

## Address given by Konrad Adenauer on the return of the Saar to the FRG (Saarbrücken, 1 January 1957)

**Caption:** On 1 January 1957, during the celebrations to mark the return of the Saar to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), the German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, gives an address in which he welcomes the peaceful manner in which the Saar question has been resolved.

**Source:** Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung. Hrsg. Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung ; Herausgeber Klein, Karl; Nieselt, Walter. 03.01.1957, Nr. 1. Bonn: Deutscher Bundesverlag. "Die Heimkehr der Saar", p. 3-4.

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## Address by Konrad Adenauer (Saarbrücken, 1 January 1957)

Prime Minister, your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Joy, beautiful spark of the Gods! Today really is a day of great and unadulterated joy for all Germans. It is particularly so for the Germans in the Saar, who are now returning to Germany in full freedom after eleven difficult and distressing years. It is so for the inhabitants of the Federal Republic of Germany. They breathe a sigh of relief, have a sense of fulfilment, now that the Saar has been returned to us as a Federal *Land*. And I know it is also a joyful day for Germans in the East. They share the feelings and joy of the other Germans. But as you, Prime Minister, have rightly said, they may also regard the return of the Saar as proof that the pursuit of a constant policy of truth and truthfulness can help resolve the most serious differences on the basis of international treaties. And that will make you, like us, more confident about reaching a settlement in the East.

I believe that only those who have spent these years here can fully appreciate what this day means for the Saar. But we too, who have ever been concerned with resolving the Saar issue, give wholehearted thanks to God, who guides our destinies, that this trial is now over. We owe the greatest thanks for this to the inhabitants of the Saarland. I do not want to reopen old wounds, but it is surely permissible at this moment, for the sake of historical truth, to say a few words about what happened in the past. Especially at this solemn moment, we want to remember the terrible time of collapse, of economic collapse, of economic distress, of the complete collapse of the state and the troubles of the state. It took on a particular scale and particular forms here, because after all the Saar was transferred to France for economic purposes, and because economic utility is closely linked with the political power of the time. Even if they belonged to different political camps, the Germans in the Saar have always been conscious that they were and wanted to remain Germans. And in the end that was the deciding, determining factor: that the people of the Saar made it so strongly and irrevocably apparent that they were German.

Over these past years, political and economic developments in the Federal Republic and in the Saarland have sometimes gone their different ways. Economically in particular, the Saarland will need a period of transition. You are all aware of the agreements that were reached on this with France. Yet there are also areas of economic life in the Saarland that are not connected to relations with France but have far more to do with what will in future be common German economic life, and at last you have the right to demand alignment with the level of economic activity in Federal Germany, in areas where that is not the case. You may rest assured that in this regard we will treat you gently and generously and will always cooperate. In areas where it seems necessary, we will appoint special experts on Saar affairs, to ensure a smooth process of integration.

I believe that at this moment we, like your Prime Minister, must think of France. It was not easy for France to give up the Saar, for the war had inflicted cruel wounds on it. It took time and patience for France to gain that sense of trust in the new Germany that is the only basis for creating balance, understanding, neighbourliness and friendship. This resolution of the Saar question truly is an event of enormous historical importance. For centuries there was distrust, indeed enmity, between the two neighbouring countries, unfortunately to the detriment of both. The Saar question has kept playing a disruptive, poisonous role ever since the 17th century.

That is now past. We thank God that it is, for the way is now clear for these two nations to forge a genuine and strong bond, for them to work in their particular areas of interest based on the fact that they are neighbours, for them to work closely together to unify Europe, for them to work together to build a peaceful world.

The world is without order or peace. The people of the Saar, France and Germany have shown that it is possible to resolve conflicts that at first seemed insoluble, and to resolve them on the basis of human rights, the right to self-determination and a spirit of peace and reconciliation.

In my opening words I spoke of the Germans in the East. I still hope that solutions can be found in the East

too, on the same basis, solutions that will redound to the benefit and prosperity of all the peoples concerned.

We owe it to you, my dear compatriots in the Saar, that the world has been shown an example of the peaceful solution of a difficult problem. For that, you deserve all our thanks. I am very keen to address a special word of thanks to you, Prime Minister, for your wise and most statesmanlike words of reconciliation. Those were difficult years for the Saar, troubled and dangerous times. We now want to look to the future, and we — you in the Saarland and the Federal Government, with the help and support of your *Landtag*, the *Bundestag* and the *Bundesrat* — want to heal all the wounds and jointly resolve your political, social and economic difficulties. The Federal Government has decided to commemorate this day by providing you with the funds to build a house that will become the focal point of all the cultural endeavours of your *Land*.

I ask the people of the Saar to draw a resolute and determined line under the past, under the differences of opinion, disputes, mistakes and misunderstandings. Be aware that now you all belong to the common German fatherland again, to our beloved German fatherland, whose motto is: unity and justice and freedom. Long live our German fatherland!