

Address given by Konrad Adenauer (23 January 1963)

Caption: On 23 January 1963, German Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, delivers a televised speech to comment on the signature, the previous day at the Élysée Palace, of the Franco-German Treaty of Friendship relating to security and to diplomacy.

Source: Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung. Hrsg. Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung. 25.01.1963, Nr. 129. Bonn: Deutscher Bundesverlag. "Rede von Konrad Adenauer", p. 129-130.

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Last updated: 05/07/2016



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Yesterday evening, at this time, we signed in Paris a Treaty which is intended to govern the cooperation between our two peoples for an unlimited period. It was signed on the French side by the President of the French Republic, de Gaulle, the Prime Minister, Pompidou, and the Foreign Minister, Couve de Murville; it was signed on the German side by me as Federal Chancellor and by Dr Schröder as Foreign Minister. Months of meticulous preparations by the Foreign Affairs Ministries of France and of the Federal Republic went into the drafting of this Treaty. The Treaty is, in its way, I believe, unique in history, in the sense that it provides for the cultivation of amicable relations between the two peoples without any limit in time. This friendship is to be cultivated at all levels of society and in all walks of life.

The French President, de Gaulle, described the signing itself, rightly I believe, as a unique historical event. When we consider this Treaty, we must be clear in our minds about what has gone before. For more than four centuries, tensions and disputes have beset relations between France and Germany, and these have led often enough to bloody wars. May I remind you that the most recent war with France is not that far in the past, a war in which we were the vanquished. May I remind you too that Germany was at that time faced with a grave danger, the danger that it might be divided up and dismembered. Even today, we are not yet united as a nation, and that is why this Treaty, like all our Treaties with other countries, contains the Berlin Clause.

But if we take a historical view, if we consider the great change in the relations between our two peoples which has already been accomplished in part and which, under the impetus of this Treaty, will now be taken further, then surely we must say: what enormous progress has been made in the history of these two peoples, neighbours at the heart of Europe facing the same dangers and, in the world as it has evolved, sharing the same fate; how lucky we are that these two peoples have now found each other!

Ladies and gentlemen, there would be no Europe if this genuine reconciliation between France and Germany had not occurred. None of the European institutions which we have already created would be conceivable in the absence of cooperation between France and Germany. I measure my words when I say that the Federal Republic of Germany would not occupy the position in the world that it now occupies if relations with France were still as strained as they were in the immediate aftermath of the war.

I am firmly convinced that, when the history of this period is written, this Treaty will be recognised as one of the most important and most valuable accords of the post-war period, and I am equally convinced that it will work to the benefit of our two peoples and of Europe and will contribute to peace in the world.

The welcome given to the German delegation in Paris yesterday and the day before, particularly by the President of the French Republic, General de Gaulle, was exceptionally friendly and warm. We were able to speak entirely openly — the Ministers who accompanied me with the French Ministers, I with President de Gaulle — about the grave problems affecting the world. We were also able, in the course of joint discussions attended by all, to say what we thought very clearly and very openly, and I was delighted to observe that the representatives of the two peoples were fully in agreement on all essential points.

Ladies and gentlemen, there would, I think, be little to be gained if I were to present the Treaties to you in detail here. A text of this kind has to be read, and it will be there to be read in the newspapers. It will be submitted by us to both houses of our parliament, for it is our view that every international Treaty must be approved by the *Bundesrat* and the *Bundestag* in the form of a law. I hope that in just a few months, in the time that it usually takes in our country for a law to become law, enactment of this draft law will also have been completed so that we may then move forward with the work in which we have been engaged with France for a number of years.

I would, however, draw your attention to one point. A substantial proportion of this Treaty is directed at young people. One concern of the Treaty is that the youth of both countries, whatever their situation, not just schoolchildren and students but also young people pursuing a trade, should get to know each other, that they should learn each other's languages and discover the riches of each other's cultures and natural

environments, so that the other country becomes for them a second great home. That is, I believe, an aim which all of us, and here I include my fellow politicians, can only approve. Since this Treaty is meant to endure for many, many years, the youth of Germany and of France will now and in the future be called upon to make a reality of this Treaty.

When we left the Élysée Palace yesterday, we were all, French and Germans alike, confident in the belief that we had done something worthwhile — allow me to repeat what I said just a moment ago — something worthwhile for Germany and France, for Europe and for peace throughout the world.