe's economic dynamo, boasting the highest per capita productivity in the world. Yes, German planes and trains leave (more or less) on time, and the streets are clean. "The Germans are not perfect," says John Meyer, an American business consultant in Düsseldorf. "But when it comes to efficiency, they come closer than anyone else."

But let us remember: efficiency, taken to an extreme, can become *in*efficiency. Anyone living in Germany quickly learns the drawbacks of excessive perfectionism. Take the helpful telephone operators at the West German Bundespost. They will routinely disconnect your call if it exceeds the time deemed necessary to efficiently conclude your business. Frustrating? You bet, but no less so than the hassle of getting a phone in the first place. That can take six weeks (three months if "street work" is required). Nor is the technician who installs your line the man who plugs your phone into the wall. That five-second operation requires yet another appointment – and another long wait. Don't do it yourself; you will be fined.

Rules and regulations encumber German society. "The price of efficiency is bureaucracy," says Stephanie Wahl, a sociologist in Bonn. "We Germans like to be told *how* to do everything." That may be an understatement. In Germany, there are laws against squeezing the tomatoes at the grocery store, laws telling you when to clip your hedge, laws on how to hang your window curtains. When you move in Germany, you must register with the police. You should also register your TV. Roving vans cruise German streets, equipped with antennas that pick up waves from whatever electronic appliances you might have. They know how many radios, TVs or telephones you have – and tax you accordingly. But watch out. A foreigner with a new baby recently found herself in an endless wrangle with the German government, which was convinced that the signals picked up from her baby monitor were transmissions from an unregistered (and therefore illegal) cordless telephone.

Few advanced countries make the mundane tasks of life so ... inefficient. A simple money transfer takes two weeks. Trains and planes are canceled without notice on holidays. Grocery stores close during the lunch hour, on weekends and before most people get off work. And don't dare mow the lawn on Sundays, a statutory day of rest. Violations may elicit a note from ***(cont. on pg. 4, col. 1)***

Book Review

Of German Ways by La Verne Rippley

Reviewed by Leonie Boehmer

I was asked to read and review this book when Bill saw an advertisement for it in the Sunday *Parade* magazine on May 6, 1990.

Of German Ways is written to inform the reader about German geography, history and customs. A primary aspect of German geography, for example, is its rivers. Among the more famous of Germany's rivers is the Rhein, which serves as one of Germany's borders, and Mr. Rippley speaks of the mystical power it has had over the German psyche, with its castles and vineyards, and to the romanticism which inspired poets and composers alike. The other major river is the Danube. Although not as legendary as the Rhein, it certainly enjoys a greater popular recognition through Johann Strauss's *Blue Danube*.

Within these natural borders, Germany is divided into four geographical regions: the North German Plain, the Middle German Hill Region, the Swabian and Bavarian Plateau, and the German Alps. Each geographical region has its own life style, and takes pride in its own customs, dialect, holidays, folk songs and dress.

One of the more interesting parts of this book is the discussion of the German culture, and the reasons Germans emigrated to the United States, particularly with respect to which aspects of their native culture were kept and are now reflected in American life. Did you know Germany's postal authorities conceived of the *Postleitzahl*, what we in the U.S. call the Zip® code? Or were you aware that the so-called Pennsylvania Dutch are really of German extraction?

The concept of the graduate school in the United States, which dates back to the founding of Johns Hopkins University in 1876, where founding faculty members were either German or held doctorates from German universities, is based directly upon the German University system.

Of German Ways is well-written and easy reading. Since it was first published in 1970, and does not appear to have been revised or updated since that time, it does not prepare one for present-day Germany, but rather gives the reader background leading up to the present.

Being a scientist, I first looked for a bibliography and was very disappointed in not finding one. But I found that, in order to permit further research of a given subject, many detailed references are provided within the text. I also found a curious sprinkling of German words throughout, which are translated in most cases. Still, it would have been nice to have had the references collected into a bibliography, and the German words into a glossary, however.

Author **LaVerne Rippley** grew up in a Wisconsin German-American community, was a Fullbright Fellow at the University of Munich and has visited Germany many times. After teaching at Ohio Wesleyan University he became Chairman of the German Department at St. Olaf College.

Information about ordering *Of German Ways*, which lists for $7.95, may be obtained by calling (800) 331-3761 (credit card orders, e.g.), or by writing to **Harper Collins, Consumer Fulfillment, Downsvile Pike, Rt. 3 - Box 20-B, Hagerstown, MD 21740**. ***Ende***

Leonie Boehmer was born in Hannover and spent the first 18 years of her life living in Germany. She has lived in Albuquerque, NM, where she works as a mathematician for the U.S. government, since the 1950s, and travels often in Germany.

"Am I German or American"

continued from page 1

Keelaghan-Silvestre, writing in an article entitled "Dual Nationality and the Problem of Expatriation," published in the Winter 1982 issue of the *University of San Francisco Law Review* (pg. 312), "German law provides that naturalization of a German national in a foreign country does *not* result in loss of German citizenship *if a written authorization to retain German nationality is obtained from German authority* [emphasis supplied]."

Thus, a German-born adoptee could assert his/her dual-national status by applying to "German authority" for a retroactive recognition of his/her German citizenship. The adoptee may also comfortably retain his/her *American* citizenship, given that the dual-national status is derived "involuntarily" (by virtue of the adoptee's foreign birth), and the fact of applying to "German authority" for an *ex post facto* recognition of German citizenship does not, of itself, appear to constitute an act which may be deemed as "expatriative" under U.S. law.

In 1978, I wrote to the German Consulate in New York to ask whether or not I had, as a result of becoming an American citizen, lost my *German* citizenship. In his reply, the Consular Attaché; said, in part, that "this Consulate General is not the proper authority to determine, if you were once a German citizen or not [or, if so] if you lost [your German citizenship] somewhere along the line." I was then instructed to fill out an enclosed form ("*Antrag zur Feststellung der Staatsangehörigkeit*"), have it notarized and submit it, along with notarized copies of my adoption papers, birth and Naturalization certificates, to authorities in the city of my birth.

(The form contains spaces for data regarding one's parents and grandparents on both sides of the family: names, dates and places of birth, nationality of each, etc. It is obvious, however, that, for a German-born adoptee, at least, completion of the form itself is virtually impossible *unless one searches*!)

In reply to a similar inquiry in Germany by Christa Hertgen, the birth mother of Kathy Hearne [*See Issue #6 of* GD – **Ed.**], representatives of the Interior Ministry and the *Standesamt* in Düsseldorf both suggested that a German-born adoptee who was adopted by Americans and subsequently naturalized "probably" retained his/her German citizenship, and might very well be a dual national; both stated unequivocally, however, that the question must be presented in some formal way to an authoritative body in Germany.

Following is a list of addresses where one may write for a copy of the requisite form:

Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany
4645 Reservoir Road, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007

Consulates General of the FRG in the U.S.:

535 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 02116
(*serves CT MA ME NH RI and VT*)

460 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10022
(*serves NJ NY PA and Fairfield Co. in CT*)

1000 Peachtree Center, Cain Tower
229 Peachtree Street, N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30303
(*serves AL FL GA MS NC SC and TN*)

2200 Book Building, Washington Blvd.
Detroit, MI 48226
(*serves IN KY MI and OH*)

104 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60603
(*serves IA IL KS MN MO ND NE SD & WI*)

1330 Post Oak Boulevard, Suite 1850
Houston, TX 77056
(*serves AR LA NM OK and TX*)

3450 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90010
(*serves AZ and southern CA*)

1960 Jackson Street
San Francisco, CA 94109
(*serves northern CA CO HI NV UT & WY*)

1200 Fifth Avenue, Suite 1617
Seattle, WA 98101
(*serves AK ID MT OR and WA*)

Ende

Briefe (Letters from Readers)

continued from page 3

absorb, translate and utilize, in the hope of understanding just what has been going on psychologically with me for 20 years!

I certainly appreciate individuals such as yourself who become involved positively in Adoption-related issues, whether search-support, reform, education, etc. I wish you much success in all your endeavors.

– Mrs. Dale F. Rutherford
Prince Rupert, B.C. (Canada)

July 8, 1990

Dear Mr. Gage,

Our organization has been exchanging publications with you since you first approached us with your wonderful newsletter, quite some time back. This letter is in regard to your most recent issue of *Geborener Deutscher* – Vol. III, No. 2 (Issue 7), June 14, 1990; page 2 – "The Editor's Page." In your article concerning a new publication, *Reunions, the magazine*, you were describing the content of the "Prepublication Issue." One of your statements is misleading: "The classified ads section is largely drawn from the newsletter of a Kansas City group," etc.

I agree that the majority of the ads either contained data needed from Kansas City or the surrounding area, but all the ads had "WAA" and a code number. "WAA" stands for "Wichita Adult Adoptees," which is based in Wichita, KS and is currently run by Rochelle Harris. It is her newsletter from which the ads were drawn.

We were most impressed with *Reunions, the magazine*, too, and provided copies at our last meeting to encourage subscriptions. We also obtained permission to reprint an article from *Reunions* in our own newsletter, *The Connecting Link*.

We also had another magazine available to our members and guests called *Midwest Searching Magazine*, which sells for $2.50 an issue and is published by Anne Monroe (P.O. Box 122, Oakland City, Indiana 47660).

We are looking forward to your next issue. Don't you wish that all countries could be like New Zealand!? Warmest wishes,

– Joanne L. Brooks
Past President/Founder
Connecting Adoptees through
Research & Education
P.O. Box 30252
Kansas City, MO 64112

The Myth of German Efficiency

continued from page 3

the neighbors, pushed under the gate, reminding you of the regulation ... and the likely interest of the police.

Germans argue, not without merit, that such restrictions make you think before you do. The theory is that if you make a careful list and budget your time, you are automatically more efficient. So be resourceful. Slip in for doorknobs or diapers on the way to interviews with heads of state.

Traffic Jams: Being so efficient, Germans have oodles of free time. Come weekends, they all climb into their cars and drive on the same autobahns to the same spots to relax in the same cafes. That produces the world's biggest traffic jams on the world's most efficient highways. You also see this in L.A. But in Germany, the breakdowns have a different cause: a love of institutional behavior. The German Bundespost regulates everything from selection of television programs to what size envelope you must use to mail your mother's birthday card. There aren't a lot of choices – but then, at bottom the Germans don't really like choices.

How do you calculate the costs of overregimentation? Manfred Bauer, an executive of Prudential Bache in Munich, suggests one answer. "No one disputes the Germans' flair for organization and management," he says. "But they are less skilled as innovators." German-made ovens are wonders of industrial design – yet hardly a manufacturer in the country has childproofed them by moving the controls from the front of the stove to the top. There is a more serious side to the question, summed up in the word *Gehorsamkeit*. It means dutiful obedience, with the faintest allusion to lemminglike behavior.

Today, as Germany sweeps toward unity, people fear that things are happening too fast, too efficiently. But there is little resistance, no public outcry. It's hard not to respect a people who can stand calmly in the rain, waiting for the light to cross a street on which no traffic passes. But sometimes you feel like a friend who recently took a vacation in Italy. "God, it was wonderful," she said. "Everybody was driving the wrong way down one-way streets." German efficiency is a wonderful thing. But let's not try so hard to be perfect.

Ende

Michael Meyer holds an MS degree from Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism and an MA in International Affairs from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Mr. Meyer has been Newsweek's Bureau Chief in Bonn since August, 1988.