

Speech by

Dr Helmut Kohl,

Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany,

on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Königswinter Conference

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Chosen

May we live in interesting times

Translation
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Sir Oliver,
Prime Minister,
Vice-Chancellor,
Your Lordships,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am most grateful, Sir Oliver, for your kind words of welcome. Last year we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Federal Republic of Germany.

On that occasion we also recalled with gratitude the part played by the United Kingdom in building our democracy and safeguarding our freedom.

Together with the members of the Bundeswehr and other forces of the Atlantic Alliance, the British Army of the Rhine have contributed to our common security. Nor have we forgotten Britain's helpful role in Berlin, beginning with the airlift in 1948-49. And even at a time when the East-West confrontation is diminishing, we should always recall that alertness is the price of freedom.

Anglo-German friendship is deeply rooted in our centuries-old political, economic, cultural and human relations. Looking upon the changes taking place in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe Germans and Britons can note with pride that we are on the verge of attaining the goals we have been pursuing together for four decades.

In that span of 40 years the Königswinter Conference, named after that pleasant little town on the right bank of the Rhine near Bonn, has played an important role as a forum for debate among representatives of both countries. The Königswinter Conferences long since became a hallmark of Anglo-German relations. This is to the great credit of far-sighted men and women in both countries who, soon after the war, established this institution which will continue to have an important function to perform.

Hardly any other institution has done so much to foster Anglo-German understanding as the Königswinter Conferences. Time and again they have provided stimulus for the solution of common political, economic and social problems.

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The success of this unique forum is primarily due to three outstanding members: Sir Robert Birley, Sir Frank Roberts, and not least Frau Lilo Milchsack. From its very inception you, Frau Milchsack, have been "Königswinter's" life and soul. You have brought this circle together and kept it together for 40 years.

This jubilee conference is also the prelude to this year's Anglo-German intergovernmental consultations. The conference's motto "Germany and Europe - undivided", which was chosen early on, would without doubt be a suitable caption for tomorrow's talks in London as well.

II

We are currently experiencing a radical change in Europe's post-war history. The dismantling of the East-West confrontation and the democratic awakening in the countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe offer the first realistic opportunity since the Second World War to end the division of Europe, and with it the division of Germany, by peaceful means. That division has always been a source of instability and insecurity. Its termination therefore benefits the whole of Europe.

The threat to the Western democracies did not only come from an ideology inimical to human dignity. More than once the confrontation - especially in Germany - assumed proportions which made it a grave danger to peace.

It was above all the people who suffered under the division of their country and under the bondage imposed upon them. And it was they, the peoples of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, who gave the decisive impetus for the breakthrough to democracy and freedom. They enforced a change in the status quo to which many of us in the West, too, had grown accustomed.

As a German I am proud that my countrymen in the GDR, through their peaceful revolution, have helped write a chapter of German and European history marked by freedom.

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III

We have reason to be grateful to all who have helped make this historic change possible. Thanks are due in the first place to our friends and allies in the West, especially the Americans, the British and the French. They have stood by our side in times of danger, when the blockade, the wall, and the barbed wire threatened to keep our country permanently divided.

In the Bonn Convention they agreed to cooperate "to achieve, by peaceful means, their common aim of a reunified Germany enjoying a liberal-democratic constitution, like that of the Federal Republic, and integrated within the European Community".

But we also thank President Mikhail Gorbachov who, in conjunction with his domestic reforms, has turned Soviet foreign policy in a new direction. "New thinking" is now also changing Soviet policy towards Germany and permits of a constructive, future-oriented solution to the German question. It is therefore in our mutual interest that President Gorbachov's domestic reform policy should prove successful.

But the recent developments in the GDR would not have been possible without the example of extensive reforms in Hungary and Poland either. This in itself indicates how tightly our national fate is bound up with that of our neighbours.

IV

The 18 of March 1990 brought the first free elections in the GDR. They resulted in overwhelming victory for those who advocate freedom, democracy and social market economy.

Our friends and partners know our unequivocal response to the question as to Germany's position in a future Europe. Forty years of the Federal Republic of Germany - that is to say, 40 years of democracy and the rule of law - allow no doubt as to where we stand: on the side of freedom, on the side of our friends. And the free elections in the GDR, too, can only be regarded as a manifestation of democratic maturity.

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The unification of the two German states is taking place on the basis of the right of self-determination. But it also affects the interests of our neighbours. We have from the very beginning made sure that the process of unification takes place within a stable European framework. We intend it to stay that way and will not present anyone with a *fait accompli*.

The words chanted by the people in the GDR - "We are one nation!" - made it clear from the start what the great majority of my fellow-countrymen want: unity in freedom.

In the first two months of this year alone the number of resettlers increased dramatically. To date over 150,000 have come to the Federal Republic - many more than the entire population of Cambridge, for instance. They include mostly young people, doctors, engineers and many other skilled persons who are urgently required to rebuild the GDR's economy. But this exodus is not only threatening the GDR's recovery; it poses problems for the Federal Republic, too.

Since the elections on 18 March the number of resettlers has dropped. The prospect of reunification is inducing people in the GDR to stay there. We must refrain from anything that would weaken their hope.

My Government has proposed that the Deutschmark also be made the GDR's currency and that a "social market economy" be introduced there. It has thus given an answer to the question asked by people of what will come next. At the same time the coalescence of the two German states must be harmonized with the external aspects of this process. These external aspects concern:

- the rights and responsibilities of the Four Powers with regard to Berlin and Germany as a whole,
- border questions,
- the existing and future security structures and
- the integration of the present-day territory of the GDR into the European Community.

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Talks in accordance with the "2 plus 4" formula agreed at Ottawa were started by experts in mid-March. I would very much like to see these talks making progress. My aim is that they be completed before the CSCE summit this year.

In addition, we make sure that our partners in NATO and the European Community are kept informed of developments and are consulted on important questions concerning them. Together we shall have to pay special attention to ensuring that Europe's security is guaranteed in future, too. This is a vital, long-term question for which a spirit of partnership is particularly necessary. I know that Britain holds a sober and firm position in this matter, and I greatly appreciate such reliability.

In assessing the security interests of a future Germany and all its neighbours, indeed of Europe as a whole, we set out from the following parameters:

First: the future united Germany must not be neutralized or demilitarized. A Germany integrated in Western security policy is an essential element of European stability.

Second: the future united Germany must therefore remain embedded in the Western alliance. Secession from NATO must not be the price for German unity. Such a policy is not acceptable to me.

Third: the transatlantic security link between Europe and North America continues to be of vital importance for us Germans and for Europe as a whole. Our aim must therefore be to further deepen cooperation between the European Community and the United States in the field of foreign policy.

Fourth: for the sake of our national interest we must not encumber progress towards German unity with border issues. In 1985 I declared in the Bundestag: "In the areas beyond Poland's western border Polish families live today for whom those regions have become their home in the course of two generations. We shall respect this and not call it into question."

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I strongly advocate that the two freely elected German parliaments and governments issue as soon as possible an identical declaration reaffirming the inviolability of the borders with Poland as the indispensable basis of peaceful relations in Europe. This declaration should unequivocally express the idea that immediately after unification of the two German states the all-German government and parliament will definitively settle the border question along these lines in an internationally binding treaty with the Republic of Poland.

Such a settlement can only be made by an all-German sovereign state. An identical declaration by the two governments and two parliaments is politically the strongest undertaking that can be expressed by the Germans before reunification. An overwhelming majority in the two German parliaments are in favour of such an undertaking, and thus there can be no doubt either about the position of a future all-German parliament and government.

The overwhelming majority of my fellow-countrymen seek definitive reconciliation with the Polish people. Lasting peace throughout Europe presupposes such reconciliation - just as the unification of Western Europe was only possible once the French and Germans had become friends after 1945.

I myself have time and again - for example in my policy statement on 1 September 1989 - recalled the untold suffering inflicted on the Polish people by Germans. It would no doubt be beneficial for the relationship between our two peoples if Poland were to refer with equally clear and noble words as President Vaclav Havel did for Czechoslovakia to the injustice committed by Poles against innocent Germans. We Germans are not entitled to such words, and even less must we try to balance accounts in one way or another. But I am certain that such a gesture would point the way to a future in which the relationship between the Polish and German peoples is marked by a spirit of good-neighbourliness in a common Europe.

V

On 28 April the heads of state or government of the European Community will meet in Dublin. Questions concerning the integration of the GDR into the European Community will be at the forefront of the summit.

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I strongly welcome the fact that the EC Commission, the European Parliament and the EC Council of Ministers began at an early stage to make intensive preparations for the process of German unification and its implications for the Community. I intend to ensure that my Government consults consistently and closely with these three Community organs on all essential issues.

A united Germany will also be a reliable member of the European Community. The larger German market will, moreover, afford additional opportunities for all our European partners. I am certain that in five years the disastrous effects of "Socialism in practice" will be overcome. Thuringia, Saxony and the other Laender of what is now the GDR will flourish and achieve new prosperity.

VI

Just as we resolutely strive for German unity, we seek early realization of a European Union. Strengthening the rights of the European Parliament and expanding European Political Cooperation are important stages along the path to that goal. Those who want a united Germany to be firmly integrated into European structures must logically support further progress in European unification.

We seek speedy progress with a view to the completion of the single market by the end of 1992. We would like this year's intergovernmental conference to make constructive, intensive and swift efforts so that economic and monetary union can be completed.

At the special EC summit in Dublin at the end of April I shall again propose, as I did in Strasbourg, that a further intergovernmental conference be convened this year with a view to making faster progress towards political union.

VII

We want to follow the path of German and European unification together with our British friends. For us Germans, close relations with Britain marked by mutual trust have for decades been a cornerstone of our foreign policy.

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In his famous speech at Zurich in September 1946, Winston Churchill indicated with his vision of a "United States of Europe" a path on which we have since then jointly made considerable progress.

Europe has now again reached a turning point in its history. But there is less cause than ever for faintheartedness. As the past year in particular demonstrated, time is working in favour of, and not against, the cause of freedom. This awareness should encourage us.

As Karl Popper explained at the end of his splendid work entitled "The Open Society and its Enemies", progress towards freedom is not the outcome of anonymous historical processes. It rests exclusively "with our watchfulness, with our efforts, with the clarity of our conception of our aims, and with the realism of their choice". We Germans want to contribute - as German Europeans and European Germans - to a future marked by freedom. The 1990s must become Europe's decade.