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KOHL'S BUNDESTAG SPEECH OF 21 JUNE: GERMAN-POLISH RELATIONS

SUMMARY

1. KOHL CALLS FOR RECOGNITION OF POLAND'S WESTERN BORDER AND A NEW ERA IN GERMAN-POLISH RELATIONS.

DETAIL

2. MAIN POINTS AS FOLLOWS:

(A) KOHL SAID HE WANTED THE POLISH NATION TO KNOW THAT GERMANY WOULD BE A GOOD NEIGHBOUR AND RELIABLE PARTNER ON THE 'ROAD TO EUROPE'.

(B) 'TODAY THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG, TOGETHER WITH THE GDR'S VOLKSKAMMER, IS ADDRESSING A CLEAR MESSAGE TO POLAND: POLAND'S BORDER WITH GERMANY, AS IT STANDS TODAY IS FINAL. AT NO TIME, EITHER TODAY OR IN THE FUTURE, WILL IT BE QUESTIONED THROUGH TERRITORIAL CLAIMS ON THE PART OF US GERMANS. AFTER GERMANY HAS BEEN UNIFIED, THIS WILL BE REAFFIRMED IN BINDING FORM UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW BY MEANS OF A TREATY WITH THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND. ONLY AN ALL-GERMAN GOVERNMENT CAN PROVIDE A SIGNATURE WHICH IS BINDING UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW ON BEHALF OF A FUTURE UNITED GERMANY. AND ONLY AN ALL-GERMAN PARLIAMENT CAN RATIFY SUCH A TREATY. BUT THERE IS CLEARLY NO DOUBT AS TO THE WILL OF THE GERMAN PEOPLE AS TESTIFIED BY THE GERMAN BUNDESTAG AND THE VOLKSKAMMER.'

(C) QUOTING CYPRIAN NORVID, THE 19TH CENTURY POLISH WRITER, KOHL SAID THAT A NATION DID NOT CONSIST SIMPLY OF THOSE THINGS WHICH DISTINGUISHED IT FROM OTHERS BUT ALSO OF THE THINGS WHICH LINKED IT WITH OTHERS. HE NOTED THE SHARED CULTURAL AND POLITICAL HERITAGE OF THE TWO COUNTRIES IN THE 19TH CENTURY AND URGED THAT THESE SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN BECAUSE OF THE EXPERIENCES OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

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(D) HE ACKNOWLEDGED NAZI GUILT FOR THE WAR AND RESPONSIBILITY (WITH STALIN) FOR THE LOSS OF THE EASTERN TERRITORIES. HE RECOGNISED THE SORROW THE EXPELLEES MUST FEEL AT THE LOSS OF THESE FORMER GERMAN LANDS BUT 'WHOEVER WANTED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS HISTORIC CHANCE FOR GERMAN UNITY HAD TO GIVE A CLEAR REPLY TO THE BORDER QUESTION'. NOT ONLY POLAND BUT ALSO THE 4 POWERS EXPECTED THIS FROM GERMANY. THE CHOICE WAS CLEAR: EITHER TODAY'S BORDERS WERE CONFIRMED OR THE GERMANS WOULD LOSE THEIR CHANCE FOR UNITY.

(E) FOR 700 YEARS THE TERRITORIES IN QUESTION HAD BEEN GERMAN. THE EXPULSION OF THE GERMANS AFTER THE WAR HAD BEEN LEGALLY AND MORALLY UNJUST. IT WAS MUCH TO BE WELCOMED THAT MAZOWIECKI AND THE POLISH WRITER ANDRZEJ SZCZYPIORSKI, ALONG WITH OTHER GERMAN AND POLISH CATHOLICS, HAD ON 1 SEPTEMBER 1989 FORMALLY EXPRESSED SORROW OVER THE EXPULSION. THE UNIFICATION OF GERMANY OFFERED THE CHANCE FOR A FINAL AND PERMANENT RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE GERMANS AND THE POLES.

(F) THERE WAS STILL MUCH TO BE DONE TO ENSURE THAT THE GERMANS IN POLAND COULD PROTECT THEIR CULTURE AND USE THEIR LANGUAGE, ESPECIALLY IN RELIGIOUS SERVICES - RIGHTS THEY SHOULD BE ASSURED OF IN A EUROPE OF PEACE AND FREEDOM.

(G) EUROPEAN UNIFICATION COULD NOT HAVE COME THUS FAR WITHOUT FRANCO-GERMAN FRIENDSHIP. IT COULD NOT BE COMPLETED WITHOUT POLISH-GERMAN PARTNERSHIP.

MALLABY

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