

Opening speech by Hans-Dietrich Genscher at the "Two Plus Four" Conference (Bonn, 5 May 1990)

Caption: On 5 May 1990, in Bonn, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, West German Foreign Minister, opens the conference on German reunification attended by the Foreign Ministers of France, the FRG, the GDR, the United Kingdom, the United States and the USSR.

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Statement by the Chairman, the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, on the opening of the Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, the Republic of France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Bonn, 5 May 1990)

Almost 45 years ago to the day a war ended in Europe which had claimed countless victims and caused immeasurable suffering. In again expressing our mutual intention, as in the first words of the Helsinki Final Act, "to contribute in Europe to peace, security, justice and cooperation", we are honouring the victims of war and tyranny.

It is in this spirit that we embark on our talks today. We wish to create the conditions for a new chapter, for a peaceful and happy period, in German and European history.

We have not forgotten the horrors of the Second World War and the Holocaust. After the War, people died, as they were expelled or attempted to escape. Others lost their lives and freedom because they called for freedom. An iron curtain divided Europe, divided the German people.

We know what feelings and memories are evoked in, people as a result of what was done to them in the name of Germany. On 8 May 1985 President Richard von Weizsäcker spoke for all Germans. Since the end of the war, despite all the tensions and confrontations, we have succeeded in maintaining peace. 45 years without a war - a new experience for our continent.

All countries ought to be able to view the united Germany as a contribution to a better Europe. This is the wish of all Germans who do not associate the unification of the two German States with any territorial claims on anyone of their neighbours.

Poland's participation in discussions on the border question will point the way for the recognition in international law by the united Germany of Poland's Western border.

Far-sighted statesmen and courageous peoples have given us the chance to shed the last remnants of the war and post-war period and to determine the architecture of a common European house, the structure of a peaceful European order.

I do not believe we are wrong in our feeling that we are witnessing a historic watershed. Europe - indeed, the world - is no longer marked by the confrontation between East and West.

The changes now transforming Europe are the result of wise policies and peaceful revolutions. Europe will regain its common identity, and thereby its unity, not in claims to power, but in human rights and basic freedoms. The dignity and rights of man and the concern for the survival of the human race are at the heart of the policy of all states represented here today.

This is history's brief to our generation. We are called upon to shape Europe. We bear a tremendous responsibility towards our children and grandchildren.

The establishment of German unity is inseparably linked with the European process.

The President of the CSFR, Vaclav Havel, expressed this notion in January in an address to the Sejm in Warsaw, saying that it was very difficult to imagine a united Europe with a divided Germany, and equally difficult to imagine a united Germany in a divided Europe.

On 13 February 1990 in Ottawa, we agreed that the Foreign Ministers of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic would meet with the Foreign Ministers of France, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and the United States in order to discuss the external aspects of the

establishment of German unity, including questions of the security of the neighbouring states.

We have difficult problems to solve. However, if we are all willing not only to defend our own interests, but also to respect the interests of our partners, then we will find solutions. Our responsibility for the future of Europe demands resolution and a sense of proportion.

Dear Colleagues, may I extend a warm welcome to you and your delegations.

As Chairman of this first ministerial round, I hereby formally declare our talks open.