

RICHARD VON WEIZSÄCKER



SPEECHES FOR
OUR TIME



with an introduction by David Clay Large



GERMAN ISSUES ■ 10

FOREWORD

The Institute is privileged to devote this, the tenth in its series *German Issues*, to six noteworthy speeches delivered by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Richard von Weizsäcker. It is published to coincide with the President's state visit to the United States this month.

President von Weizsäcker has spoken out boldly on issues of conscience and morality. His views on them carry thoughts with validity not only for Germans but also for Americans and all others who grapple with moral problems in a political context. We have asked an American historian of the postwar generation to introduce the President and his speeches to our readers. Professor David Large of Montana State University has undertaken this task.

The Institute expresses its gratitude to Professor Large and also to the German Information Center, which agreed to purchase and disseminate a significant number of this *German Issues*. Of course, the Institute alone is responsible for all aspects, including the translations, of this publication.

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Robert Gerald Livingston
Director

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GRAPHICS

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INTRODUCTION

David Clay Large

All politicians deliver speeches, but Richard von Weizsäcker, president of the Federal Republic of Germany, delivers speeches that actually say something and which therefore can be read and re-read with profit. No doubt much of the significance of these speeches derives from their author's willingness to pour into them his passionate engagement with the most urgent issues of our time. Their power and special ring of authenticity, however, stem also from the fact that they are the distillation of an entire lifetime of acute observation and of varied, sometimes painful, experience. The most useful introduction to a collection of Richard von Weizsäcker's speeches, therefore, is a brief introduction to Weizsäcker, the man.

1920-1945

Born in the castle of the former King of Württemberg in Stuttgart on April 15, 1920, Richard von Weizsäcker hails from a long line of illustrious jurists, scientists, academics, and theologians. As this family's proud history had long been entwined with the rise of modern Germany, it also, however, became enmeshed in the *Reich's* tragedy and disgrace. Richard's father, Ernst Heinrich von Weizsäcker, culminated a successful diplomatic career by serving as chief state-secretary in Joachim von Ribbentrop's Foreign Office from 1938 to 1943. After the war he was found guilty by the Americans of war crimes and served a prison term. At the very beginning of the war, which brought his father's disgrace, one of Richard's two older brothers, Heinrich, was killed in action. Then a young soldier himself, Richard stood over the body of his brother, just as he would later, as a law student, stand by his father during his trial in Nuremberg. Yet even while defending his father against the central

charges against him, he acknowledged a record of political and moral failure — failure first to appreciate the true nature of Hitler's enterprise, then failure to act decisively against the tyrant. Having been forced at a young age to confront moral culpability in his own family, Richard von Weizsäcker became convinced that the German people as a whole had to make every effort to come honestly to grips with their nation's responsibility for the crimes of National Socialism.

Although his experiences in World War II and its immediate aftermath were crucial in shaping von Weizsäcker's character and intellectual development, his political education began in the years preceding that tragic conflict, when, accompanying his father to diplomatic postings in Copenhagen, Oslo, Bern, and Berlin, he was introduced to a variety of European cultures, including some very different from his own. At a time when many of his cohorts in Germany were being steeped in nationalistic and racist dogma, young Richard von Weizsäcker was cultivating an interest in foreign lands and developing a precociously cosmopolitan cast of mind.

Aware that linguistic skills are an integral part of the internationalist's equipment, von Weizsäcker spent the summer semester of 1937 studying at Oxford University, where, given currency restrictions and growing Anglo-German tensions, he was practically the only German student. Socially isolated, however, he was not: an openness to friendships with his hosts, including his female hosts, allowed him to conquer the English language, not to mention some of those who spoke it. Next, in the winter of 1938, came a session at the University of Grenoble, where he combined studies of French literature and philosophy with frequent forays into the nearby Alps. Having improved his French along with his skiing, he passed exams in that language at the end of the term.

His father's career and political developments in Germany now drew him back to Berlin, the vibrant city in which he had already lived for six years, and which he considered (and still considers) his true home. The Nazi government had recently ordered that all young men who wished to study at a university be required to spend six months in the *Reich* Labor Service. Fulfillment of this requirement gave Richard his first close-hand experience with the enforced conformity and proto-military ethos of the Nazi state. Shortly thereafter, back in Berlin, he witnessed an even darker side of the new Germany: the so-called "Night of the Crystals," when Nazi thugs, encouraged by the regime, plundered Jewish shops and burned synagogues in the cities across the *Reich*. Years later he would recall that the atmosphere of anxiety and terror in the

capital on November 9, 1938 contrasted dramatically with the sense of guarded hope which many Berliners, including young von Weizsäcker himself, harbored when Hitler came to power in January 1933.

Though filled with growing reservations about the Nazi regime, von Weizsäcker joined the *Wehrmacht* in late 1938, mindful that a two-year term in the army was also a requirement for university study. Following his brother Heinrich, he enlisted in the famous Ninth Potsdam Infantry Regiment, the most "Prussian" of all *Wehrmacht* outfits and an entity where the lingering spirit of Friedrich the Great predominated over the competing claims of Adolf Hitler. Of course von Weizsäcker could not have known that the *Führer's* claims would soon pull this unit, along with the rest of the *Wehrmacht*, into the vortex of war, and that instead of serving two years in the army he would serve six.

Much of that time he spent on the Eastern front, first in the Polish campaign, later in the mammoth invasion of the Soviet Union. Wounded twice in the latter campaign, he received the Iron Cross, First and Second Class. But he also came away with spiritual wounds for which there was no reward and no real healing: he witnessed atrocities that went beyond the usual cruelties of war, and through a colleague in the Ninth Potsdam Infantry, Axel von dem Bussche-Streithorst, he learned that German SS forces had murdered about 1000 Jews at the Dubno Airfield in 1942. Such revelations hardened his hatred for the Nazis, a sentiment he began rather recklessly to demonstrate by openly criticizing the regime and by joining in unit shooting-matches in which a picture of Hitler served as a target.

In May 1944 von Weizsäcker came into contact with a group of anti-Nazi officers who were determined to do more against the regime than shoot holes in Hitler's picture. On leave in Potsdam, he learned from Count Fritz-Dietlof von der Schulenburg about a plan to topple the Nazi government by eliminating Hitler. Von Weizsäcker promised to lend his support to this initiative, but he had not learned all its concrete details when, two months later, Count Claus von Stauffenberg's bomb went off in Hitler's bunker, lamentably failing to kill the *Führer*. In the bloody aftermath of the failed coup attempt, nineteen members of the Ninth Potsdam Regiment were executed for treason, including von der Schulenburg. Having not been active in the conspiracy, von Weizsäcker escaped arrest and probably persecution, though he took the risky step of covering up for some of his friends who were more deeply involved in the plot. "I wasn't there where the action was," he said later, "but through personal contacts and friends, through their ideas and deeds, I

was connected to the events of July 20, 1944 in a way that has decisively shaped my life."

The impact of this experience was evident in von Weizsäcker's postwar assessment of his own generation's role in the Nazi enterprise. He admitted that young people like himself could have been expected to probe more deeply into the Nazi evil and to make more determined efforts to thwart it than they did. After all, many of them had personally witnessed crimes against German Socialists and Communists, enemy troops, citizens of occupied countries, and above all European Jewry. This theme of broad-based accountability was one to which von Weizsäcker would often return in his later political career, especially in his capacity as Federal President.

1946-1969

In the meantime, like so many of his contemporaries, von Weizsäcker now was able to return to endeavors that had been suspended or postponed by the war — in his case, university studies. He took up the study of law at Göttingen University and quickly put his legal training to work in the above-mentioned defense of his father at Nuremberg. This, too, was an invaluable formative experience, for it helped him to appreciate that a condition of moral and political ambiguity was almost inevitably the lot of those who, like his father, hoped to reform or modify a tyrannical regime while continuing to work on its behalf. On a yet broader level, work on his father's defense team gave him a clearer perception of the tortuous complexity of life in an oppressive dictatorship, helping him to become less judgmental toward the failings of people caught up in totalitarian systems, whether of the right or of the left.

Though encouraged by some of his professors to pursue an academic career in law, von Weizsäcker decided, in a break with family traditions, to try his hand at business instead. After all, he reasoned, business would play an increasingly important role in the political development of Germany, and it was "unfortunate" that no one in this family had ever shown much of an interest in this field.

Thus, in the early 1950s, von Weizsäcker embarked upon what turned out to be a sixteen-year career in the demanding world of German business and finance. Working in the legal department of the huge Mannesmann steel concern, he soon became involved in issues of

Mitbestimmung (employer-employee cooperation in management) and in his firm's participation in the European Coal and Steel Community, a forerunner of the European Common Market. By 1957, having in the meantime completed a doctoral dissertation at Göttingen and married Marianne von Kretschmann, the daughter of a Ruhr businessman, von Weizsäcker was chief of Mannesmann's economic policy department. Undoubtedly he could have continued to climb the corporate ladder at Mannesmann had he not decided to take another leap and to assume the recently-vacant directorship of the Waldthausen Bank, a private concern belonging to his wife's family. Performing successfully in this capacity for four years, he then moved in 1962 from the banking world to the board of directors of the C. H. Boehringer pharmaceutical company. His cosmopolitan background came in handy here, for among other tasks he organized the firm's "International Days," which promoted exchanges and contacts with other countries. Over all, von Weizsäcker's career in business was of crucial significance for his later career in politics, for it gave him a practical understanding of economic affairs that few of his political colleagues could equal.

Though long interested in things political, von Weizsäcker did not move directly from his career in business to one in politics. While working in industry he had also become actively involved in lay Protestantism — an old family tradition. Having served since 1962 in the presidium of the EKD (Evangelical Church of Germany), he became President of the German Evangelical Church Congress in 1964. For the next half-decade he devoted himself intensely to church affairs, especially to relations between West German Protestants and their beleaguered brethren in the East. The Berlin Wall had of course gone up in August 1961, and the painful consequences of this division now became a central concern in von Weizsäcker's life. Another issue which absorbed him was the troubled relationship between Germany and Poland. As a member of the Synod of the EKD he helped produce a memorandum on eastern policy and refugees that was designed to promote reconciliation with Warsaw. He also involved himself in interdenominational efforts to combat racism, ethnic conflict, and ideological confrontation between East and West. All these issues would be of vital concern to von Weizsäcker, the politician and statesman, challenging his talents as practical administrator and providing him with much of the subject matter for his seminal speeches.

As an internationally-minded businessman and lay Protestant leader, von Weizsäcker had inevitably been part politician, and had in fact

joined the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) as early as 1954. He took this step because he understood that parties lay at the heart of modern German political life, but he was never entirely comfortable with sectarian party politics and always strove to put larger issues above those of his party — a position that did not always sit well with his CDU colleagues. It was, however, von Weizsäcker's close association with that consummate party operative, Helmut Kohl, that led him toward a more active role in the CDU. In 1966 he became a member of the party's *Bundesvorstand* (National Executive); and in 1969, despite an irrepressible habit of taking positions that did not accord fully with the party line, he won a place in the CDU's *Bundestag* delegation.

1969-1983

Since this was the year in which SPD leader Willy Brandt won the chancellorship, von Weizsäcker began his political career in the opposition. Yet his was hardly an entrenched or bitter opposition, for he sympathized with much of Brandt's program, above all with his commitment to improving relations between Bonn and the Eastern bloc, including East Germany. In 1972, at the height of the controversy over Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, von Weizsäcker called for Bonn's formal recognition of the Oder-Neisse border with Poland, an appeal that irritated many in his own party. Through two impressive speeches he helped secure passage of West Germany's new treaty system with Poland and the Soviet Union by persuading the majority of his party colleagues not to vote against the accords. Four years later, when supplementary accords with Poland came up for a vote, von Weizsäcker led a dissident faction of CDU and CSU delegates in support of the measures, which among other things allowed some 125,000 ethnic Germans to leave Poland. He clearly agreed with the ruling Social-Liberal (SPD-FDP) coalition that Cold War shibboleths and old nationalist claims should be replaced by improved relations between East and West.

Nowhere was the human cost of the Cold War more obvious and agonizing than in Berlin, the city divided by ideology. Having early on formed a strong attachment to the former *Reich* capital, and having over the years become increasingly convinced that Berlin could serve as a "model" for resolving not just East-West antagonisms, but also for tackling a whole host of pressing urban problems, von Weizsäcker consented in 1979 to run for the post of "governing mayor" of West

Berlin. He and the CDU failed on that occasion to break the Social Democrats' traditional domination of Berlin city government: but through a new election two years later, brought on by a housing-industry scandal that severely tarnished the Social Democrats, von Weizsäcker took over the mayor's office at the head of a minority municipal government.

At the time he assumed his new post, West Berlin had gained a reputation for being "ungovernable." In addition to the logistical and economic problems caused by its isolated location, West Berlin suffered from more than its share of social ills, including a shortage of decent housing, growing crime rates and street violence, ethnic conflict, an influx of political and economic refugees, and, perhaps most disturbingly, a huge population of radical young people who illegally "squatted" in derelict houses and factories. In dealing with the latter problem, Mayor von Weizsäcker brought to bear his considerable talents as conciliator: meeting both with real estate owners and squatters, he managed to construct compromise arrangements that diffused some of the tension. By curtailing Berlin's ongoing civil wars he helped revive the city's economy and its status as a cultural mecca. But above all he regenerated municipal pride through his elegant representation of the city abroad — in America, the Soviet Union, Turkey, Israel, and throughout Europe. His primary message was that Berlin, as a focal point of German, European, and world problems, offered a key to the solution of these problems. A high point of his mayoral career came in 1983 when he went to Eisenach and Wittenberg in East Germany to participate in celebrations of the five-hundredth anniversary of Martin Luther's birth. In September of the same year he again ventured into the East to discuss common concerns with the East German leader Erich Honecker, becoming thereby the first mayor of West Berlin to meet with a GDR (German Democratic Republic) head of state. On this occasion he argued that though the German division might have been generated and hardened by the larger East-West schism, imaginative new ways of contending with the division, of reducing its painful consequences, still could and must be found.

Mayor von Weizsäcker by no means solved all of Berlin's problems, but his undeniable successes, achieved largely through his ability to work harmoniously with opposing political factions, brought him great acclaim throughout Germany, Europe, and indeed the world. Thus it was hardly surprising that his name began to figure prominently in ongoing speculation regarding future candidates for the office of Federal President. The holder of this post, after all, is meant to remain above

party politics and to represent the interests of the entire people, both at home and abroad. Unburdened with the day-to-day duties of running a government — that is the job of the chancellor — the president is free to speak out on the big issues, those that transcend party, and sometimes even national, concerns. The president's job, in short, seemed almost cut to order for Richard von Weizsäcker.

1984-1992

However, von Weizsäcker's first attempt to win this position, in 1974, was unsuccessful, since his opponent was the heavily favored and virtually unbeatable Walter Scheel of the Free Democrats. Circumstances were very different when, in 1983, President Karl Carstens (CDU) decided not to run for a second term, thus giving his colleague von Weizsäcker another opportunity to vie for the post, which would undoubtedly go to the ruling coalition's candidate. (The president might be expected to stand above party politics once elected, but the election process itself is political enough, involving a vote in the Federal Assembly, an amalgam of federal and state parliamentary delegates.) Announcement of von Weizsäcker's candidacy was delayed for a brief period while Chancellor Kohl dealt with inner-party opposition to his selection and sought a replacement for him in Berlin. At the time, von Weizsäcker remarked patiently that all his predecessors in the mayor's office had moved on either to Bonn or to heaven; he would too, it was just a question of which came first. The answer, of course, was Bonn: on July 1, 1984, Richard von Weizsäcker took the oath as Federal President, West Germany's sixth.

It is fortunate indeed for Germany that von Weizsäcker managed to put off the afterworld for the federal capital, a place no sensible person would confuse with paradise, unless heavenly bliss entails having the opportunity to represent one's country during a time of breathtaking change, both for that nation itself and the rest of the world. Amply prepared by his past career and experiences, von Weizsäcker has shown himself up to the challenge. He has used his office as a "bully pulpit" (Theodore Roosevelt's term) for the propagation of new ideas about old problems, for admonitions to his countrymen and to confront head-on both the painful realities of history and the difficult responsibilities of the present.

As it was for much of his previous career, the primary theme of

Richard von Weizsäcker's presidency has been *Versöhnung* (reconciliation). In the first instance, he has applied this concept to the relations between East and West, above all to those between the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union. Disturbed by a sterile lack of dialogue between Bonn and Moscow, he went to Russia in July 1987 and declared that talk of "crusades" and apocalyptic struggles between good and evil must be replaced by common efforts to resolve the horrendous problems facing East and West alike. Sensing the epochal importance of Gorbachev's reform efforts and the crucial necessity of their success, he offered Moscow "partnership" rather than enmity. But important as his initiative toward the Soviet Union was, von Weizsäcker realized that there were other peoples and lands with which Germans had to achieve some measure of reconciliation and cooperation. Thus he made highly-publicized visits to Israel, where his honest efforts to atone for the past won new respect for Germany. He went also to Norway, Holland, and Greece, countries formerly occupied and brutalized by the Nazis. In Greece he paid tribute to the victims of National Socialism, a gesture that recalled Willy Brandt's moving act of atonement at the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland. When people made reference to this similarity, von Weizsäcker said simply that he was "honored" by the comparison.

President von Weizsäcker's tirelessness on behalf of reconciliation and understanding have won him added renown and a wide following — he is by far the most popular political figure in Germany, and much celebrated in the rest of Europe and in the developing world — but his words and gestures have often been controversial, not least among members of the ruling coalition in Bonn. For example, during state visits in Africa in 1988 he forcefully attacked apartheid and speculated that sanctions against the South African government might be in order — declarations that raised hackles not only in Pretoria, but among the rightist camp at home. This group was similarly offended by the president's decision to attend the burial of novelist Heinrich Böll, whom some conservatives considered a "sympathizer" with leftist terrorism. Even more controversial, and not just among conservatives, was von Weizsäcker's announcement in 1988 that he would consider pardoning two former "Red Army Faction" terrorists who had shown remorse for their deeds. He had hoped thereby to start a process of reconciliation between mainstream German society and some of those who had most bitterly attacked it, but he managed instead to rekindle old hatreds.

Even von Weizsäcker's efforts on behalf of East-West understanding, applauded by most Germans, could sometimes generate friction and

acrimony. Such was the case when he pointedly declared his commitment to detente and weapons reduction at a time when Washington, Bonn's chief ally, was still talking about forcing Moscow to its knees through an exhausting arms race, or about the "winnability" of nuclear war. Germans and other Europeans, he made clear, simply could not afford to base their hopes for peace primarily on ever-larger stocks of weapons. In other contexts, however, the president was sympathetic to Washington's position, and he expressed "full understanding" for America's sharp response to the terrorist attack in 1986 on U.S. soldiers at the La Belle Discotheque in West Berlin.

Richard von Weizsäcker and the rest of the world could breathe easier as East-West tensions soon gave way to pathbreaking new accords in the wake of Moscow's internal reforms and its rapid withdrawal from Eastern Europe. But the sudden unification of Germany, one of the most spectacular consequences of this process, brought with it a host of new questions, including that of where to locate the capital of the now united nation. President von Weizsäcker again brought controversy upon himself when he came out strongly for Berlin over Bonn. His argument — an implicit criticism of the Kohl government — was that Germany could not stick with "status-quo thinking" as Europe's center of gravity began to shift eastward, and as the peoples of the East, including those in the states of the former GDR, cried out for concrete evidence of the West's commitment to European-wide integration. For von Weizsäcker the "capital question" was one of those epochal issues upon which he as president had every right and reason to speak out; but Bonn-supporters in his own party, and indeed in the country as a whole, were greatly angered by his partisanship for the former capital. The president, however, was no more deterred in his cause by this reaction than he was by earlier attempts to clip his wings or to keep him out of "trouble." He would not stay "safe" and simply dispense comforting bromides, as some seemed to want him to do.

We can safely say that it is good so, for Germany continues to need Richard von Weizsäcker as its conscience, not as a kind of national anesthetist.

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The Speeches — A Commentary

The six speeches collected in this volume represent a good sample of President von Weizsäcker's thinking on issues of key significance for our time. They embrace most of his central concerns — the imperatives of historical honesty, the quest for a German identity, East-West relations, the nature and future of united Europe, and the responsibilities of advanced industrial nations toward the endangered environment and the struggling Third World. These speeches are also indicative of von Weizsäcker's intellectual style: sober, straight-forward, stern but not humorless, above all refreshingly free of the catchy phrase-making and incantatory cliché-mongering that often passes for political oratory in our era. Though, as is inevitable given the bewildering changes of recent years, some of von Weizsäcker's appeals or arguments have been overtaken by events, it is astonishing how much of what he had to say can now be seen to have been prophetic.

Unquestionably the best known of these speeches — indeed, one of the most celebrated oratorical performances of recent times — is the address President von Weizsäcker delivered on May 8, 1985 in connection with the fortieth anniversary of the end of World War II. Aside from its profound and challenging sentiments, the speech gained importance because it came soon after the ill-conceived joint visit by President Reagan and Chancellor Kohl to the Bitburg military cemetery, a gesture which struck many as an attempt, in the interest of intra-alliance harmony, to "draw a line between the present and the past." While fully committed to the principle of reconciliation, von Weizsäcker admonished his people that this must not be achieved at the expense of historical honesty and the commitment to keeping alive memories of what Germany had done in the Third Reich. Nor could Germans who had lived through that awful era legitimately take refuge in the well-worn claim that they had known nothing of what was happening, for "every German was able to experience what his Jewish compatriots had to suffer, ranging from simple indifference and hidden intolerance to outright hatred." Not all Germans were anxious to hear this message — aware in general of what to expect, thirty CSU *Bundestag* delegates boycotted the speech — but for the most part the response was overwhelmingly positive. An avalanche of congratulatory telegrams and letters descended upon the president's office, and the accolades came not only from Germans, but also from foreigners concerned about the political direction of the Federal Republic. Thus the Israeli Ambassador to Bonn declared that von Weizsäcker's

address was “a moment of glory” in West German-Israeli relations. Small wonder that *“Die Rede”* (The Speech) was soon translated into dozens of languages and dispatched in printed or recorded form in hundreds of thousands of copies around the world.

Though delivered in Bonn, von Weizsäcker’s May 8 speech was addressed to Germans on both sides of the border — not only because they had a common past, but also because he believed they had a common future. “We are confident,” he said, “that the 8th of May will not remain the last day in our history that is binding upon all Germans.”

Very soon, indeed, Germans would share another common date — that of November 9, the historic day in 1989 when the Berlin Wall opened up, but also the date of the proclamation of the Weimar republic in 1918, of the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923, and of the “Night of the Crystals” in 1938 — so it is fitting that we should include in this volume von Weizsäcker’s Heine Prize address of December 1991, when he reflected upon the political past of the former German Democratic Republic and considered how Germans might deal with this dimension of their history. He insisted that the success of unification demanded that West Germans realize that the East German past was in many ways their past as well, that it was a burden all Germans had to share. He noted that while the SED (Socialist Unity Party) regime was not comparable to the Nazi state in terms of historical evil — it did not start a war or perpetrate a Holocaust — it nonetheless created an oppressive police system that terrorized and corrupted huge segments of the population. Like the Nazi crimes, this legacy had to be confronted and worked through, painful as that might be for some. The task would be all the harder because, unlike the aftermath of the Third Reich, the victims of the persecution were mostly still alive and demanding justice. The greatest difficulty of all would arise in somehow balancing such legitimate claims with humane reconciliation and the frustrating recognition that it may be impossible “... to establish unambiguity in retrospect where previously deep inner conflicts prevailed and ambiguity seemed inevitable.”

The necessity of confronting the past with an appreciation for historical complexity and without holier-than-thou finger-pointing was also a central theme of President von Weizsäcker’s address to the 37th Historians’ Congress in Bamberg in 1988. He delivered this address against the immediate backdrop of the so-called “Historians’ Debate,” in which prominent West German historians had arguments over, among other issues, the extent to which the Nazi crimes should be seen as “singular” or “unique” in the annals of modern, political, barbarism. This was not

just an instance of learned disputation, another tempest in the academic teapot. If it could be effectively argued that the Holocaust was just another atrocity in an era filled with atrocities — Turkey’s massacre of Armenians in World War I, Stalin’s Gulag, Mao’s Cultural Revolution, Pol Pot’s “Killing Fields” in Cambodia — then many Germans might conclude that they need carry no special load of guilt. At issue too was the context of the Nazi actions, their relationship to historical pressures or threats to which the Hitler regime was allegedly subjected. Professor Ernst Nolte, one of the central figures in the debate, argued in essence that Nazi policies, including the persecution of the Jews, were defensive reactions to the threat of Bolshevism, and that Auschwitz was Hitler’s paranoid answer to Soviet Communism’s “asiatic” policies of mass murder and deportation. Such contentions were sharply attacked by other German historians, but many observers, especially outside Germany, read the debate as a sign that Germans were now finding scholarly support for their long-held desire to step out of Hitler’s shadow. This allegation was in turn vehemently denied by the historians who had launched the debate.

Not being a professional historian himself, President von Weizsäcker did not plunge into the minutiae of the controversy. He recognized that one of the factors behind the discussion, Germany’s desire to “find itself” in its history, was understandable and legitimate. Nor was he anxious to slap the wrists of those accused of “relativizing” the Nazi crimes, for he did not believe that this was the intention of any of the main contenders. One of the purposes of his Bamberg speech, indeed, was again to bring a measure of reconciliation to a divided and feuding community. He was careful therefore to recognize comparative analysis as one of the historian’s central tasks. Yet, as in his May 8 speech, he also found it necessary to warn against any intellectual backsliding in matters of historical responsibility, should this be the lesson anyone drew from the historians’ debate. He thus made it clear that Auschwitz must be considered “unique,” and a burden of which the Germans could not divest themselves. “[Auschwitz],” he said, “was perpetrated by Germans in the name of Germany. This truth is immutable and will not be forgotten.”

If the German scene in the mid-to-late 1980s was rife with controversy over interpretations of the national past and its meaning for the present, controversy and distrust were also afflicting the relationship between Germany and its main ally, the United States. America’s growing economic ills and West Germany’s ever-increasing wealth were fueling charges in the U.S. that Bonn was not shouldering its fair share

of the burdens of global responsibility. West Germans, for their part, were distrustful of American leadership claims when that leadership seemed dangerously to combine aggressive self-assertion and provincial insularity. The German-American quarrel, however, was simply part of a larger rift between the United States and Western Europe, an area once economically dominated by America but now financially prospering and increasingly restless with Washington's tutelage.

Disturbed by such mutual misgivings, President von Weizsäcker chose the Harvard University Commencement of 1987 to speak out on European-American relations from the European perspective. He placed his comments within the context of a Harvard graduation speech given forty years earlier by George Marshall — the occasion when the American statesman announced his famous "Marshall Plan." Marshall's plan, suggested von Weizsäcker, was not only about economics, but about the "common stock of ideas" shared by Europeans and Americans. It was imperative that these common ideals not be lost sight of as America and Europe sought to redefine the Atlantic partnership.

Of course, Marshall's generous proposal also reflected the sense of responsibility that his America, as the world's richest and most powerful nation, felt toward the devastated lands of Europe. Now, lamentably, such notions of responsibility seemed on the wane both in America and among the European countries brought to prosperity partly by Marshall aid. The urgent necessity of the hour, said von Weizsäcker, was for Americans and Europeans together to revive Marshall's ideal of the responsibility of the strong, and to apply that vision to the "hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos" of the Third World.

Despite growing prosperity, the Europe of 1987 was still unsure of itself in many ways. Three years later, when President von Weizsäcker delivered his important speech on "European Virtues in a Time of Radical Change" at Zürich's Technical University, a new confidence was in the air. The Western European nations were making progress toward their "Single Market" and the Eastern European peoples were celebrating one of the most remarkable transformations of modern times: the collapse of Communism and the establishment of new democratic governments across the region. As a European who had long dreamed of such changes, von Weizsäcker joined in the celebration. Yet the German president saw, more clearly than most, that the new era had also ushered in great challenges which would severely test just how strong Europe's "virtues" really were. Effecting genuine economic integration would demand new forms of institutional organization and a greater

willingness to give up sovereign rights than some countries (most notably Great Britain) seemed ready to muster. Herculean efforts would be required to pull the newly-independent Eastern European countries out of their economic backwardness and into the common fold. Those Eastern governments and peoples would have to be careful to prevent a "revival of old, deeply-rooted national contrasts and problems." All Europeans, as they celebrated the death of socialism and the triumph of the market system, would have to keep in mind the potential for injustices in capitalism that had produced the socialist reaction in the first place. They would also have to remember that no kind of economic system could survive if in the process of expanding it destroyed the physical environment of the earth. Only two and a half years have elapsed since von Weizsäcker delivered these warnings, but the record would suggest that his admonitions were hardly misplaced.

The sixth speech in this collection returns to the subject of German-American relations, which, at the time of its delivery in April 1991, had been tested once again by the recent Gulf War. The Federal President delivered this speech in English as spontaneous words of welcome to a German-American conference in Berlin. Bonn, it will be recalled, did not send troops to that conflict, arguing that its constitution forbade deployment of forces out of the NATO area. Though it aided the allied effort with extensive, logistical and financial assistance, many Americans (and, for that matter, many Europeans, including some Germans) believed that Germany had been remiss in its global responsibilities, which had become all the greater in the wake of German unification. Welcoming the participants at a German-American conference on European politics in Berlin, President von Weizsäcker did not defend in detail the German position on the Gulf, though he pointed out that the German contribution had in fact been quite significant. More importantly, he placed the strains over the Gulf War within the much broader context of German-American relations since the end of World War II, noting that there had been other conflicts as well, but insisting that all of them had far less meaning than the long record of cooperation and mutual advancement.

Nowhere, he added, was the record of German-American cooperation more impressive or significant than in Berlin, the formerly divided and isolated city which Americans had chosen to defend, and which, newly reunited, was preparing to become the capital of united Germany. But Berlin — chaotic, multi-ethnic, struggling to knit itself back together — was also symbolic of the challenges that faced the new Germany. And

Americans, von Weizsäcker believed, could help the Germans cope with these problems the way they had helped in Berlin. But beyond Germany were looming European and global problems which urgently called for trans-Atlantic cooperation. Von Weizsäcker insisted that Europe needed America, America needed Europe, and that the rest of the world, much of it awash in the worst material misery, desperately needed help from the prosperous West. In stressing this on virtually every occasion he could find, von Weizsäcker proved that he was not just a good German, or a good European, but a true cosmopolitan — an *homme du monde*.

"FORTY YEARS AFTER THE WAR"

Speech in the Bundestag, Bonn, May 8, 1985

I.

Many nations are today commemorating the date on which World War II ended in Europe. Every nation is doing so with different feelings, depending on its fate. Be it victory or defeat, liberation from injustice and alien rule or transition to new dependence, division, and alliances - May 8, 1945 is a date of decisive historical importance for Europe.

We Germans are commemorating that date amongst ourselves, as is indeed necessary. We must find our own standards. We are not assisted in this task if we or others spare our feelings. We need and we can look truth straight in the eye - without embellishment and without distortion.

For us, the 8th of May is above all a date to remember what people had to suffer. It is also a date to reflect on the course taken by our history. The greater honesty we show in commemorating this day, the freer we will be to face the consequences with due responsibility.

For us Germans, May 8 is not a day of celebration. Those who actually witnessed that day in 1945 think back on highly personal and hence very different experiences. Some returned home, others lost their homes. Some were liberated, while for others it was the beginning of captivity. Many were simply grateful that the nightly bombings had passed and that they had survived. Others felt, first and foremost, grief at the complete defeat suffered by their country. Some Germans harbored bitterness about their shattered illusions, while others were thankful for the gift of a new start.

It was difficult to find one's bearings straight away. Uncertainty prevailed throughout the country. The military capitulation was unconditional, placing our destiny in the hands of our enemies, for whom the past had also been terrible. Would they not make us pay many times over for what we had done to them? Most Germans had believed that they were fighting and suffering for the good of their country. Yet now it turned out that their efforts were not only in vain and futile, but had served the inhuman goals of a criminal regime. Most people felt exhaustion, despair and renewed anxiety. Had one's next of kin survived? Did a new start amid these ruins have any sense? Looking back, people saw a dark abyss of the past, looking ahead, an uncertain, dark future.

Yet day by day something became clearer that must be said on behalf of all of us today: the 8th of May was a day of liberation. It liberated all of us from the cynical system of National Socialist tyranny.

Nobody will, because of that liberation, forget the grave suffering that was just beginning for many people on May 8. But we should not regard the end of the war as the cause of the massive flight, expulsion and loss of freedom that followed. The cause goes back to its outbreak and to the advent of the tyranny that brought about the war. We should not separate May 8, 1945 from January 30, 1933.

We truly have no reason today to participate in victory celebrations. But there is every reason for us to perceive May 8, 1945 as the end of a false path in German history, an end bearing seeds of hope for a better future.

II.

May 8 is a day of remembrance. Remembering means recalling an occurrence honestly and purely so that it becomes a part of our very being. This places high demands on our truthfulness.

Today we mourn all the war dead and those deaths caused by National Socialist tyranny. In particular we commemorate the six million Jews who were murdered in German concentration camps.

We remember all nations who suffered in the war, especially the countless citizens of the Soviet Union and Poland who lost their lives. As Germans, we mourn our own compatriots who perished as soldiers, during air raids at home, in captivity or during expulsion. We remember the Sinti and Romany gypsies, the homosexuals and the mentally ill who

were killed, as well as those who had to die for their religious or political beliefs. We commemorate the hostages who were executed. We recall the victims in the resistance movements in all the countries which we occupied. As Germans, we pay homage to the victims in the German resistance - among the public, the military, the churches, the workers and trade unions, and the communists. We commemorate those who did not actively resist, but who preferred to die than to violate their conscience.

Alongside the endless army of the dead arises a mountain of human suffering — suffering for those who perished; suffering from wounds or encripplement or barbarous, compulsory sterilization; suffering because of air raids, flight and expulsion; suffering due to rape, pillage, injustice, forced labor, torture, hunger and hardship; suffering because of fear of arrest and death; suffering because of the loss of everything which one had falsely believed in and worked for. Today we sorrowfully recall all this human suffering.

Perhaps the greatest burden was borne by the women of all nations. Their pain, renunciation, and silent strength are all too easily forgotten by history. Filled with fear, they worked, bore human life, and protected it. They mourned their fallen fathers and sons, husbands, brothers and friends. In the years of darkness, they ensured that the light of humanity was not extinguished. After the war, with no prospect of a secure future, women everywhere were the first to lend a helping hand to set stone upon stone. They were the "rubble women" in Berlin and everywhere. When the men who had survived the war returned, women again had to step back. Owing to the war many women remained alone and had to spend their lives in solitude. It was thanks first of all to women that nations did not disintegrate spiritually in the wake of the destruction, devastation, cruelties, and inhumanity, and that they were able slowly to pull themselves together after the war.

III.

At the root of Nazi tyranny was Hitler's immeasurable hatred of our Jewish compatriots. Hitler had never concealed this hatred from the public, but made the entire nation a tool to implement it. Only a day before his death on April 30, 1945, he concluded his so-called last testament with the words: "Above all, I call upon the leaders of the nation

and their followers to observe painstakingly the race laws and to oppose ruthlessly the poisoners of all peoples: International Jewry." Hardly any country has in its history always remained free of blame for war or violence. The genocide of the Jews is, however, unparalleled in history.

Perpetration of this crime was carried out by a few people. It was concealed from the eyes of the public, but every German was able to experience what his Jewish compatriots had to suffer, ranging from simple indifference through hidden intolerance to outright hatred. Who could remain unsuspecting after the burning of synagogues, the plundering of Jewish shops, the stigmatization of Jewish citizens with the Star of David, the deprivation of rights and ceaseless violations of human dignity? Whoever opened his eyes and ears and sought information could not fail to notice that Jews were being deported. The nature and scope of the destruction may have exceeded human imagination, but, in addition to the crime itself, too many people, including many of my own generation, who were young and uninvolved in planning the persecution or in carrying it out, tried not to take note of what was happening.

There were many ways of not burdening one's conscience, of shunning responsibility, looking away, keeping silent. When the unspeakable truth of the Holocaust then became known at the end of the war, all too many of us claimed that they had known nothing about it and had not even suspected anything.

There is no such thing as the guilt or innocence of an entire nation. Like innocence, guilt is not collective, but personal. There is acknowledged or concealed individual guilt which people proclaim or deny. Everyone who directly and consciously experienced that era should today quietly ask himself about his involvement in these awful events.

The vast majority of today's population were either children then or had not been born. They cannot confess guilt of their own for crimes that they did not commit. No discerning person can expect them to wear a hair shirt simply because they are Germans. But their forefathers have left them a grave legacy. All of us, whether guilty or not, whether old or young, must accept the past. We are all affected by its consequences and liable for it. The young and older generations must and can help each other to understand why it is vital to keep memory alive. It is not really a case of "coming to terms" with the past. That is not possible. It cannot be subsequently modified or undone. However, anyone who closes his eyes to the past is blind to the present. Whoever refuses to remember this historical inhumanity is prone to new risks of infection.

The Jewish nation remembers and will always remember. As human

beings we seek reconciliation. Precisely for this reason, we must understand that there can be no reconciliation without remembrance. The experience of millionfold death is part of the very being of every Jew in the world, not only because people cannot forget such atrocities, but also because remembrance is part of the Jewish faith.

"Seeking to forget makes exile all the longer; the secret of redemption lies in remembrance."

This oft-quoted Jewish adage surely expresses the idea that faith in God is faith in the work of God in history. Remembrance is experience of the work of God in history. Remembrance is the source of faith in redemption. The experience creates hope, creates faith in redemption, in reunification of the divided, in reconciliation. Whoever forgets this experience loses his faith. If we for our part would forget what has occurred, this would be not only inhuman, but would undercut the faith of the Jews who survived, and destroy the basis for reconciliation. We must erect within ourselves a memorial of thinking and feeling.

IV.

The 8th of May marks a deep caesura not only in German history but in the history of Europe as a whole. The European civil war had come to an end, the old world of Europe lay in ruins. "Europe had battled itself out," as the German historian Michael Stürmer put it. The meeting of American and Soviet Russian soldiers on the Elbe became a symbol for the temporary end of a European era.

Certainly all this was deeply rooted in history. For a century Europe had suffered under the clash of extreme nationalistic aspirations. The Europeans had great, even decisive influence in the world, but they were increasingly incapable of arranging their life with one another on their own continent. At the end of the First World War, peace treaties were signed but they lacked the power to foster peace. Once more nationalistic passions flared up and became linked with the distress of society at that time.

Along the road to disaster Hitler became the driving force. He created and exploited mass hysteria. A weak democracy was incapable of stopping him. And even the powers of Western Europe - in Churchill's judgement naive but not without guilt - contributed through their

weakness to this fateful trend. After the First World War America had withdrawn and in the thirties had little influence on Europe.

Hitler wanted to dominate Europe — and by war. He looked for and found a pretext for war in Poland. On May 23, 1939 — a few months before war broke out — he told the German generals: “No further successes can be gained without bloodshed . . . Danzig is not the objective. Our aim is to extend our *Lebensraum* in the East and secure food supplies . . . So there is no question of sparing Poland, [and the decision remains to attack Poland] at the first suitable opportunity . . . In this, justice or injustice or treaties play no role.”

On August 23, 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact. The secret supplementary protocol made provision for the impending partition of Poland. That pact was made in order to give Hitler an opportunity to invade Poland. The Soviet leaders at the time were fully aware of this. All at that time who understood politics realized that the German-Soviet pact meant Hitler’s invasion of Poland and hence the Second World War.

This does not diminish Germany’s responsibility for the outbreak of the Second World War. The Soviet Union was prepared to allow other nations to fight one another so that it could share in the spoils. The initiative for the war, however, came from Germany, not from the Soviet Union. It was Hitler who resorted to the use of force. The outbreak of the Second World War remains linked with the name of Germany.

In the course of that war the Nazi regime tormented and defiled many peoples. At the end of it all only one *Volk* remained to be tormented, enslaved and defiled: the German people itself. Time and again Hitler had declared that if the German nation was not capable of winning the war it should be left to perish. Many nations became victims of a war started by Germany before we ourselves became victims of our own war.

There followed the division of Germany into zones of occupation agreed upon by the victorious powers. In the meantime, the Soviet Union had marched into all countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe that had been occupied by Germany during the war. All of them, with the exception of Greece, became communist states.

The division of Europe into two different political systems took its course. True, it was the postwar development which cemented that division. But without the war started by Hitler it would not have happened. That is what first comes to the minds of the nations concerned when they recall the war unleashed by the German leaders. And we must think of that, too, when we ponder the division of our own country and

the loss of large parts of German territory. In a sermon in East Berlin commemorating the 8th of May, Cardinal Meißner said: “The bleak result of sin is always division.”

V.

The arbitrariness of destruction continued to be felt in the arbitrary distribution of burdens. There were innocent people who were persecuted and guilty ones who got away. Some were lucky to be able to begin life all over again at home in familiar surroundings. Others were expelled from the lands of their fathers. We, in what was to become the Federal Republic of Germany, were given the priceless opportunity to live in freedom. Many millions of our countrymen have been denied that opportunity to this day.

Learning to bear the arbitrary allocation of varying fates was the first, psychological task, alongside the material one of rebuilding the country. Inevitably, this presented a test of our human strength to recognize the burdens of others, to help bear them over time, not to forget them. It involved a test of our ability to work for peace, of our readiness for reconciliation, both at home and abroad, an ability and a readiness which not only others expected of us but which we, most of all, demanded of ourselves.

We cannot commemorate the 8th of May without being conscious of the great effort required of our former enemies to set out on the road of reconciliation with us. Can we really put ourselves in the place of the relatives of the victims of the Warsaw ghetto or of the Lidice massacre? And how hard must it have been for a citizen of Rotterdam or London to support the rebuilding of our country, which had so recently bombed his own city. For that support assurance had gradually to grow that the Germans would not again try to use force to avenge a defeat.

In our country, the biggest sacrifice was demanded of those who had been driven out of their homeland. They were to experience bitter suffering and grave injustice long after the 8th of May. Those of us born here in the West often lack the imagination or the heart necessary to grasp the meaning of their harsh fate.

But soon there were great signs of readiness to help. Many millions of refugees and expellees were taken in. Over the years they were able to

strike new roots. Their children and grandchildren have, in many different ways, formed an attachment to the culture and to the love of homeland of their ancestors. That is good, since it is a great treasure in their lives. But they themselves have found a new homeland, where they are growing up with youth of their own age and growing together with them, speaking their dialects and sharing their customs. Their young lives constitute proof of their ability to be at peace with themselves. Their grandparents or parents were once driven out; they themselves, however, are now at home.

Very early, and in exemplary fashion, the expellees identified themselves with the renunciation of force. This was no transitory declaration in the early stages of powerlessness but a commitment which has retained its validity. Renouncing the use of force means allowing trust to grow on all sides, trust that a Germany which has regained its strength remains bound by this commitment.

The expellees' own former homeland has, meanwhile, become a new homeland for others. In many of the old cemeteries in Eastern Europe you will today find more Polish than German graves. The compulsory migration of millions of Germans to the West was followed by the migration of millions of Poles and, in their wake, millions of Russians. These are all people who were not asked if they wished to move, people who also suffered injustice, who became defenseless objects of political events and to whom no balancing off of injustices and no comparing of claims can make up for what was done to them.

Renunciation of force today means giving these peoples a lasting, politically uncontested security for their future in the place where fate drove them after the 8th of May, and where they have been living in the decades since. It means placing the precept of understanding above conflicting legal claims. That is the real, the human, contribution to a peaceful order in Europe which we can provide.

The new beginning in Europe after 1945 has brought both victory and defeat for the ideals of freedom and self-determination. It is up to us to seize the opportunity to have done with a long period of European history in which peace seemed conceivable and sure only as a result of each country's own supremacy, and in which peace meant a period of preparation for the next war.

The peoples of Europe love their homelands. The Germans are no different. Who could trust a people's love of peace if it were capable of forgetting its homeland? No, love of peace manifests itself precisely in one's not forgetting one's homeland and for that very reason being

resolved to do everything in one's power to live together with others in peace forever. An expellee's love for his homeland is no revanchism.

VI.

The last war aroused a desire for peace in the hearts of men more strongly than in times past. The work of the churches in promoting reconciliation met with a tremendous response. There are many examples of how young people are working for understanding. I think of "*Aktion Sühnezeichen*," a campaign in which young people are active for atonement in Auschwitz and in Israel. Recently, the town of Kleve, on the lower Rhine, received loaves of bread from Polish towns as a token of reconciliation and fellowship. The town council sent one of those loaves to a teacher in England because he had discarded his anonymity and written to say that as a member of a bomber crew during the war he had destroyed churches and homes in Kleve and wanted a sign of reconciliation. In seeking peace it is a tremendous help if, instead of waiting for the other to come to us, we go to him, as this man did.

VII.

In its consequences, the war brought old enemies closer together, on a human basis and also politically. As early as 1946, the American Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes, appealed in his memorable Stuttgart address for understanding in Europe and for assistance to the German nation on its path to a free and peaceable future. Innumerable Americans assisted us Germans, the conquered, with their own private funds to heal the wounds of war. Thanks to the vision of the Frenchman Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman and of Germans such as Konrad Adenauer, the traditional enmity between French and Germans was buried forever.

A new will and energy to reconstruct Germany surged through the country. Many an old trench was filled in, religious differences and social tensions were defused. People set to work in a spirit of partnership.

There was no "zero hour," but we had the opportunity to make a

fresh start. We have used this opportunity as well as we could.

We have replaced servitude with democratic freedom.

Four years after the end of the war, on May 8, 1949, the Parliamentary Council adopted our Basic Law. Transcending party differences, the democrats who were members of the Council gave their answer to war and tyranny in Article 1 of our Constitution: "The German people acknowledge inviolable and inalienable human rights as the foundation of every community, of peace, and of justice in the world." This further significance of the 8th of May should also be remembered today.

The Federal Republic of Germany has become a state that is respected worldwide. It is one of the highly developed industrial countries in the world. It knows that its economic strength commits it to share responsibility in the struggle against hunger and need in the world and for social accommodation among nations. For forty years we have been living in peace and freedom, a condition to which we, through our policy among the free nations of the Atlantic Alliance and the European Community, have contributed greatly.

Never have the liberties of the citizen enjoyed better protection on German soil than they do today. A comprehensive social welfare net which can stand comparison with that of any other nation ensures the people's fundamentals of life. Whereas at the end of the war many Germans tried to hide their passport or to exchange it for another, German citizenship today is a highly valued right.

We certainly have no reason to be arrogant and self-righteous. But we may look back with gratitude on the development of these forty years, when we make use of our historical memory as a guideline for our conduct in the present and for the unsolved tasks that await us.

- If we remember that the deranged were put to death in the Third Reich, we will regard the care of people with psychiatric disorders as our own responsibility.
- If we remember how people who were persecuted on grounds of race, religion and politics and threatened with certain death often stood before the closed frontiers of other countries, we will not close our doors today on those who are really persecuted and seek protection with us.
- If we reflect on the persecution of free thought during the dictatorship, we will protect the freedom of every thought and every criticism, however much they may be directed against us ourselves.

- Whoever renders a judgment on the conditions in the Middle East should think of the fate to which Germans condemned their fellow human beings who were Jewish, a fate that led to the establishment of the State of Israel under conditions which still continue to burden people in that region today.
- If we think of what our eastern neighbors had to suffer during the war, we will find it easier to understand that accommodation and peaceful neighborly relations with these countries remain central tasks of German foreign policy. It is important that both sides remain mindful of the past and that both respect each other. They have every reason to do so — for reasons of humanity, of culture, and finally also for reasons of history.

Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, has declared that it is not the intention of the Soviet leaders to stir up anti-German feelings on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the end of the war. The Soviet Union, he said, is committed to friendship between nations. Even if we have doubts about the Soviets' contribution to understanding between East and West, and about their respect for human rights in all parts of Europe, we must not ignore this signal from Moscow. We wish friendship with the peoples of the Soviet Union.

VIII.

Forty years after the end of the war, the German nation remains divided.

At a commemorative service in the Church of the Holy Cross in Dresden in February this year, Bishop Hempel said: "It is a burden and a scourge that two German states have emerged with their harsh border. The very multitude of borders is a burden and a curse. Weapons are a burden."

Recently, in Baltimore, in the United States, an exhibition on "Jews in Germany" was opened. The ambassadors of both German states accepted the invitation to attend. The host, the President of the Johns Hopkins University, welcomed them. He pointed out that all Germans stand on the ground of the same historical development. A common past

is a bond that links them. Such a bond, he said, could be a joy or a problem, but it was always a source of hope.

We Germans are one people and one nation. We feel that we belong together because we have lived through the same past.

We also experienced the 8th of May, 1945 as part of the common fate of our people, a fate which unites us. We feel bound together in our will for peace. Peace and good-neighborly relations with all countries should radiate from the soil of both German states. And others too should not let this soil become a source of danger to peace.

The people of Germany in common want a peace that encompasses justice and human rights for all peoples, including our own. No Europe of walls can make peace with itself across its frontiers but only a continent which removes from those frontiers that which divides. That indeed is precisely what the end of World War II recalls to our minds. We are confident that the 8th of May will not remain the last date in our history that is binding upon all Germans.

IX.

Many young people have in recent months asked themselves and us too why such lively discussions about the past have arisen forty years after the end of the war. Why are such discussions livelier now than they were twenty-five or thirty years ago? What is the inner necessity for this?

It is not easy to answer such questions. But we should not seek the reasons primarily in external influences, although there have doubtless also been such influences.

In the life span of men and destiny of nations, forty years play a great role. Permit me at this point to return again to the Old Testament, which contains deep insights for everyone, irrespective of his faith. There, forty years frequently play a recurring and essential role. The Israelites were to remain in the desert for forty years before a new stage in their history began with their arrival in the Promised Land. Forty years were required for complete transfer of responsibility from one generation to another. Elsewhere too (in the Book of Judges), it is described how often the memory of assistance received and rescue experienced lasted only for forty years. When that memory faded, tranquility was at an end.

Forty years always constitute a significant time span. That passage of time has an effect on human consciousness, whether in the form of an end to a dark period that brings confidence in a new and good future or in the form of a danger that the past might be forgotten and of a warning of the consequences should that happen.

In our country, a new generation has grown into political responsibility. Our young people are not responsible for what happened then. But they are responsible for what comes of it in our history.

We, of the older generation, owe to young people not the fulfillment of dreams but honesty. We must help younger people understand why it is vital to keep the memory alive. We want to help them to accept historical truth soberly, without one-sidedness, without taking refuge in utopian doctrines of salvation, but also without moral arrogance.

From our own history we learn what man is capable of. That is why we must not imagine that we have become different and better. There does not exist a moral perfection that is achieved once and for all — neither in the case of an individual nor of a country! We have learned as human beings, and as human beings we remain endangered. But we also have the strength to overcome danger again and yet again.

Hitler's habitual tendency was to foment prejudices, enmities and hatred.

What is asked of young people today is this: do not let yourselves be driven into enmity and hatred of others, of Russians or Americans, of Jews or Turks, of those who call themselves "alternatives" or of conservatives, of blacks or whites.

Learn to live with one another, not against one another.

Let us democratically elected politicians take this to heart and constitute an example.

Let us honor freedom.

Let us work for peace.

Let us cleave to the rule of law.

Let us be true to our own standards of justice.

"THE MARSHALL PLAN"

*Speech at Harvard University Commencement
Cambridge, Massachusetts, June 11, 1987*

I

Being invited to speak at Harvard's commencement, and in honor of George Marshall, is an accolade I would never have dreamed of attaining.

Harvard is unrivaled in the world as a magnet for the best talents from all continents, and George Marshall has become a symbol of the virtues that have taught us to admire, and indeed to love, the United States.

Thus, to address you as a voice from Europe is a high distinction and a welcome challenge in these critical times.

This unique university has already inspired many a European. For instance, the Prince of Wales delivered a very impressive speech here last year. On behalf of his own university in Britain, he greeted Cambridge from Cambridge. Three cheers for the little difference between the two, if I may say so. Since I studied not only in Germany but also at Oxford, I hardly need to explain why Cambridge on the Charles River is the only university city bearing this name which my self-esteem should allow me to set foot in.

Generations of young people have left Harvard for all corners of the globe. Through their high standards, sense of responsibility, and dedication, they have helped people throughout the world to cope with the

challenges they faced. With all my heart I wish everyone who is graduating today and thus stepping over a major threshold in his or her life happiness and fulfillment, with the memory of the Harvard experience serving as a challenge and an encouragement. You have every reason to be proud and to have a sense of commitment because you come from this great university.

II.

Here, on commencement day in June 1947, George Marshall addressed Harvard graduates and alumni, America and the world. His speech has gone down in the history of the modern world. How did it come about? Let us try to picture the situation then.

Two disastrous world wars lay behind us. America had been decisive in both of them.

At the end of the Second World War, Europe lay in ruins. Unimaginable human pain, injustice and death had left their imprint. Millions of Jews had become the victims of an unprecedented crime. The Poles, the Russians - and the Germans too - were deeply suffering, as were other nations. Though there were winners and losers at the end of the war, they all shared a terrible burden. Europe was devastated and exhausted.

In this situation, we young people who had experienced the war and miraculously survived it set about building a new life. This was a bitter and difficult challenge. What we sought most of all were ethical fundamentals. We had witnessed what happens when racist madness, terror, and violence disfigure the human countenance. We had learned that freedom and human dignity are jeopardized whenever we fail to stand up for these ideals.

We had discovered that man cannot live by bread alone. But that was just one side of the coin; for without bread man also cannot survive. "First food, then morals," as Brecht said in "The Threepenny Opera."

Misery prevailed in Europe: expulsion, homelessness, hunger, no heating, no power, no production, no material resources, no prospects, little hope.

It was in this situation that George Marshall announced his program. He proclaimed it without solemnity, rather dryly and soberly. His plan is unparalleled in the history of world powers in generosity, selflessness and vision.

Outstanding Americans helped to shape it: Dean Acheson, William Clayton, George Kennan, Charles Bohlen, to name but a few. It was the work of a far-sighted, highly responsible American administration. It called upon Europe to revive its political and social life and regain its share of political responsibility — with the decisive material assistance being provided by the Americas.

The plan was generous: it included everyone, among them the enemies defeated in the recent war, not least of all us Germans. It was addressed to the whole of Europe, including the East. As Marshall put it, it was "directed not against any country or any doctrine."

The plan was selfless: the assistance was provided with no political strings. The recipients themselves were free to decide on the distribution and utilization.

The plan was visionary, as the plans of great victors seldom are. Victors tend to carry on with their war objectives even in peacetime. They seek to ensure that defeated adversaries or weakened partners remain dependent. The happiest times in history, however, have occurred whenever victors assisted all former belligerents to recover and helped the conquered to regain their self-esteem. In this respect, the Marshall Plan was a standard that has never been matched.

America was at that time materially far superior to all other nations. But it did not misuse its superiority by moral arrogance or political coercion. It did not seek to maintain dependence. Instead, the aim of the United States was to restore the confidence of the Europeans in their own strength, in their own political future.

The Marshall Plan bears testimony to the ability of a great and free nation to define its own legitimate interests in the light of a truly historical perspective and to act in accordance with basic, ethical principles. America gave expression to its own dignity by respecting the dignity of other people.

III.

George Marshall added to his printed speech a handwritten statement to which he attached special importance: "The whole world of the future hangs on a proper judgment."

How true this is, and how difficult it is to act accordingly day after day!

Marshall was not an ideologist, but a realist. He was all too familiar with the temptation of nations to adhere to mutual prejudices, instead of seriously trying to understand others. He knew that prejudices generate violent emotions. The outcome is fear, confrontation or crusades. In history, this has proved dangerous time and again. We are facing similar dangers today. Can George Marshall's guidelines help us to cope with them?

First of all, we must soberly analyze our situation. What has become of the Marshall Plan in these forty years? What has been achieved? What is still unfinished? What is our task today?

The first answer is quite clear: The Marshall Plan produced great, decisive developments. It laid foundations for new life in Europe. The nations that benefitted from it are free and sovereign. They experienced an unprecedented recovery.

As intended by Marshall, this recovery was due no less to their own hard work than to the enormous material assistance provided by America. The Marshall Plan is the most successful example to date of a policy of help to self-help.

The plan simultaneously acted as a trigger for cooperation and growing unity. It gave rise to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The European Community would be inconceivable without it. It focused attention on global tasks; worldwide forms of cooperation, such as the International Monetary Fund, are the product of its economic momentum. The Marshall Plan is, and will remain, the most fundamental achievement of the Western world in postwar history.

The plan also gave decisive impetus to transatlantic partnership. George Marshall was not only concerned with practical cooperation between America and Europe. His thoughts were deeply rooted in the common stock of ideas of Europeans and Americans. These include universal human rights, cultural openness among nations, free world trade. Such common values and goals, not missiles, have given the North Atlantic Alliance its identity and permanence.

IV.

The "proper judgment" that Marshall demands of us also involves tackling many unresolved or new problems.

Though the alliance has worked well over the last four decades, there are mutual misgivings between Americans and Europeans. Many Americans regard us Europeans, not only as strong economic rivals, but as affluent egotists who constantly criticize America without being able or willing to think in global dimensions or to bear our fair share of our burdens of political responsibility. They view us as wavering partners with a provincial outlook.

Seen from the other direction, Europeans believe that their American partners are subject to erratic confusion: Americans on the one hand claim an often rather unilateral leadership role in the world, while at the same time maintaining an inward-looking mentality. Many feel that the Americans are living beyond their means. They regard the huge deficits in the U.S. budget and trade balance as imposing a burden on the United States and on others as well. They point out that the Americans produce less than they consume and save less than most other peoples, but as the world's richest nation draws on a disproportionately large share of the world's savings to offset this deficit.

I am neither able nor willing to render judgment on the merits of such allegations. More important, in my view, is the perception that our societies have fairly similar weaknesses. Our democracies function well, but they do not educate us to pay attention to the problems of other countries, although our own destiny depends on their destiny. On the contrary, people here and in Europe have learned primarily to organize their own interests, to strengthen their domestic position and to increase their personal prosperity. We all try to safeguard our own claims and rights. Our societies are marked by tight networks of expectations and entitlements. Politics becomes more dependent, its scope narrower.

To be sure, politicians - my own guild - often reinforce this trend instead of opposing it. They are not a club of selfless saints to say the least. Their performance in resolving problems rarely matches their skill in fighting for power. Moreover, all too often they are captives of local and regional interests, tied down like Swift's Gulliver by countless little ropes and chains.

Thus, it seems as though provincialism has taken charge everywhere, as though all of us are dominated by a shrinking horizon and parochial view of the world.

Is this trend irreversible? Must we accept that democracy trains us better to exercise our rights than to recognize our duties? Have we really divorced freedom from responsibility? Has the ability to adopt an historical perspective died away? Do young graduates from Harvard or Heidelberg really want to enter a society of indifferent affluence which has difficulty specifying what its goals are, what it believes in, and what it is inspired by?

I think not. A new generation will follow its own path. It will select its involvement itself. It will recognize its own tasks and new opportunities.

Two challenges stand out today. The first concerns the Third World. George Marshall spoke out against "hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos." His plan helped the recipient countries in Europe to overcome their need. But in large parts of the world there is a completely different situation. Much of his speech has relevance today, if one replaces the word "Europe" by "Third World". America's thoughts and deeds for the benefit of Europe were immensely generous. However, many developing countries see precisely in the prosperity and current practices of America and Europe one of the main causes of their own poverty.

Do we really understand the impact of our trading and financial system on those countries? Are we, the rich countries, ready to stop damaging their export opportunities by forcing our agricultural surpluses upon their export markets at subsidized prices? Have we not all too often misinterpreted the social struggle of those nations primarily as a danger for our own security? How long will we continue to seek and support military solutions there? When will the East and the West put an end to the wretched "zero-sum game" of their proxy wars on the territory of third countries?

This brings me to the second challenge of our time, a matter particularly close to our hearts as Europeans and Germans: to East-West relations.

The purpose of the Marshall Plan was to assist and unite all of Europe. At the time, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia in particular wanted to participate. Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov had already started negotiations with his Western European counterparts. But they failed. Stalin distrusted the American offer, expecting a weak Europe to be more useful for his own designs. As a result, the division of Europe grew worse. Today, the continent is divided into two seemingly irrecon-

cilable systems, into two blocs which still maintain the world's largest arsenals.

Must the Marshall Plan, which was never intended to create such opposing blocs, remain a torso? Are we satisfied that fate has been kind to us Westerners alone? Do the Europeans accept the division as an immutable destiny?

No, the situation is quite different. Europe is politically divided, but is not and will never be divided in spirit. We have not only a common history based on closely related national cultures: what links us is the common fate of a future on a small continent. After a period of resignation, there is again a growing awareness among Europeans in East and West that they belong together. The people in the Warsaw Pact countries have a more difficult path to travel than we. An entire generation has had to live in forced isolation. But they have never ceased to be Europeans. Theirs is the greater contribution towards keeping the spirit of a united Europe alive.

Among Western Europeans there is a growing perception that we harm ourselves if we try to convince ourselves that the East does not concern us. We know, as Vaclav Havel put it, "how ambivalent our Western happiness would be if it were obtained permanently at the expense of Eastern misery."

For you here in America it may be difficult to appreciate such European feelings. Many of you may perhaps even regard this as a source of estrangement between America and Europe. You may feel that one can only opt either for transatlantic partnership or for the whole, undivided Europe.

Yet what is the essence of our partnership? It is the concept of freedom. We protect it as our right. We can succeed in that only if we understand freedom as inseparable from responsibility. We would not only be disloyal to our own ideals, but would in fact destroy them, if we were to claim freedom only for ourselves and not champion it for others.

Anyone of you who visits Berlin will appreciate what I mean. For twenty-six years now, a Wall has sliced through the middle of the city. It separates people who belong to the same family, are of the same spirit, have the same hopes, breathe the same air, face the same future. But it has failed in its true purpose: it has not made people become resigned to division. On the contrary, this dead structure is a vital and daily reminder of what it was intended to make us forget: our feeling of belonging together. Intended to be a symbol of the division between the political systems, Berlin has increasingly become a symbol of unity, a manifesta-

tion of people's determination not to be separated.

Many neighbors and friends of Germany are not overly pleased when the unsettled German question is broached. But anyone who looks at the walled-off Brandenburg Gate in the heart of Berlin, as I shall do with your president tomorrow, will feel in his own heart what we mean: as long as that Gate remains closed, the German question remains open.

This is not tantamount to any neutralistic yearning or nationalistic nostalgia. It is a very simple human feeling of all Europeans. We do not want new conflicts about frontiers. We have learned painful lessons from history. But frontiers should lose their divisive nature for people. This is the crux of the open question for all Europeans, a question of human rights and human dignity for everyone, not just for one nation or solely for the West.

VI.

It will not serve to be bull-headed. Grand declarations and ideological crusades do not help either. What we need is a consistent policy of East-West understanding.

Of course understanding does not mean approval of the other system. Faith healing is no policy. Opposing convictions and divergent interests will persist. Nor must we neglect our security. Those who can no longer defend themselves will invariably fail politically.

But, politics does not serve defense, defense serves politics. For all too long, East-West relations were dominated by mere security concepts. It seemed as though deterrence was the only language in which East and West could communicate with one another.

In actual fact, security itself necessitates a policy of confidence-building interdependence. It was the policy of a Harvard professor, Henry Kissinger, whose SALT negotiations first drew the inescapable conclusion that in an era of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons security could no longer be ensured against each other but only with each other.

That was the first necessary step toward a cooperation that opens the systems up. Further steps have to follow. We must find "currencies" other than just military power for dealing with one another.

At present, the Soviet Union is making great effort to reform its

economic and political structure. To this end, it seeks to widen cooperation with other countries. Of course, the Soviet Union is proceeding this way for its own advantage and not to do us a favor. At the same time, Moscow may very well have a genuine interest in finding new "currencies" in communication with us.

Is this a disadvantage for us? The deficiencies that the Soviet Union is trying to correct arise from a closed system providing no incentives, no participation in decision-making, no free flow of information. The people are the losers, not only in material terms. If there is a chance now for further opening steps, is this a risk for us? Should we respond with mistrust and rejection, renewed containment, and confrontation?

The Soviet Union is neither a mere public relations system founded exclusively on ideology nor a blindly obsessed world revolutionary. At the top of the East-West agenda is not a final apocalyptic struggle between good and evil, but a growing number of problems which neither East nor West can solve on its own: the population explosion and hunger in the world, the progressive destruction of nature, ensuring energy supplies, coping with the ethical aspects of scientific and technological progress, and above all ensuring peaceful relations between neighbors.

In the East-West context today we do not have to provide loans and grants as in Marshall's time, but cooperation of a new quality. We should recall Senator Fulbright, who decisively advanced the concept of international, educational exchange. This is the way to replace prejudice with knowledge. Science requires openness. Business requires vocational and management training. Telecommunication promotes technology and widens people's horizons. The greatest friend of mutual understanding is culture, the greatest enemy is isolation.

It is in these areas that we need an East-West transfer in both directions. The concept of coexistence as class struggle is antiquated and reactionary. Coexistence must imply the capacity to settle conflicts by political means without either side claiming to possess the absolute truth.

Disarmament is important. But history teaches us that usually it is not disarmament that leads to peace, but peaceful cooperation that leads to less mistrust, less fear, and then to disarmament.

Today, we have a truly historic opportunity to engage in cooperation which can lead to greater openness and responsibility between the two political systems. We must make vigorous and responsible use of this opportunity. It is mainly the mandate for us, the Europeans. But we want to and must do it together with you, with our American friends.

VII.

It is not sufficient to wait and see in which direction the "new thinking" in Moscow moves. New thinking is, first and foremost, a challenge to ourselves. In this George Marshall set us an example.

We should complete what he was prevented from finishing. Fifteen years ago my country set up the German Marshall Fund of the United States as a token of gratitude for the American assistance given to us. This fund is intended as a transatlantic institution serving to meet the challenges of our time. Would it not be in line with the spirit of George Marshall to include prominently in the foundation's projects those countries which were once prevented from participation in the Marshall Plan?

Fresh thinking has always been a characteristic of Harvard. Here, there is freedom and openness in research, interdisciplinary horizons, the concept of teamwork, stimuli for talent, and the vital force of curiosity.

To be sure, Harvard is not an ideal world, but I know hardly any other place on earth where there is more tolerance, where diversity is so strongly encouraged, where talent is not suppressed for fear of competition but is fostered, and where foreigners are not just tolerated but perceived as enrichments to the community.

The Harvard student is encouraged to make intelligent use of freedom, to practice "mature citizenship," as Harvard's president in George Marshall's time, James B. Conant, put it. We in Germany remember him with great respect because he, as America's representative to our country, practiced in exemplary fashion what he had been teaching at this university.

Harvard's motto, "Veritas," is not a claim to a monopoly on truth. It means seeking truth together with other people who are seeking it also, even if they set out from entirely different points of departure. "Veritas" in Harvard has a different meaning than truth in Moscow, the "Pravda." It is all the more necessary to strive for communication and exchange. This is one of the great tasks for the young generation of our time.

For that we need above all the strength to have historical perspective. In the end, if we resist prejudice and emotion it is not systems and doctrines that will prevail, but people with their human aspirations.

What I would welcome from the bottom of my heart is a new thinking from the "global village" on the Charles river. You have been educated and qualified for this purpose. You owe that to the world. Let me couch

my request in the words of Senator Fulbright: "We must learn to conduct international relations with patience, tolerance, openness of mind, and, most of all, with a sense of history. These are qualities of educated men. The cultivation of these qualities is the ultimate challenge to international education."

Harvard itself is part of the message which George Marshall gave the world forty years ago. We are, all of us, called upon to live up to his legacy, and, by meeting the challenges of our time, to fulfill it anew.

"REFLECTIONS ON HISTORY"

*Excerpts from an Address at the 37th Historians' Congress
Bamberg, October 12, 1988*

Occasionally one hears talk of the "intact" areas of history, evidently in contrast to the disastrous periods of our own history. But is non-European history, the primary subject of this conference, such an "intact" area? In proposing that it is urgently necessary to deal with the non-European history, are we not laying ourselves open to the charge of escapism? Can we be accused of striving for an all-encompassing "historicization" of the world, in whose multitude of comparisons and parallels the dark chapters of our own recent history might disappear or be reduced to mere episodes?

It is hard to avoid asking such questions against the background of the so-called historians' dispute. I will not evade this but confine myself to a few general remarks and refrain from discussing individual positions involved in the dispute.

Like any other nation, ours wants to find its identity in its history. In our case looking into the mirror of history certainly calls for strength. Who can be surprised to find himself tempted to look away or to denounce the mirror as a "distorting mirror," wherever it reflects the emergence of National Socialism and the latter's unspeakable crimes? Looking into the mirror causes deep distress, but what else should be expected? It is not legitimate immediately to condemn such distress as morally wicked, even if it indeed leads to a looking away. Do we always know what lies behind this tendency? Is it invariably moral insensitivity? Or is it a form of embarrassment that is not bearable?

To be sure, we cannot simply accept the desire to look away or to forget. But neither can we condemn anyone who in his distress withdraws into himself. Instead he must be given courage to face the truth. Like other nations, the German nation has suffered time and again from its own history, and not just since 1933. But it cannot make others

responsible for what it and its neighbors endured under National Socialism. The German nation was led by criminals and allowed itself to be led by them. It knows that to be true, especially in places where it would prefer not to know it.

A path marked by violence, hardship and death led from 1933 to the end of the war. Not until then did many people feel the full extent of injustice and suffering. Only gradually did it then become clear what had actually happened. It remains immensely difficult to acknowledge those occurrences. And yet genuine liberation is achieved only by freely facing the truth, by allowing oneself to be overpowered by it.

This is where the responsible tasks of historians lie. None of their findings will diminish the National Socialist crimes. Historians are, like all of us, faced with a common great predicament. Each of them will conduct his research in his own way; there will often be different findings, but this should be mutually conceded. However, I believe that nobody seriously wants to make historical relativism permissible.

Historical references and comparisons have their due place in research. But research and moral perceptions provide the same answer to the question of uniqueness. Everything takes place in an historical framework, but every event is at the same time unique in history. It has occurred in that specific way, differently from events elsewhere.

And what, after all, would it mean for us if Auschwitz could be compared with the ruthless extermination of other people? Auschwitz remains unique. It was perpetrated by Germans in the name of Germany. This truth is immutable and will not be forgotten.

As Siegfried Lenz said a few days ago, "Auschwitz remains entrusted to us, it belongs to us, just as does the rest of our history." The aim cannot be, nor could it be attained if it were, to reconcile oneself with history. Historical responsibility means accepting one's own history. We must make such an effort, above all for the sake of the present.

The passage of time does not change this. In fact, mankind's awareness of the occurrences at Auschwitz has increased over the decades since the war. But something else has also evolved: a democracy to which we are committed out of conviction. This democracy has proved its worth for forty years now, not least in its openness to its history. By being capable of this openness and constantly learning, we are able to acquire self-assurance in the true sense of that word.

This is liberation. We put it to use by what we make of it in our time by our own efforts.

It is painful that we are still unable to do so in one single Germany.

Yet nothing that occurs is devoid of broader connections.

The Germans in the GDR, who have had to bear the consequences of National Socialism under completely different, very oppressive circumstances — and still must bear them — face history in their own honest way. For both, for them and for us, history continues — German history. Of key importance is the search of young people for self-esteem and for their proper place in today's world. They want to know who they are, where they come from, and who the others are with whom they are to share and shape this world.

To them, it is vitally important to know how the moral and political disaster of their grandparents' era came about. Did their nation abandon the civilized community of nations only temporarily and has it now returned to its natural position, albeit encumbered with that terrible aberration? Or will they, young Germans and their descendants, remain forever branded and excluded?

No, definitely not. The young people of Germany have answered this question for themselves just as clearly as any other people would and indeed just as we would have done in their position. They are certainly not outsiders. They form part of the whole.

Could this situation be at all different? Should one even want it to be different? Is it at variance with historical insights and lessons? Definitely not, in my opinion. I state this in the light of one experience in particular: the penetrating questions that young people themselves have persistently asked their parents and grandparents. For their own lives they need an answer to the question of where we were, what we did, which responsibilities we assumed and which we very much failed to assume.

On the subject of this search, I recently heard a very impressive report from pastors who work with young people in the GDR. Questions about the past are being asked very insistently there. In this connection valuable experiences are gained, which at times stand out more clearly than they do here. Prescribed antifascism is not conducive to in-depth analysis; in fact, it is more likely to generate inordinate taboos. Only a free inner conviction can produce honest concern. It is precisely the conditions of life that prevent this inner conviction from vanishing in the GDR but, on the contrary, make it so sincere and so fundamental. The young certainly do not bear guilt. Neither history nor the Bible teaches them otherwise. But liberation from guilt will be possible for them in their own lifetimes only if they ask and try to understand where they come from, when they open up to their history in an attitude of inner freedom.

Nobody should idealize this process, neither over there in the GDR nor here. We know that many conversations that would have been so necessary and helpful have never taken place. And the generations are seldom completely free of self-righteousness when judging each other.

But the important and encouraging aspect is that young people are seeking their place in today's world as Germans, that they want to understand themselves and the world and that for this purpose they are actively learning their history. For this, they need the insights which you, the historians, provide not least in the light of the theme of this congress. The power of historical facts is needed, not the exploitation of history for certain purposes.

The so-called historians' dispute attracted a great deal of public attention — rightly so, because it reflected a public attitude toward very important questions. Sometimes I could not help thinking that, precisely for this reason, it became too much insiders' discussion and insiders' confrontation. But I feel it has developed into more than that. That is indeed necessary.

Dealing with the unholy legacy of history takes place in the heart of the entire nation. With "holy soberness," historians can help out. They can and they must help all of us. For history, our history, does not belong to historians alone.

"EUROPEAN VIRTUES"

*Lecture to the Society of Former Students of the
Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, Zürich, January 17, 1990*

It is generally held that the 20th century will go down in history as the American century. And how will it end? Will it pass on the same trends to the next century? Which role will Europe play, for itself as well as for the world?

Quite some time has passed since predictions that the European world would soon no longer be capable of determining its own history on its own. Alexis de Tocqueville and the Spaniard Donoso Cortes voiced such opinions in the first half of the 19th century. Their message quickly became famous at the time.

More than a hundred years later, when in the middle of this century the peoples of Europe had to take stock of their situation, these dire predictions seemed to have come true completely. Max Ernst captured the moment in a great painting entitled "Europe after the Rain:" A continent beaten to the ground and at the edge of a black abyss, reaching out for a meager ray of sunshine to warm its stiff and freezing body.

The situation was bad enough in large parts of Europe. Estranged from its own teachings of reason and morality, led astray in its feelings toward its neighbors by a disastrous nationalism, blinded by narrow politics, decisively weakened by two world wars, scarred by Hitler's dictatorship and by Stalinism, Europe began its post-war period divided and an object of the world powers. The end of the old European world had a name: Yalta.

Almost half a century has passed since then. History goes on. It offers no final solutions. New life sprouts from old roots. The powerful have to learn to share and are forced into cooperation by larger tasks, unknown in the past.

At the end of World War II, the United States had achieved predominance in the world. It possessed clear military, scientific, and economic superiority as compared with all the others. America was the standard bearer of the concept of democratic freedom.

Much of this has remained, but not all. What has persisted — and this is worth remembering two hundred years after the French Revolution — is the pleasant dominance of the American comprehension of pluralistic democracy. The American interpretation bases itself on universal human rights although not on Rousseau's notion of an enforced collective morality; it completely soberly accepts the nature of human beings as they are.

Even if it proceeds from the assumption that every person is equally entitled to the pursuit of happiness, this comprehension allows each individual to pursue his or her own personal advantage. The core of morality consists of the forms of conduct, which make the pursuit of personal interest compatible with the public good, as well as of rules of behavior and institutions which guarantee this compatibility. Goals prescribed by the state do not guarantee it for every society harbors a plurality of interests, and no monopoly of power by the state can make them disappear unless it also commands an authoritarian, collective monopoly over all values.

Out of the European roots of the Enlightenment traditions and American constitutional practice have grown a common intellectual history and a community of values, which in the light of present and future reform processes, remain of great political importance not only for Europe. Moreover, America's reputation would certainly profit additionally if in its foreign policy relations with the countries of Central and South America it permitted these good maxims of its domestic society to become more effective.

In science and research Americans still enjoy a leading position in the world today, even if this is now less clearly visible than it was a few decades ago. In the military field, the Soviet Union has practically drawn even.

But the significance of weapons systems in power politics is giving way to that of economic efficiency. Fundamental changes are taking place in this domain. In 1945, the United States controlled about forty-five percent of the world's Gross Output. At present, this has fallen to about twenty-five percent. Americans consume more but save and invest less than the other big industrialized countries. America participates in world markets more through financial transactions than through goods and services.

Although their share in an enormously expanded global market has shrunk dramatically, the Americans have succeeded in maintaining the dominance of the dollar. Very differing phases in monetary history have made this possible or at least not changed the situation — from the Bretton Woods System of 1944, through flexible exchange rates from the Nixon era, the subsequent interest rate increases after the dollar's loss of stability, to the policy of deficit financing which followed and which generated the largest budget deficits in world history.

What an absurd situation it is when the richest country in the world now depends on vast inflows of capital and credit amounting to \$130 billion annually. This sum roughly approximates the current trade surpluses of Japan and the Federal Republic taken together.

All things considered, a contradictory picture emerges. America is still the strongest nation in the world, but outside its own region it is no longer the hegemonic power. Its century is approaching an end. The world order is in flux and it is still unclear how it will look in the new century.

This applies in particular to our own continent. We do not yet know the nature of the Europe which will take shape in these decades. Will it become one Europe in the eyes of the world despite all the differences within it? Will it become one economic area? What advantages will it be able to draw from its cultural diversity and unity? Which political interests will it present to the world? Toward what intellectual stimuli and global perspectives will it press ahead? And finally, what contribution will it make in identifying and solving global problems?

That which unites all Europeans, despite all their deep conflicts, emerges again and again. "No European can be a complete exile in any part of Europe," said Edmund Burke two hundred years ago. The commemoration of the bicentennial of the French Revolution last year was a European celebration.

What emanated from France in that era, has not lost its significance anywhere. That is why Europeans everywhere understood the peaceful, democratic upheavals of 1989 in Warsaw and Budapest, in Leipzig and Prague, as part of their own destiny. The concept of universal human and civil rights transforms everyone into a participant.

The relatively confined space in Europe has never permitted its peoples simply to live with each other in indifference, turned away from each other. Europe's peoples were always shaped by a dialectic of contrasting and common elements, differentiation and conformity. This was the source both of the achievements and the sufferings of European history.

After the destructive wars of this century, an appreciation of the need for interdependence developed more strongly than ever before. Churchill expressed this idea here in Zürich forty-three years ago with a generosity of spirit and a great perspective.

Political division in the Cold War and the prevailing, antagonistic societal and economic systems almost blocked the path to one another but did not bury it completely. First the European Council was created, then the European Community and the European Free Trade Area, and finally the significant Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the CSCE.

A few weeks ago, Edvard Shevardnadze was right in saying in the European Parliament: "We must not lose sight of the fact that this Europe divided in blocs and military alliances is nevertheless the most politically integrated region in the world." He spoke of the "elements of a unified European legal area" which were being created.

And it is true, we are indeed all bound by the Helsinki Final Act. This act became a most important source of encouragement for the nations and a way for them to tie common goals together. Free movement of people, ideas and information gained. Intellectual and technical communication became increasingly effective. Gradually the repressive instruments of the states lost their edge. Old methods of indoctrination and oppression lost effectiveness. Use of force against people became more and more senseless. People no longer allowed themselves to be intimidated. They put aside their fears and fought as peacefully as they did valiantly for justice and individual dignity. Candles placed at the feet of policemen symbolized a new chapter of European history.

Next to the inherent power of the Final Act itself, especially Basket III that deals with human rights, Gorbachev's perestroika was the decisive precondition for the peaceful democratic revolutions. As time went by it became clearer and clearer that a continuation of Brezhnev's policy course, which involved a centrally administered economy paired with completely disproportional arms expenditures, was proving to be a dead end. Step by step this course was undermining the Soviet position as a world power.

What led to Moscow's reform from above was a recognition of the relatively diminished importance of the military sector and the capitulation of the Soviet planned economy to the market. The Soviet Union had to find ways to connect itself with the scientific, technological, and economic levels of the western world.

This could be done only by opening up Soviet society. The Soviet

Union had to draw upon the productive capacity and will of the individual. Only if the citizen's interests were taken seriously and the citizen's rights protected would he or she be willing to work at their best. And the efforts also had to pay off: No pay no hard work.

The road is long and stony. Less command economy and more political freedom are inseparably linked. This linkage results in constantly growing risks for the central leadership of a large and extremely heterogeneous empire. Along the way, Moscow had to give up on the Brezhnev Doctrine. A change in the societal and political conditions in those countries which had fallen under Moscow's dominance after World War II could no longer be prevented by force. That fact created the decisive precondition for the success of the peaceful revolution in the Warsaw Pact states.

And what about freedom in the Soviet Union's republics, and finally the freedom to secede? Everyone sees the conflicts and nobody knows the solution. What is visible, however, are fundamental trends which will hardly change.

One of these trends is the continuous, constantly intensifying global pressure to modernize in a technological age with its economic, ecological and demographic challenges. To the degree that a common European self-understanding prevails, this pressure will counter a strong renewal of old, deeply-rooted national conflicts and minority problems.

Another trend is a need for security which is deeply embedded in the Russian psyche. The Soviet Union is a continental great power with long frontiers and innumerable neighbors. At the same time, heavy losses in wars fought on its own soil and new spheres of influence in many different areas have put a policy of security and stability at the center of Moscow's concerns.

A symptomatic step in this direction is the Renunciation of Force Agreement with the Federal Republic. For the Soviet Union, Basket I of the CSCE Final Act signifies the multilateralization of this agreement.

The security interests of the Soviet Union will not disappear in the future. Nobody should deceive himself about that.

However, this does not mean that the exorbitant arms expenditures will continue. If this irresponsible and senseless waste of strength, which is increasingly senseless even in power political terms, does not change radically in every way, perestroika will have no chance. Nobody articulates this more clearly and proves it more convincingly with data than Gorbachev himself.

At present, the most effective western contributions to the success of

Moscow's reform processes are far-reaching, timely, and serious steps towards disarmament. Today, the two superpowers who lead the alliances have, for different reasons, a common interest in reaching in this fashion a new European security order with cooperative elements.

With their cooperation, NATO and the Warsaw Pact can develop a security system that assumes the function of an umbrella, under which we Europeans can redirect our talents and resources toward more productive and urgent tasks. This can open a chapter in our history in which we will grow together.

We in the western part of the continent can and must contribute decisively. For years we have been under the global pressure to modernize. Bumping and stumbling along, we nevertheless clearly are making progress. To an increasing degree this progress takes place in supranational communities bearing economic names: Common Market, Free Trade Area. The growth of markets and problems takes place across national and continental frontiers.

If Europe's industrialized countries want to take a path of cooperation which promises success, they will not avoid a considerable amount of institutionalization. Economic effectiveness and broad-based environmental policy, telecommunications, freedom of movement and a social order are helping to bring conditions of life of our societies even closer to a common standard.

International relations no longer remain the monopoly of foreign ministries. To an increasing extent they will be characterized by relations between societies and will therefore in practical terms be the responsibility of all government ministries.

In pan-European economic cooperation, the function of motor falls to the European Community. In the conflict about deepening or widening the Community, the latter was the choice. But contrary to widespread worries and perhaps also hopes, by taking this step the Community neither gave up the internal integration process nor sacrificed its stimulative effect on other parts of Europe.

The European Monetary System of 1979, the Common European Act of 1987, the project of creating an internal market by the end of 1992, and the timetable for an Economic and Currency Union have all created an effective dynamic, internally as well as externally. This dynamic exerted an influence on the new thinking in the East and serves as a catalyst for economic reforms in today's COMECON area. It does not divide East from West, but rather brings them together. In this way the weight of Europe as a whole grows.

Certainly nobody deceives himself about the host of unsolved problems. The European Community is on its way toward a Political Union, but not toward a single state. In some partner countries, authority exercised by the Community's organs is quite unpopular. However, it is indispensable. In economic policy, the question is not whether national governments will generously be willing to give up to Brussels something of their hitherto inviolable rights. It is whether they want to win back an influence that is continually and increasingly slipping from their grasp over an economy that is europeanizing itself — and to win it back by institutionalizing that influence in common.

Whoever wants to gain, keep or win influence cannot, in his own interest, stand aside. This applies also to the question of Britain's joining the European Monetary System. Staying outside ultimately means for London not protecting its own capacity to act, but rather not being able, when the chips are down, to have enough of a say.

Political capacity to act requires equal rights for members and majority decision-making. Security policy remains a matter for the defense alliances. It will not become a task for the Community in whose hands it would only divide Europe anew. The decisive factor for the further effectiveness of the Community internally and externally is not constitutionally perfected supranationality but societal modernity.

This requires — along with growing democratic control and with the help of an independent judiciary — competition in open markets for goods, services and capital, freedom of movement for the people within larger regions and at the same time gradual equalization of opportunity and personal security.

These goals which I have described with the four freedoms at their core will not create unbridgeable trenches between the partner countries of the European Community and the European Free Trade Association. The negotiations on a multilateral framework of agreements will lead to a large European economic area with similarities to an internal market.

I do not have to say anything, least of all here in Switzerland, about the difficulties for individual states which arise from their differing constitutions and preferences. But we will continue to see that it is the dynamic of overarching problems and markets that will help along negotiating teams, who are hardly to be envied, both among themselves and at home.

For cooperation with the countries in Central and Eastern Europe harmonized trade and cooperation treaties that are as comprehensive as they can be are a first possibility. We are moving toward cooperation

throughout Europe, which, as François Mitterrand described so aptly, should assume the character of a confederation of the member states of the EC, EFTA and COMECON — with economic finality but not without political content.

It is of decisive importance to offer the COMECON countries a positive perspective for the future. Significant bilateral and above all common western aid initiatives and institutions like the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which is now being established, will help pave the way.

We Germans see our own affairs within the context of such a development. At present we live in two states, but as one people. An innate human feeling links us. Both states have contributed considerably to advancing the CSCE process. We are constantly experiencing anew the interplay of German and European goals. Geographically as well as politically, the German question lies in the middle of the pan-European process.

We Germans cannot take an isolated path. We have more neighbors than anyone else, our history has constantly been an interplay between our neighbors and ourselves. We have all experienced enough to have learned from our past. Today we in Germany and in Europe understand better than before that our interests ultimately converge.

The goal of a peaceful European order demands that we Germans neither press on ahead nor remain excluded. In that way we will be able to be a driving force of common European development. Revolutions usually create their own momentum, their own urgency. All the more important are circumspection, discipline in thought and action, and cooperation oriented toward stability.

Under the moving impress of the great historic opportunities which the peoples have gained peacefully, a time of testing has come for us.

In these revolutionary processes, the idealistic urge for freedom and the desire for material improvement quickly merge. The time needed to carry out economic reforms is often longer than the patience needed. The main task is to link economic dynamism with social justice.

This constitutes a new chapter in an old conflict. Dubcek has revived his demands for socialism with a human face which he articulated during the Prague Spring of 1968. Realists call it utopia. And people who are just now liberating themselves from "real existing socialism" are not much in favor of utopias these days. In their experience, Marxism has failed as a political economic system. Nobody seriously doubts anymore that a centrally administered command economy is hopelessly inferior to the market system of the West.

People are now looking for their share of the rewards of a productive economy. They want to become members of the global society of industrialized nations, and these are all market-oriented. They constitute the yardstick for reform plans.

With that point, however, everything is not yet said about the current debate. Socialism is not in high demand at the moment. Whether it will have entirely lost its validity as a counterpart to capitalism remains to be seen. It has contributed decisively to the criticism and thus to the correction of a capitalism prepared to learn.

This critical function would only be ended if there was finally nothing left to correct. But who will seriously make that claim? We remain in serious need of sober insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the market system.

Its superior efficiency is clearly obvious. The market satisfies the demand for goods and services, and it is the people themselves who decide upon that demand; it does not result from command. In addition, by exercising their right to vote, citizens in a democratic state make sure that the market economy is socially regulated as the need arises. That leads to social welfare programs of varying scope.

In the Federal Republic social welfare expenditures today comprise about thirty percent of the Gross National Product. We talk of a social market economy. The Swedes call their system, which is even more elaborate, "socially tamed capitalism." These differently structured models, which, however, follow the same principle, may have no small influence on current reform projects in Europe.

In any event, the market must never give up its readiness to avoid damages or introduce regulations relating to them after the fact in cases where such damages are connected with its methods of operation or its failures. This applies above all when nature is endangered. No market economy will survive over the long run if it does not make responsible ecological considerations an integral feature of its system. Resistance to such steps is strong, but there is no alternative.

Like environmental protection, other developments, too, have consequences to which the market economy has as yet not reacted appropriately. In this century world population will quadruple, and the consequences in terms of food needs, energy supplies, the green-house effect, and the as yet inconceivable misery of refugees will soon be perceptible everywhere. New economic distress and new needs are arising, and technology accelerates the creation of a global village. But so far the markets, which thanks to new telecommunications have worked excel-

lently on a global scale, prefer to devote themselves to other tasks, such as round-the-clock transactions in currencies, stocks, bonds and currency dealings of all sorts.

Most of the world's population can at best watch such dealings from the sidelines. But in so far as movements on international markets determine foreign exchange and interest rates, the consequences for many countries of the South, already burdened by huge debts, can sometimes be disastrous.

Finally, there are the fatal consequences of consumer habits on our own markets. The worst example is the endlessly increasing use of drugs, behind which the most gigantic capitalist interests, involved in everything from production to laundering the profits, have built themselves up. Another example, though one harder to measure, is the market-oriented media and video supply, which for many youngsters replaces the influence of parents who are busy with other things. The consequences are increasingly alarming, especially in overcrowded industrial areas.

Now some people argue that such examples constitute not a criticism of the market but of human nature. They say that it is not the market which vulgarizes taste or undermines human beings' power of resistance. And though advertising may suggestively exploit human weaknesses, it is said to be a lesser evil to expose oneself with open frontiers to a world of temptations than to entrust oneself to a platonic tutorial education state which could only end in totalitarian isolation.

I cannot offer solutions to such conflicts. I can only voice my concern that in the East-West opening in Europe of the moment and in the discussion about economic reforms we should not too hastily and calmly relax and lean back as if everything essential has been cleared up. It indeed seems today as if it is right to celebrate. After all, a wrong-headed economic system has filed for political bankruptcy. The market is victorious, and it is only a question of time until the market system has prevailed everywhere.

The truth is, however, that our capacity to learn faces difficult tests. They stem from the consequences of scientific and technological progress, from the excesses of our habits, and above all from the pressures exerted by global problems. It is not interesting to clarify whether the market is partly responsible. Rather, it is important to clarify whether the market, if it is indeed the most effective means for satisfying human wants, can prove itself more useful than heretofore in solving the new tasks.

Utopias express hopes for changing situations that are felt as intoler-

able. Realists make a genuine contribution when they expose the starry-eyed nature of utopias in those instances where, in the name of idealistic goals, they degenerate to robbing us of our freedom. However, it would be an impoverished realism that would ignore the sober insight that we human beings are constantly creating new and intolerable conditions in this world. These conditions bring forth new countervailing forces and, fortunately also new hopes.

The realist should not dismiss such hopes as utopian but use them as necessary corrections. Socialism has been called the hostile twin brother of capitalism. Why should the realist not recognize the utopian as his true helper? Neither will permanently eliminate the other.

Today, we in Europe are living in a period of radical change, the like of which does not come often in history. The question is whether we will satisfy ourselves with minor celebrations of the Western model or whether we will make use of the spiritual stimuli that come from the freedom movements of our day and look for new approaches that will lead us on.

The Cold War absorbed Europe's energies one-sidedly. Indeed, we all too often transferred our East-West tensions in a sorry way to other regions in the world. Today neighboring continents worry that we will once again limit our intellectual and material resources to Europe, this time for instance to promote reform processes in Eastern Europe and the growing together of the eastern and western parts of our continent.

Obviously we want to overcome the division of Europe and above all the peoples from the Warsaw Pact area strive after this goal. The question is whether in the course of these processes we can develop the perspectives which we need in order to make responsible use of our potential, not only at home but also for the solution of global problems.

The expectations of the world are in any case enormous, and we would be misperceiving our own interests if we did not care whether or not we disappointed these expectations. I think that in reality the speedy concentration of our capacities and powers will not be an obstacle but a condition for making the intercontinental contributions which are justifiably expected of us.

Much has been written and said about our sense of togetherness in Europe. This consists of more than unity in diversity and it goes beyond necessary mutual respect for regional differences. Despite all regional variations, we share one culture with common religious and philosophical origins. The intellectual and moral impulses of that culture are still felt down to today. A retrospective look at their development is sometimes helpful in appreciating our capabilities now.

A key concept in Greek antiquity was Arete, virtue. In Homer it pertains to a personality who strives to be the best and to distinguish himself from others through bravery and strength. In Plato we encounter four central virtues: wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance. In his works Arete becomes ethical perfection. However, the Greek concept of virtue limits itself to describing a strong person's qualities of competence. The person who is the object of this competence is not mentioned. Moderation towards the conquered is necessary not for the sake of the conquered but because excess leads to blindness and thus to disaster for the victor himself.

In contrast to this, the object is central in Christian thought. "What you have done to the least of my brothers, you have done unto me." We are called upon to prove our virtues toward the weaker. Antiquity's concept of "competence" is supplemented by Christianity's concept of "obligation." Virtues, if we may still call them that here, oblige us to a belief in love. We do not satisfy this obligation in obedience to the law but only in love. Thus the classical virtues are joined by the biblical ones: faith, hope, love.

The central task of medieval theology was to connect antiquity and Christianity. Later, Nietzsche caricatured the results as "Platonism from below:" The weak profit when the strong practice Christian virtues and when such Christian virtues are elevated to the standard for society. This sounds like a debate on current Anglo-Saxon tax policy. The better off the capable are (with regard to taxes!), the more certain it is that their cups will overflow for the benefit of all, including the poor.

Before that, however, Rousseau had described compassion as a virtue in itself. The conviction that everyone has an equal claim to pursue happiness, which we mentioned at the outset of these remarks, is a precondition of compassion. It led to the formulation of human rights. The consequence is the demand for proof of how our capability, strength, and success are being used and whether they are socially helpful or injurious.

It is the concept of subsidiarity that is best suited to connect antique and Christian thought. People should be enabled to help themselves so that they do not have to remain as recipients of support or even alms. It is the path to an independence which lets us count on help if we cannot do without it, without our becoming dependent on expected subsidies and hand-outs. In principle this task remains the same whether it involves relationships between one individual and another, among groups within a society, or between peoples and continents of the world.

This view helps to overcome the excesses of the constant tension that exists between freedom and equality. It makes use of capability and obligation. Thus it faces the pressure of modernization in our time without relinquishing the orientation toward our image of the human being.

Our diversity within a relatively confined area becomes less and less an obstacle to progress. A common market forms which transcends the economic sphere. After having long combined identical concepts in our innumerable languages with differing contents, we are today uniting them with ideas they were always meant to express: this applies to such central concepts as freedom, democracy, law, the public sphere, peace.

Linking politics with civil and human rights derives from our culture and is making measurable progress. Modern natural science and technology were developed by us Europeans. From here they spread through the world and developed further. Now they are returning to challenge us with their achievements and their new unresolved defects.

As with the tension between capitalism and socialism, the decisive question is now how ready and capable we are to learn. We have to put to test what we have achieved in common. In this process, we have to recognize what we may do and to learn to control what we can do.

Toward the end of this century, which has been so difficult for Europe as a whole, we have a great chance to show that the lessons were not in vain. Much of what is "European" has global validity. And the expectations which we encounter all over the world are not a bad sign for us.

The prospect of a common future is expanding and for that reason it is worthwhile to be aware of the sources of our common origin. That too our concern with the virtues has produced.

My kind hosts had suggested another title for my remarks. However, I was lacking in the admirably unbroken and innocent self-confidence of the French spirit. Had my scruples not prevented my accepting your suggestions, the title would have sounded much more graceful and more glorious, namely: "Le génie de l'Europe." Perhaps the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule in Zürich will invite a Frenchman to address it in the near future. That would then truly be unity in its diversity on the path toward a new century which is waiting for Europe.

"AMERICANS AND GERMANS"

Welcoming Address, 16th German-American Conference of the Atlantik-Brücke and the American Council on Germany, Berlin, April 18, 1991

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you here and to thank the American Council on Germany and the Atlantik-Brücke for having arranged this meeting at such an appropriate moment for us to discuss the latest developments in world affairs and our mutual experiences — some very positive, some less so. I should add that you could not have found a better place than Berlin for a candid discussion about world politics among friends. Even the younger ones among us will undoubtedly recall the key role that Berlin has played in the relations between America and Germany.

In my view, this relationship took a decisive turn when America decided at the end of World War II not to abandon Berlin to the Soviets. Though this decision placed extensive demands on the Americans and came at a time when that was also very difficult for the Berliners, it set the pattern for the whole postwar period. German-American ties were made even closer when the United States, along with Britain and France, chose to support freedom in Berlin during the Berlin Blockade. This close relationship has remained important until today, and will undoubtedly continue to be important in the foreseeable future.

In addition to helping preserve freedom in West Berlin, the Americans made a decisive economic commitment to Germany: the Marshall Plan. I see this as the most magnanimous and enlightened act of statesmanship to have occurred in my lifetime. In showing that you were ready to protect freedom and to assist former enemies, you set the stage for the extensive trans-Atlantic cooperation of the late 1940s and early 1950s. Since then we have gone through many more crises together, and

Berlin has continued to provide the tests and challenges that have further sealed our friendship.

Somewhat later, we began to contemplate the possibility of improving East-West relations. Here, too, Berlin played a unique and decisive role. On our side — and it may surprise you to hear this — the hope for unity was actually kept alive and strengthened by your continued presence in Berlin. It is difficult to imagine how the political consciousness of West and East Germans might have developed had the Americans decided to abandon West Berlin. In any event, you did stay, and that part of the old capital which you kept free retained a strong sense of unity with the East and a determination to overcome the painful division.

For my part, I have lived many years in Berlin, and my almost daily vision of the Wall has convinced me that its very existence proved the necessity for national unity. I'm not sure how we Germans, or indeed how the other Western Allies, might have viewed the German question had not the Americans maintained their presence in the divided city.

With the onset of detente, Berlin reminded us in the West not only of our ties with the East, but also of the need to find some kind of accommodation with the governments on the other side of the Wall. Again, one wonders what might have come of the detente process had not Berlin provided a kind of incentive to better relations between East and West.

Our meeting here in Berlin should therefore point up to anyone with even a minimal historical memory how crucial this city has been in recent history. As we now contemplate the challenges we will face together in the future, Berlin will again provide new horizons for our relationship.

Having said all this, I'm sure that you will no doubt discuss in your meetings here, the planning and execution of the Gulf War, and in doing so perhaps direct some questions to us Germans about our role in that conflict. I must say, for my part, that I find Germany's position in this affair neither surprising nor a cause for deep misgivings. There is an old saying that the Germans are economic giants but political dwarfs. To my mind, it never made much sense: on the one hand, the Germans did not begin as giants in any field; and on the other, their gradual achievements in economic development soon allowed them increased influence in the political domain. Roughly twenty years ago, again in connection with Berlin, the West German government embarked on its controversial, albeit in my opinion necessary, efforts toward *Ostpolitik*. Though Henry Kissinger, then Secretary of State, had pursued detente with the Soviets through the SALT negotiations, the West Germans' similar efforts to

foster improved East-West relations through the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe were not particularly popular in the United States. Nevertheless, America eventually joined the Europeans in finalizing the Helsinki accords, ensuring that these agreements would have the utmost importance for the development of freedom, human rights, and democracy in Eastern Europe.

Of course, Gorbachev had reasons of his own to pursue reform, believing that it held the key to Moscow's chance to catch up with the West in economics, science, and technology. Yet his policy was undoubtedly encouraged by campaigning for reform within the Eastern Bloc which emanated from the Helsinki initiative. And Helsinki — if I may say so in all modesty — would not have been possible without the Germans.

Let us now take a big leap to August 1990, when, thanks to the reform movement in the Soviet Union, we witnessed an unprecedented moment in the United Nations: the unanimous vote in the Security Council demanding Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. Germany could not send soldiers to the Gulf conflict for constitutional reasons. But what it could do it had begun to do long before by helping to prepare the ground for the unanimity without which it would have been difficult for the U.N. plan to go forward. The German contribution to East-West understanding that made such concerted action possible may have been an indirect one, but I believe in that moment, everything did count somehow.

On another front, the old dream of unification came within reach for us Germans in 1989. We did not know in what way or how quickly this would be achieved when the Wall suddenly opened in November of that year. The following year, 1990, also turned out to be exceptional in the annals of German history. No one could have known how the so-called "Two plus Four" talks on German unity would develop. But thanks largely to America's very special support and partnership, the talks proceeded successfully, and we will always remain aware of our debt of gratitude to the United States for standing by us so decisively in our quest for unity.

Now we face on this side of the Atlantic a number of challenges and tasks. For us Germans, the greatest challenge is solidifying and completing our national unity; for the members of the European Community, the pressing task is furthering the process of integration; and for those outside the EC, the big question is how East-West relations as a whole will develop.

First, let us consider German unity — a very difficult process. I have

been pleased to learn in the brief time I have been with you of three new examples of American engagement in our Eastern *Länder*. By smaller or larger actions — investments of great international companies, invitations to scholars, or simply by traveling around the Eastern *Länder* and talking with their citizens — you prove your interest in the region and greatly encourage the people who live there. But even with the best of will the coming-together of the two Germanies will not be easy, for as we know, the people in the East have been living for more than forty years in an economic and social system which did nothing to prepare them for institutions such as the social market economy which they have now voted for.

Courage alone will not be enough for them to succeed. For courage to bring results, they must also somehow solve the property question, they must use or acquire technological know-how and be ready for the very elementary experiences always involved in a fresh start. Challenges like unemployment are especially difficult in the East, where joblessness was hidden away and officially did not exist. Yet we must understand that if Germany as a whole is to compete in the global marketplace we cannot preserve jobs that have no effective function in a competitive world. We can only hope that sacrifices in the short-term will lead to genuine chances for positive gains in the medium- and long-term perspective.

Secondly, we must consider the challenges inherent in progress toward European integration. As you know, we are now engaged in high-level conferences aimed at securing not only Economic and Monetary Union but also Political Union. You may wish to discuss the broader aims of this last endeavor. Discussions on these issues with our Atlantic partners are not always easy. As you know, there are some Europeans who like to imagine a Europe more or less independent from America. And there are other Europeans who want good relations with the Americans but are not so keen on a truly united Europe. I think we Germans want both: we want a united Europe that maintains good relations with America.

From time to time we also have more technical matters to discuss, such as the possible dimensions of a common security policy in Europe. I would like to ask some of our American friends not to be too anxious about what the Europeans will do in this domain. After all, it was the Americans themselves who offered us the good advice to work more closely together as Europeans. This spirit, as I have noted, helped animate the very positive Helsinki conference.

Moreover, in my opinion, it should not be considered “anti-Atlantic” if the Europeans get together from time to time in anticipation of NATO meetings to sort out proper European security tasks. This does not mean that we wish to have some kind of European sub-division on security that might operate in competition with NATO. That would be absolutely contrary to our interest as Europeans and as Germans. On the other hand, it should not be seen as threatening if members of the Western European Union try to do more in the security realm than they have in the past. This organization has existed for a long time without even developing much clout in European security policy. I consider a truly political European union as absolutely essential and I am convinced that it will have a very favorable impact on Atlantic relations as a whole.

Thirdly, there is the question of East-West relations. Again, I think this is a field in which common Atlantic understanding can easily be fostered. The current administration in Washington has repeatedly insisted to the Soviet leadership that it does not want to see recent accomplishments in detente lose their momentum. All recognize that it is crucial that we move ahead with disarmament and arms control and further enhance understanding between the two superpowers. At the same time, we all agree, I think, how important it is not to disappoint our friends in the newly democratic Eastern European nations. I might note in this regard that just two days ago I had the pleasure of receiving Mr. Dubcek, president of the Czechoslovakian parliament. You all know his name from 1968 and perhaps know too that after the collapse of the Prague Spring he had a terribly trying time. But now, as president of the parliament, he revealed Prague’s perspective on the current situation quite clearly when he suggested that Czechoslovakia and Poland hope one day to find a place for themselves in NATO. At the same time, however, he insisted that the security which NATO might provide must not re-divide Europe. He said that Prague did not want a Western security policy that would give momentum to hard-line reactionaries in the Soviet Union who oppose all efforts toward reform in that country.

These are wise thoughts, not easy to accomplish, but, I think, wise if we are to ensure that NATO provides security not only for its existing members but also for the new democracies in the East. If we can at the same time handle NATO affairs in ways that encourage reform groups in the Soviet Union, we may see a major success.

In any event, we all know that the success of democratic initiatives in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary depends to a large degree on simultaneous achievements in the economic realm. Though we cannot

and should not try to write the constitutions for Prague and Budapest and Warsaw, we can help see to it that those emerging democracies are not undermined by economic failure.

Thus there are plenty of challenges for us to meet together here and now, and if we look to the more distant future we can say that President Bush's appeal, that Europeans think not only of Europe but beyond Europe's borders, is completely appropriate. President Bush was asking for European contributions to stability throughout the world. But what is meant by "stability?" We have just seen the United Nations act decisively in favor of world security by refusing to tolerate a gross violation of the international order. But I think that if the United Nations is to make a lasting contribution to global security, we will have to define security in broader terms than simply military ones. It would mean taking into consideration such pressing issues as demographic development and overpopulation, famine and material misery in the southern hemisphere, the vast migrations stemming from those conditions, and, finally, the degradation of our physical environment. We must grapple seriously and effectively with these questions — because if we do not, we will not achieve any meaningful stability on a global scale.

Undoubtedly, we Germans will from time to time disappoint our American friends in certain questions. Our interests may not always coincide, especially in the economic realm and about what stability beyond our borders should really mean in the long run. But I am full of confidence that this Atlantic Alliance, friendship, and partnership which has proven to be of such decisive value throughout the past forty-five years will prevail in the foreseeable future, not only for my generation but for our children and grandchildren.

"FACING THE PAST: AN ESSENTIAL PART OF GERMAN UNIFICATION"

*Address upon Award of the Heine Prize,
Düsseldorf, December 13, 1991*

I.

Which is more painful: The "wound Heine" (Th. Adorno) in the minds of the Germans, or the "wound Germany" (W. Hinck) in the life of Heine? For him, Germany remained the "land of riddles and pain." His love for his mother and his fatherland kept Germany constantly in his thoughts, not only "in the night."

Today, we, too, must think of Germany when we think of Heine.

He took the liveliest interest in the struggles of his time. He sought and found access to the public quite naturally through his poetry. He was not in the least pretentious. He explored matters thoroughly with the combined energy of his intellect and humor. He neither concealed weaknesses nor repressed ironic jokes. He thought of the rich and the poor. As a friend of the weak he did not forget the needs of human nature when seeking spiritual liberation:

"Im hungrigen Magen Eingang finden nur Suppenlogik mit
Knödelgründen,
nur Argumente mit Rinderbraten, begleitet von Göttinger
Wurstzitate."

(An empty stomach knows only the logic of soup and dumplings,
and no arguments other than roast beef accompanied by Göttingen-
sausage-quotations.)

He is without false modesty, yet all his writings contain deep sincerity. Throughout his life, he was caught in a conflict between a restless spirit and a generous disposition. He was driven by a creative contradiction which he endured but did not resolve. This had the effect of a dialect which offered no Hegelian synthesis, nor a Marxist utopia. Again and again, he raised critical doubts, both in himself and in us, to protect us from dogmas. No ideology or sect can invoke him. He belongs to no one at all.

He was stamped by a productive interaction between thought and action. His *Doppelgänger* in "A Winter's Tale", expresses this:

"Ich raste nicht, bis ich verwandle
in Wirklichkeit, was du gedacht;
du denkst, und ich, ich handle."

(I will not rest
until I have made your thoughts come true;
you think and I, I act.)

One must think courageously. Heine teaches us not to think without feeling and not to feel without thinking; to have troubling thoughts about doctrines of salvation; but to act without hesitation where morality and humanity dictate.

In this too, Heine is timeless. All the same, we find in him no ready-made solutions for the problems of our own age. We have to look for the answers ourselves.

II.

In Germany today, we face the task of uniting. The emphasis is on adjusting conditions of life in the two parts of Germany. But these alone will not bring us unity. In order to cope with the present we must settle our differences with the past. Does this burden divide us or unite us?

The past forty years have driven eastern and western Germany far apart in historical awareness. We experienced the dark chasm of German history together as a still united country. Heine more than sensed those chasms: "The guillotining of ideas will be followed by the censorship of

people," he wrote, and "...where books are burned, ultimately people will be burned."

When the country was divided after the Second World War, the task in both German states was to find an explanation for the demonic crime and injustice of the Third Reich. But the explanation was sought on two completely different paths. And as a result in the decades past, there developed two separate chapters of history.

Now strengthened following unification, the old Federal Republic wants to defend and continue its successful history, with as little disturbance as possible from the history of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). But now it turns out that this history will not let itself be forgotten quietly and painlessly; rather, it poses burning questions.

To whom? Only to the eastern part of the country? So there remains a history divided in halves? Can unification succeed on that basis?

Absolutely not. Were the West to try and to divest itself of the GDR's legacy it would be refusing to share the historical burden and to permit a true insight into the course of that history. Neither side has the option to declare itself "not affected" by the other's fate. We can only become one whole if we are also prepared to unite in an understanding of the past.

III.

After the war, the division of Europe and Germany produced two fundamentally different political systems. The most important response the Federal Republic gave to National Socialism was the new constitution of a free, social and democratic state based on the rule of law. In its external relations also, the West German state assumed historical responsibility for the consequences of Nazi injustice, particularly with regard to Israel. But that hardly answered questions of human guilt. Even though these questions rightly were not allowed to be posed collectively, they remained a burden on a whole generation.

There were several reasons why we could not come to terms with the past. It seemed at first as if only healing slumber might give us the energy to face up to the ghastly reality of the crimes that had come to light. The temptation to avoid reappraising the past, to avoid remorse and grief, grew through the undifferentiated efforts of the victorious powers,

including questionnaires, tribunals, and re-education programs.

They enticed us to a communal rejection of guilt. A rapid aggravation of East-West tension followed. The deep inner conviction and identification with the West was expressed in the constitution; the Federal Republic became a cornerstone of the international western system. It was a time when experienced people were wanted and, without much ado, they were placed in high positions. The past was suddenly lost in a zone of silence.

But that didn't last. Two decades after the War, a new generation rose in opposition, in part because they could not bear the previous generation's silence about the past. They took it upon themselves to judge history, justly condemning the stubbornness of the older generation, though they were often self-righteous in their belief that they, the younger ones, would never have allowed things to go so far.

This clash of the generations during the 1968 period was hardly a good example of how to deal with the past. Nevertheless, that bitter struggle permanently changed our political life. A democratic, civil society emerged with all its initiatives and movements, its new topics and big public debates. It was a civil society beyond the traditional thinking and language of party headquarters and the bureaucracy. One of the difficulties we face today is that this civil society has so far been missing in the post-communist part of Germany.

In the GDR the answer to the past was antifascism. It was given an ideological basis and installed by the state. At first, the political leaders put in place by the victorious power derived their legitimation largely from their fate during the Nazi era, which had forced them into emigration or terrible German prisons and concentration camps. Emigrés returned from the West too. The term "antifascist" was originally an honorable one. But as early as the Spanish Civil War the term was suspected of having simply been taken over by the communists. This was especially true in America. Many on the left felt like outsiders in the West. Now, they saw the chance to establish in the GDR a culture and society in the GDR which they had previously sought in vain in Germany. Bertolt Brecht and Hans Mayer were among such people.

But the years went by and totalitarianism spread. Not the Hungarians, Czechoslovaks or Poles but rather the Germans in the GDR were the first in the Soviet bloc to rise up against it, in 1953, but they were suppressed by force.

After that, any effort for any post-Nazi spiritual and moral renewal in the GDR had no real chance. True, attempts were made, mainly by the

churches and by artists. But the political leadership would not tolerate antifascism from below. The task "renewal" was taken over by the political "collectivity" and thus stifled. The people felt no personal obligation to confront the past but only to be loyal, disciplined members of the communist state.

Commitment to antifascism promised general absolution from what had gone before. Guilt and atonement for the past were left to West Germany alone. Thus confrontation with National Socialism in a personal sense stopped before it had really begun. Antifascism degenerated into a mere propaganda slogan and instrument for securing political conformity. It withered away in the very area to which it had once owed its moral roots.

IV.

Now we face the difficult task of coming to terms with the dictatorship of the SED (Socialist Unity Party) of the past. The conditions for doing so are completely different from what they were after the War. The two systems which deprived the East Germans of their freedom for almost sixty years stand, with their ideologies and misdeeds, on quite different levels. The SED state had not started any war and had no Holocaust to answer for. In 1945, the German Reich collapsed; in 1989, only the leadership of a state. Because that leadership had been installed by the victorious power and had little leeway for political decisions of its own, it required special instruments with which to discipline its own population. Whereas in the Third Reich most Germans identified themselves with their state, a great deal more coercion was needed to make them conform in the GDR.

The State Security Police was created for this purpose. Its task was to stabilize the SED state and it developed into an unparalleled system of rule. Among its methods were indoctrinating and keeping people under control, spreading fear among them, coercing them and blackmailing them to aid and abet the regime if they did not want to become its victims. Their backbones were to be subtly bent or broken.

This produced a tangle of attempted resistance, self-protection, or guilt. Can it be unravelled? Or will it come again to repressing the past? There is concern that this might happen. Günter de Bruyn writes:

"We neither regret nor forgive, we are not sure about where we have again gone wrong. We deliver speeches and write letters as if nothing had happened. We worry about food, our homes, and our jobs, and we have difficulty finding our way in a world that is changing day by day. Because of the rush of events, we are unable even to remember and thus we continue to drag our evil past around with us without having come to terms with it."

This task weighs upon us all. We need time and strength to reflect, which inevitably brings with it serious conflicts. There will be no simple solutions handed down from above as they once were in the GDR after the war, solutions which supply answers of the collective to questions of the individual. At the end of the Nazi period, most of the victims were no longer alive, and few of the surviving emigrés returned.

Now the Germans are on their own with the job of conquering the past. Nearly all the victims live in our midst. This time, we will not have to wait for the moral rigorism of the next generation. True, there may be many today among us who seek to use political changes to turn away from their own past. But in truth the catharsis is already fully underway.

V.

In the East, there is disappointment to be heard about the importation of western democracy. "We expected justice and got the rule of law" (Bärbel Bohley).

Who would not understand the sentiments behind these words? Was it all in vain? Who would not sympathize with the anger if all the deeds of informing on people, of harassing them, of laying obstacles in the way of education or profession were to go unpunished? Or indeed if someone who used to harass others on behalf of the regime today again has a top job and perhaps is firing others? There is a deep human need to come as close as possible to historical, moral and individual justice. Rule of law alone cannot bring that about, but it is a huge asset. If it is to help foster a humane approach, it cannot be suspended in times of upheaval.

When criminal law is applied, neither history nor a dictatorial regime is indicted. The judge decides whether a person is guilty of conduct

which, under the prevailing law of the time and place of that conduct, constitutes a punishable offense. Morally speaking, this self-limitation can also benefit the wrong people. It can make it extremely difficult to prosecute so-called government crimes. Nevertheless it is necessary, not at all to protect the perpetrators, but to protect all of us from the errors of witnesses and files, of judges and of public opinion. The rule of law is an expression of the experience that we human beings have, purely and simply, no final resort to absolute justice.

Certainly, each one of us has a sense of good and evil. This can produce a great wealth of feeling. But, on the other hand, the memory of the dictatorship's abuse of "healthy popular sentiment" guards us against that. Therefore, courts will necessarily hesitate to fill out legal norms by general precepts of nature that are above the law and then use those precepts as a basis for prosecution. Like all of us, revolutionaries who fought for and gained freedom must respect the rule of law, even if it gives advantages to those very people who, prior to the turn of events, felt no commitment to it whatsoever.

VI.

Friedrich Schorlemmer has suggested the establishment of a tribunal to deal with those political and moral aspects of the past which do not come under criminal law. It will not be possible to set up a new institution which is generally binding. Such an institution would have to operate on a voluntary basis and without use of the enforcement provisions of the legal system. It could not invoke the authority of responsible proceedings or a supervising agency. There would be no legitimate basis for determining who is to render judgments, who is to be judged, and what kind of a case is to be tried. It could neither punish nor absolve; its only influence would be that of its findings.

Nonetheless, the public controversy about the proposal for a tribunal is very necessary and helpful. We need it to sharpen our consciences. In the first place it is beneficial to debate who would be able to distinguish in all cases between good and evil in the past. Where are the righteous who could do this? Where are the prophets capable of such a judgment? Who ventures to establish unambiguity after the fact where previously deep inner conflict prevailed and ambiguity seemed unavoidable?

Public argument is above all so important because the questions behind the tribunal proposal are of central importance. How did the system operate? What compulsion did it exercise? What liberties did it permit? To what extent was conformity necessary? How much scope was there for refusing consent or resisting? What moral guilt can be attributed to people? How can that guilt be recognized, described, admitted and overcome?

Innumerable disputes will be carried on about all of this, publicly and privately. Many experiences will be exchanged. The political establishment debates and intervenes with laws, regulations, and administrative actions. The academic world pursues its urgently needed historical studies. Writers argue. The media join in with information and criticism.

All this leads into an autonomous popular debate. Society's "reappraisal of the past" has already begun, not in the mere sense of this ominous term but in actual fact. Precisely this marks the break with the oppression of the past. In our free society, all of us together are the tribunal.

VII.

In the course of the debate, we learn step by step. As far as possible, there must be satisfaction for the victims and understanding by the perpetrators. The files of the state security forces, the Stasi, play an important role, but they do not possess unassailable authority in every case. In many instances they were compiled to demonstrate that the Stasi's function of protecting the system and disciplining the people was being performed successfully. Their thoughts and words are purposeful and in conformity with the system.

The files are indispensable for investigating facts and conduct. But those who seek to write or reconstruct the history of the GDR, its institutions and people solely on the basis of the Stasi files will not gain a reliable picture. In using the files against individuals, therefore, it is necessary to proceed carefully and consider how much is true. Moreover, situations must not arise where, as a result of administrative action based on the Stasi files, someone is worse off than he would be before a criminal court. Under the rule of law, it is guilt, not innocence, which must be proved.

VIII.

We seek peace among ourselves. How are we to achieve it? Certainly not without efforts to ascertain the complex truth about what lies behind us. This is a path which leads deep into personal relations. Yet avoiding it now simply means postponing it to a later date. Anticipating harmony now means feigning it. That does not make for peace. Most matters will come to light by and by. Of that we can be sure.

Reconciliation among individuals cannot succeed without truth. But truth without the prospect of reconciliation is inhuman. The strength to recognize one's own weaknesses, failures, and guilt can work wonders. It does not mean exclusion, but the most basic starting point for a chance at a new beginning, which is vital for the future.

IX.

A considerable part of this work must be carried out in the East itself. In the effort to recall, no one can substitute for anyone else. The West German knows very little of individual fates and predicaments in the former GDR. He must avoid creating the impression that he can deal with the past of his East German countrymen. Moreover, western advice to stop wallowing in the past and to turn at last to the future sounds shrill in East German ears.

A premature amnesty would be difficult to bear; it would throw a cloak of amnesia over injustice. Important enough would be for Western Germans to recognize that under the conditions of the East German communist state, they would probably have behaved no differently.

Our past remains a task for East and West to address together. Our common historical roots are to be found in January 30, 1933 with what went before and what came after. It was National Socialism that began to spread images, to preach racism and xenophobia, and to practice contempt for one's fellow man. It was Hitler who, through his misdeeds, paved the way for the Soviet occupation of German soil. Without him, the division of Europe would not have happened.

This does not in the least excuse Stalinism and the inhuman Stasi system. But the peaceful revolutionaries of 1989 stood up against every

kind of dictatorship and all threats to freedom and human rights. We must retain a clear memory of the entire past in order to prevent any violation of human dignity in the future.

East and Western Germany have not only the period up to their division in common. Even after the establishment of the two German states, each remained a part of the other. There was constant interaction between the two, which influenced the behavior of people.

First the East endured the bitter experience that the Free World failed to act as expected at decisive moments. No Western power intervened:

- On June 17, 1953, in Berlin, which was under the Four Powers;
- In the autumn of 1956 in Budapest;
- On August 13, 1961, when the Berlin Wall was built;
- In August 1968 in Prague.

In the West this passivity was understood as the price to be paid for peace. In the East, on the other hand, people had to reconcile themselves with the recognition that they were locked in and handed over inescapably to dictatorship at home.

Then began the West's own history of dealing with the SED regime. It had an indirect but lasting influence on the situation of the Germans in the GDR. In the old Federal Republic, there were huge disputes about contacts and contracts with the GDR leadership and about the completely new *Ostpolitik*. Vestiges of that chapter of West German history exist to this day, but they are pointless today. For years the vast majority of non-communist voices from the GDR urged us in the West not to shy away from contact with the SED leadership, but to seek it in order to improve the situation of people in the GDR. Almost everyone in the West became involved in this process sooner or later. I, too, had more than one personal meeting with Honecker and other members of the *Politbüro*, and I have asked myself and been asked time and again what influence this had on relations between Germans and their leadership in the GDR.

With the help of these visits and agreements, the GDR leadership tried to improve its international reputation and its authority at home. But they had to pay for this. They had to sign the Helsinki Final Act and thus open their borders to goods, information and gradually, step by step, even to people. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) process developed into a driving force for human rights. Together with the entire Eastern bloc, the ossified GDR system came under increasing pressure. History will tell whether the policy of

"change through rapprochement" first stabilized and then weakened the SED in power, or did both at the same time.

The fact is that none of us predicted that unification of the two states would come about in the way that it did. Contributing to it were the solidity and systemic success of the West as well as the policy of detente with the East.

X.

Yet another chapter links the future with the past, and this chapter is, above all, the responsibility of the West.

In the competition between the systems, the West has proven itself stronger, both politically and economically. The "real existing socialism" of the SED is a thing of the past, as is the utopia it proclaimed as the hope of the future. The belief in ideologies by which man and society can finally overcome the imperfection of the world has come to an end for the time being. Whatever secular doctrine of salvation may have been derived from Christian beliefs in life after death or from the enlightenment's belief in progress has lost first its fascination and then its power.

Who would regret this? But what will take its place? Has history attained its final goal now that these utopias have been refuted? That would be a dangerous fallacy. We in the West would do well not to fall into a spirit of triumph and self-satisfaction. As effective as our system may be, it has so far still failed to deal with the most difficult challenges.

The wealth as well as the scientific and technical lead of the Western industrial nations still lead to prosperity at the expense of most of the world population, which is hardly able to participate in our markets. Our own habits of life harm the environment more than does exploitation of nature in the Third World. Our incessant craving for stimulation, up to and including the use of drugs, is a sign of weakness when it comes to carrying out fulfilling, rewarding tasks.

The struggle for power among the political parties, although democratically necessary, constitutes a constant temptation to live at the expense of the future, in order to ease our lives in the present.

Those are all not arguments for another system, much less nostalgia for a time when we had to prove ourselves against the other side in the

Cold War and could correct ourselves. But when the external yardstick no longer exists, we need even more our ability to learn how to deal better with the major and growing problems of our time. This is true globally and also for our own country after unification.

We continue to live in a field of tension between justice and freedom. Justice is expected not only for victims and perpetrators of the past, but also for conditions of life in the future. The thought of greater justice in the future expresses the hope for a change in circumstances which we find hard to bear today.

We must measure the present as it is against the future, as it can become. This is a human need, not a longing for doctrines of salvation. Those who do not want to allow for such visions of the future simply drive people into the arms of new fundamentalisms.

When the old, failed utopias have been forgotten, and a present full of worries comes to be felt as unjust for too long, then dreams of just societies come again — and not only in the case of us Germans who, according to Heine, are “unrivalled masters in the ethereal kingdom of dreams.”

We should not avoid tensions; rather, we should endure them and make them work for us — not only tensions between the present and the future but between justice and freedom.

One of the best features of our constitution, which now is valid for all Germans, is the absence of a doctrine to which one must adhere. There is room to maneuver. We can use it to lead our lives as we see fit and possibly to change them radically in large or small ways. We don't want to let influences grow that could limit our scope or diminish it. Rather we must strengthen, protect, and use it to the benefit of the individual and of society.

Particularly in this regard, there are valuable lessons to be learned for us all from the communist period in East Germany. It makes us realize that in most cases, the weaknesses and guilt of people in society are banal in character. They involve less unperformed heroic deeds than a hurried, fearful readiness to conform.

The most impressive models and the most important experiences, on the other hand, are cases in which individuals have recognized and courageously made use of their scope for action. With their non-violent acts, the revolutionaries of 1989 have given all Germans a new consciousness of freedom. This has not wiped out the past. But it has added a decisive chapter to our history.

An order based on freedom is characterized by the fact that much is achieved not by the state but by the citizens. Such a system suffers not from animated disputes, but, if at all, from the fact that too many conform too often and too quickly to prevailing circumstances.

This applies at all times, including our own, at the time of German unification. For all of us, especially for the young generation, it is of the greatest value to learn to respect civil courage. Every political system desperately needs this. It is freedom's source of life.

What impresses me most about Heine, apart from his intellect, his wit, and his poetic gifts, is his courage. Let us emulate him. Courage has a place in every life.

And let our society and community always remember Heine's words: “Germany, that is we ourselves.”