

Outcome of the Franco-German consultations (Aachen, 14 and 15 September 1978)

Caption: On 14 and 15 September 1978, the German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, and the French President, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, meet in Aachen to take Franco-German cooperation a step further.

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Address given by Helmut Schmidt (14 September 1978)

Mr President, Prime Minister, ladies and gentlemen,

Following the many occasions in Bonn, following Hamburg and Bremen and Mainz, it gives me great pleasure to be able to welcome you here today in Aachen. Aachen is a special case. This we all felt as we listened to the concert in the cathedral. On behalf of us all, I offer my sincere thanks to our hosts and to the choir. We Germans associate Aachen with the memory of the common historical origins of the French and German nations. For us Germans, Aachen has developed from that memory and has become a symbol of our hopes for a peaceful and united Europe. Aachen is truly a symbolic location for this Franco-German gathering.

We are both of the view that it is good, fitting and necessary to look back to history to understand whence we come, what heritage history has bequeathed to us and to others: language, thought, paintings, buildings, music, but also scars, bad memories, and even memories falsified.

It will perhaps surprise you to learn that, this afternoon, the French President and I again spoke at length about history, a theme which may appear somewhat remote from our day-to-day problems. This is something that we have often done in the course of a friendship which now spans six years, a recurring question being what we believe is to be learnt from history. It seems to me that one of the lessons which French and Germans alike have learnt in 30 years of mutual dealings is this: that there are no historically predetermined events, or at least that such predetermined events do not have to occur so long as we have and maintain the political determination to overcome them. We have learnt that, in coming to terms with the past, the surest, if not perhaps the best, approach is to master the present and prepare the way for a bright future. I believe that our friendship is founded on this shared realisation, or perhaps today — after so many years, running into decades — we may even say that it is founded on this shared experience. For a tradition has indeed grown up, looking back to Robert Schuman, to Adenauer, to de Gaulle, a tradition which is of the greatest value to both our peoples, to all the peoples of Europe and indeed to Europe as a whole. It should be our concern to build on that tradition and one day pass it on, as an inheritance involving profound obligations, to those who will come after us.

It gives me great pleasure to affirm on behalf of all of us — and here I address you, dear Valéry, you Raymond Barre, and also our colleagues here today, so many of our staff members and so many of our guests — that we are all committed to mastering the problems of the present and helping Europe prepare for the future. It is in this connection, in this crucial framework, Mr President, that we have today again exhaustively addressed the issues associated with the creation of a monetary pact in Europe. We share the conviction that it is both necessary and possible to restore in Europe the basic conditions for economic predictability. Bringing this plan to fruition will certainly not be easy. I believe, however, that we have come a long way since the Bremen meeting at the start of the summer, and we can surely take satisfaction in the knowledge that the cooperation between our two governments has played no small part in this.

With your permission, I would like in this connection to say that much which has in the last years and months been set in motion, and in part already achieved, in the European and international domains, could not have come about, or at least would not have come about in the same way, without your personal contribution.

Politics, as Prime Minister Barre recently said, has much to do with economic, social and political constraints. We cannot simply shrug off those constraints, but what we can do, what it is our duty to do, is take our decisions in such a way that freedom is preserved, justice is ensured and peace at home and abroad is promoted. All this can be achieved in today's world only if national endeavours are brought closely into line with regional cooperation and international coordination.

Just a few days ago I read with great interest that the French President had engaged in discussions

concerning the outlook for the year 2000. I believe that we must indeed be conscious of the extent to which the decisions that we take or fail to take today will shape the world 10 or 20 years hence. We recently celebrated the 15th anniversary of the Franco-German Treaty of Friendship and, if I have correctly understood the work in which we are now engaged, we are busy, in the various areas in which we cooperate, exchanging ideas and discussing and comparing plans which stretch another 15 years or perhaps even longer into the future. I have no doubt that we shall come increasingly on both sides to view our cooperation in that light.

It would give me great pleasure to think that Franco-German friendship was already firmly established in your projections for the year 2000.

Ladies and gentlemen, please drink a toast with me to the health of the French President, to peace between the French and the Germans and to friendship and cooperation between our two peoples.

Address given by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (15 September 1978)

Chancellor, Ministers, ladies and gentlemen, and of course the Mayor of the City of Aachen,

Custom has it that these regular meetings of the French and German Governments conclude with a meal at which we have an opportunity to proclaim in a spirit of conviviality the mutual understanding which binds our two countries. We were concerned that the lunch that we have just shared here in Aachen should be an opportunity to meet with a host of prominent German figures in the economic, scientific and cultural domains, in addition to our usual interlocutors, by which I mean eminent figures from the political world here in the Federal Republic of Germany. We, the Federal Chancellor and I, were unable earlier to greet each guest individually, but I would like to say now how greatly I appreciate your presence and how much I value the contribution which each of you makes to cooperation between France and Germany and to the mutual understanding between our two countries.

Relations between Germany and France are of course a task for the governments. It is, however, my profound conviction that responsibility for this task extends beyond the governments, that it lies also with leaders from all walks of life in our two countries, industry and commerce for example, or the social and cultural domains. And since I have an opportunity to be with you today, I would like you to consider the following two remarks about the politics of France.

The first point is that the economic and social policies that we pursue are always determined with due regard to the imperatives of European solidarity, and if at the present time we are engaged in an economic policy which brings with it certain difficulties, this is because we hold this policy to be essential for the proper functioning of our Community and in particular for the maintenance of good economic relations between Germany and France.

The second comment that I would like to make is that every government, and ours is no exception, quite naturally looks after the interests of its own country. And yet, in so doing, we look beyond our own country's particular interests and try to devise solutions which also take account of common European interests. By way of example, I would refer you to the efforts which I, together with my friend, the German Chancellor, am making to create a zone of monetary stability in Europe. We are not doing this primarily in response to what we see as a national interest, which is in any case disputed, but rather because we believe that this course of action best meets the organisational needs of our old and beloved continent.

That is also why, speaking in this palace which once belonged to a statesman whose memory we dispute — for we French know he was a Frank, whereas for you he is a German Emperor — I would hope that all those here today, be they politicians, senior officials, businesspeople or influential media representatives, make it their firm resolve to contribute to the performance of this task, a task for our time, in which we seek to ensure progress for our nations and, at the same time, to advance, in a spirit of solidarity, the process of European integration. This we have also done in these last two days in Aachen.

And with that thought in mind, I invite you to raise your glass and drink to the health of the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and to the work that we have done here in Aachen to reinforce the mutual understanding between the Federal Republic of Germany and France and as a further step along the way towards the establishment of a united Europe.

Address given by Helmut Schmidt (15 September 1978)

Mr President, ladies and gentlemen,

This morning, when the two delegations met for the closing session, which gave some participants a first opportunity to speak, I was particularly moved by a thought which I would like to share with you. There are not that many among us here today who have been involved in the Franco-German consultations for more than 15 years. I believe that you, President Giscard, are the only one here who was involved from the outset.

There are certainly many among us who have known each other throughout that time and have had many and varied dealings, some perhaps longer still. I am pleased after so many years to have met Mr Laloy again. And there are undoubtedly many among you who have known my respected friend Carlo Schmid for many decades. But what is quite astonishing is that, this enormous turnover in the official teams notwithstanding, the spirit in which our negotiations and discussions take place remains unaltered.

I would very much like to act as spokesman for your German guests here today and thank you, President Giscard, for the invitation to this fine table and to this meeting of minds from both our nations, from the sciences, from the arts, from industry and commerce, from the political world, from the public service. You have even succeeded in inviting a certain number of Germans who are very familiar to us but with whom we have never spoken. I am not sure whether Mr Golo Mann and I ever had a chance to talk to each other. I have read much that you have written, often with great pleasure, more recently with a little irritation, too, if I may say so. At all events, it is thanks to a Frenchman that we meet in person for the first time.

I would like in this connection to underline the appeal which the French President made to all those attending this lunch, the request that each and all of us, from where we live and work, in our dealings with our friends and with our colleagues in our profession, in our sphere of activity, in our art, should contribute to a broadening and deepening of what the President has called our mutual understanding.

I would like to extend this call for involvement to the endeavours seeking to return the Common Market to stable, predictable monetary relations between individual partial markets, the national partial markets, an endeavour which is of great importance in political and economic terms and in terms of national psychologies. And I would urge you in this connection not to rely solely on the snap judgments of overhasty experts but rather to consider the broader political context in which this issue can and must be seen as we look forward to the next 15 or 20 years, or even longer.

When the Common Market was founded in 1957, all the statesmen and diplomats involved, every firm in France, Italy, the Netherlands and Germany, and farmers in all these countries, took it for granted that the exchange rates between the franc, the mark, the guilder and the rest would remain stable. This has, however, not been the case for the last four, five, even six years. We are witnessing a deterioration of the Common Market, and that process must be halted. This necessarily implies risks. Nothing on earth is entirely risk-free, not even love, let alone monetary policy. The risks must, however, be limited by our working together. Here we must thank the experts, especially those in the two central banks, for the work that they have already done. And we now look to them to do even more to earn our gratitude. But let it be understood that what we are doing here has historical dimensions; this is not some kind of trivial matter that someone dreamt up out of self-importance and to get a few headlines in the newspapers.

The French President just spoke about interests, and he also spoke about friendship. I would like to underline what he said on both points. I was asked this morning by a reporter from ORTF whether the personal friendship between the French President and the German Chancellor affected the course of foreign policy as regards the relationship between these two States. And I said no. It is quite clear that bonds of

friendship would not change the way that the French President handles his people's interests, and it is equally clear that the German Chancellor's handling of his State's interests would not be affected by the bonds of friendship with his French counterpart; but what this friendship does bring is greater trust than is customary in national and international politics and a willingness to give greater access to one's private thoughts than would usually be the case. And mutual trust, trust given and trust received, is something hugely important, not only in life in general but also, and more particularly, in international politics.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing called on all of you to become involved; I would like to widen that call to embrace, quite explicitly, an effort to develop on both sides the sense of mutual trust. Perhaps I may be allowed to add a few words in connection with the word 'trust' for the benefit of the representatives of the business and financial world here today. My trust in the constancy of France's stability-oriented economic policy is very great. Without that trust, this would all be a rather risky experiment.

Both the French and the German Governments know that, if we are to succeed in this great project, the close understanding between us is not, on its own, enough. We need our other partners within the European Community. But here as in all other areas in which Europe is seeking to emerge, one thing is clear: while that close understanding between France and Germany may not of itself be enough, nothing can be achieved at all without it.

And that is why I invite you to drink a toast with me to the close understanding between French and Germans, to our common future and to the health of the President of the French Republic.

Press statement issued by Helmut Schmidt (15 September 1978)

Ladies and gentlemen,

As is the custom following Franco-German consultations, the President of the French Republic and I will report to you briefly on the outcome. As is also customary, we shall not take questions, but our two press spokesmen are here and at your disposal.

It has become a tradition in recent years for the Franco-German consultations to be held on an alternating basis in our capitals and other cities, on this occasion in Aachen. And I believe that I am speaking for the French and German participants alike when I say that the tour of Aachen, the visit to the cathedral and the concert yesterday evening were exceptionally moving.

The themes we addressed together did of course include all current foreign and world policy issues, with careful coordination by the Ministers concerned in such areas as economic and structural development, business trends, energy policy, space, and many others.

For both the French President and me, one of the most central concerns was of course to assess the chances of implementing the Copenhagen initiative which seeks to create a closer monetary association between the Member States of the European Community. As you are aware, when we met in Bremen eight or ten weeks ago, we made significant progress on this issue. In recent days, critical comments have appeared in a number of newspapers, in my country at least. It has been asserted too that there is disagreement between France and Germany. I am terribly sorry to have to disappoint the sceptics — and I believe that that disappointment will be particularly acute when the Council of Ministers of the European Community meets, next Monday in Brussels as I understand it, to discuss action in furtherance of what we regard as an exceptionally important project, and when following that ministerial meeting further progress is reported.

The fact is that there are no differences of opinion between the French and German Governments; the project simply and very naturally presents a number of very challenging technical problems. And the more we go into the technicalities together, the greater our understanding of the technical solutions that will allow us to overcome these difficulties.

Perhaps I could say a few words about the political significance of restoring stable monetary relations within

the Common Market. I use the word *restoring* advisedly, for when the Rome Treaties were negotiated and came into force in 1957, all the governments and all the private undertakings involved, including those in the agricultural sector, assumed that the system of fixed exchange rates, which seemed so natural at the time, was here to stay.

That system has not existed for a number of years now. What we are in fact seeing is a deterioration of the Common Market in this area, a deterioration which could threaten the evolution of the Common Market. And we have both arrived at the conclusion that the current distortions in the world monetary system, taken together, threaten our future economic development and that each of us in our own area of responsibility must do everything that can be done to secure stability, reliability and predictability in the monetary domain.

I would like to make the point very clearly that I do not regard these issues as simply a matter of monetary engineering; these are issues of the highest importance, politically, economically and in terms of political psychology. I advised the French President this morning of my intention, when the Bundestag meets again next week for the first time after this very lengthy summer recess, to report in detail on the Bremen Summit and on the work that has been done since then. I have no doubt that this report will provoke a discussion there.

There is another point I would like to mention, one which may appear modest enough in relation to the advances that we have made on the monetary policy front, but one to which I attach considerable importance. We agreed today on a permanent exchange of officials. Our intention is that these should not be officials at the end of their careers, for there would then be no benefit for the two administrations. I greatly regret that I shall not, as a result, enjoy the benefits of the exchange arrangement, but it would certainly have stood me in good stead early in my professional career in the public service to have had the opportunity, as is now being proposed, to work for nine months in a French administration, just as it will be beneficial for the future if particularly capable French and German officials in the early stages of their careers work for a spell in the other country's ministries in order to find out about each other's administrative methods and attitudes and generally to learn from each other.

I would also like to say that, in the course of this 78/79 winter semester, we are setting up a Franco-German University of Applied Sciences in Saargemünd. Preparations are sufficiently advanced for it to open its doors before the winter is out. Compared with the large numbers which appear to play a role when it comes to monetary policy, this may seem a rather minor matter, but to my mind it has real importance.

All in all, I believe I can describe this meeting in Aachen between the French President, Prime Minister and Ministers and the German Federal Government as a complete success, the outcome of which gives me full satisfaction.

Press statement issued by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (15 September 1978)

I am very pleased that Aachen was chosen as the city in which to hold this meeting. Aachen is a city so rich in memories from the histories of our two countries and one which brings those memories alive wherever one sets foot.

As the Chancellor has already said, there were three sets of issues to be addressed at this Franco-German meeting. The first was a set of bilateral Franco-German issues and in each individual case positive solutions were found.

Like the Chancellor, I also attach great importance to the exchange of officials which is to begin next year and, similarly, to this first Franco-German University of Applied Sciences in Saargemünd, which will train engineers and deliver qualifications recognised in both countries.

We went on to discuss the outcome of the Bonn Summit in relation to our countries' respective economic policies and also ways and means of bringing those policies increasingly into line with each other.

We took note of the decisions and efforts the Federal Government made in the wake of the Bonn Summit and indicated that French economic and budgetary policy had been formulated in accordance with the Summit recommendations and conclusions. As regards the evolution of the economy, we thus expect in the course of 1979 to see the gap narrow between the economic situation in Germany and that in France. The third issue was no doubt the most important of all, namely the contribution that we can make to the creation in Europe of the zone of monetary stability to which both Chancellor Schmidt and I are so committed.

I am pleased to inform you that the spirit of Charlemagne was discernible as we addressed this issue. Our progress towards the creation of this zone is apparent from the stages through which we advanced. In Copenhagen, we established the goals in the framework of the European Council. In Bremen, we reached joint agreement on the principles in accordance with which the zone would be created. And since the Bremen Summit, we have been dealing with the mechanisms involved.

At this Aachen Summit, we have looked closely at the problems associated with those mechanisms and we have been able to conclude that the German and French Governments share similar views on them. From next Monday, the mechanisms will be reviewed in the Council of the Communities, and I am convinced we shall make a significant contribution to the establishment of a common system.

So I think we may say that the way has now been cleared for the introduction of the mechanisms which put into practice the aims pursued by this European monetary stability zone.

Lastly, the Chancellor and I discussed, as we do on each such occasion, all the various international and European problems; to my mind, the information and ideas exchanged in this way constitute one of the most crucial elements of this Franco-German Summit. We may in this way expect, over time, to develop closely coordinated positions on the major world issues or in respect of situations with which we are confronted.