

## Address given by Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Louis de Guiringaud (Bonn, 27 November 1978)

**Caption:** On 27 November 1978, during diplomatic consultations between France and Germany in Bonn, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, German Foreign Minister, and his French counterpart, Louis de Guiringaud, emphasise the importance of France and Germany in the European unification process.

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## Franco-German contribution to European integration

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Foreign Minister, dear Louis,

A careful record is kept of the twice-yearly consultations among Heads of State and Government. The 32nd such gathering took place in Aachen in September. I am not quite sure how often we Foreign Ministers meet, for our meetings take place not only in the form of the regular exchanges provided for in the Élysée Treaty. We also work together, and no less intensively, in the multilateral bodies in which a substantial proportion of our two States' common interests are addressed. We are, at the same time, aware that our meetings cannot take place often enough.

One of your predecessors once said that there could be no French foreign policy that was not built on the irreversibility of Franco-German reconciliation. That affirmation is no less true of German policy. The reconciliation between France and Germany and the Franco-German cooperation built upon it not only were and remain of historical importance for our two countries; they were and remain also a European necessity.

The areas of activity which we discuss together are expanding all the time. This is of course true of our cooperation in the Council of the European Community and at the ministerial gatherings held under the aegis of European Political Cooperation. Our common endeavour here is to further the process of European integration, the basis for which is Franco-German understanding. Let there be no doubt: without that understanding, any attempt to create a European Union would be condemned to failure, whatever the structure proposed for such a Union.

The benefits which the Franco-German relationship brings for Europe have once again been seen in recent months. Our joint efforts to create a European Monetary System are moving forward. Progress is being made on the accession to the Community of Greece, Spain and Portugal. Direct elections to the European Parliament are scheduled for next year. And Franco-German cooperation is also important for the effectiveness of the North Atlantic Alliance.

Beyond the bounds of Europe, Franco-German friendship has also done much to promote the peaceful development of international relations. Both countries are seeking, on the basis of the Namibia Initiative established by the five Western members of the United Nations Security Council, to achieve a peaceful solution to the problems besetting southern Africa. The European Community's relations with the ACP States, which our two countries do much to shape, are an example of the global dimension of our joint commitment. The negotiations on a Lomé II Convention are under way and are currently being conducted by the German Presidency. We hope that it will be possible to conclude them under the French Presidency in the first half of 1979.

This is all clear evidence of the continuity in Franco-German policy on which Europe can rely and also of the benefits that that policy brings to Third World countries. I would add that cooperation between our two countries carries significant weight, too, as regards East-West relations. Your visit to Berlin and the commitment to Berlin which you professed on that occasion have not been forgotten. Your declaration in Berlin conveyed our shared awareness of Berlin's importance for détente in Europe.

Today, Franco-German relations bear upon the major political issues facing the world: European unification, the problems of the Third World, and East-West relations. Their impact is not limited to our joint actions. As neighbours bound by friendship, we also offer the world an example of how the lessons of history can create political insight and give rise to a shared political determination to work for peace. That this has been possible is the historical achievement of far-sighted statesmen in both countries over the last three decades.

Dear Louis, as a member of the French High Commission in Germany from 1949 to 1952, you were both a witness and party to the first steps along this path. I know that you are as conscious as I am of the resulting responsibility — every French and German Foreign Minister assumes that responsibility on taking office.

But we both know, too, that, in undertaking our work, we are acting to meet the deep desire of the Germans and the French to live together as good neighbours and friends.

This gives us strength and courage to face the path that still lies ahead, the path leading to the united Europe for which we are jointly striving. We are aware at the same time that the opportunities for Franco-German cooperation have by no means all been fully explored. This is a permanent challenge for us.

Dear Louis, almost two years have passed since we first met at the Foreign Minister consultations provided for in the Élysée Treaty. I would like to say to you here today how greatly I appreciate our close cooperation and the trust which underpins our dealings. I thank you for that.

Ladies and gentlemen, I now raise my glass and ask you to drink a toast with me to the health and well-being of the President of the French Republic, to your personal health, dear Minister, and to friendship with France.

### **Address by Louis de Guiringaud (Bonn, 27 November 1978)**

Dear Minister and colleague,

The truly amicable words that you have just voiced and the friendship that you have demonstrated towards me, not only at this dinner but throughout my visit to your capital as Minister for Foreign Affairs, touch me profoundly.

The mission which the President of the Republic has entrusted to me and which I myself wished to be of limited duration is coming to an end. So while I leave my present office without any kind of bitterness, I do so with some regret and with feelings of emotion which I find it hard to conceal. Regret above all because more than two years' cooperation with colleagues such as yourself is coming to an end, cooperation which I have valued for its constructive, enriching and amicable nature. And I am quite naturally gripped by emotion as I leave the service of the state after more than 40 years devoted, first as diplomat and then as Minister, to representing and guiding France's foreign policy.

It is particularly moving and symbolic for me that this final act of my political life should be a visit to Germany, the democratic, successful and European Germany of 1978, the country which is closest to us, the only country to which we are bound by a Treaty of friendship and cooperation and by an institutionalised network of consultation and positive cooperation, the country finally whose oneness with France is the most essential precondition for the establishment of a genuine, lasting European Union.

It will soon, Mr Genscher, be 50 years since I first got to know your country; that was in Berlin where as a young student I became acquainted with your language and culture. Later I returned often and travelled the country from the Baltic to the Alps, from the Rhine to the Oder. With each passing year, I saw the growing threat to democracy, I saw peace increasingly endangered. Posted as a junior diplomat and later serving as an officer in the armed forces, I observed with a feeling of horror and sadly also of helplessness the approaching conflict, which came close to annihilating us all and in which I myself was embroiled.

Even in the darkest hours, I never abandoned the belief in the unavailability of the friendship between our peoples and hence in the absolute need, following the fall of National Socialism, to work for greater mutual understanding and improved cooperation. Immediately after the war I had an opportunity to do so through my participation in the negotiations on the conditions for the restoration of peace and through my contribution, here on the banks of the Rhine, to the establishment of the democratic and federal regime which is now yours.

It was in this very room in which you are receiving me this evening that, on a May afternoon in 1952, I said goodbye, before leaving for another posting, to my friends and to all those with whom I had worked on this mission of peace. The Communities had not yet seen the light of day, save the ECSC which had just come into being. Numerous imponderables cast a shadow over the future of Europe, while that of the youthful

Federal Republic remained uncertain. Let me tell you how delighted I am to see gathered here today, 26 years later, the representatives of a Germany which has sincerely and successfully committed itself to democracy and to Europe.

Since the signing of the Élysée Treaty in 1963, our two countries have had at their disposal a framework in which to further develop this special cooperation which, as both sides know, is simply essential. The twice-yearly summits, the meetings of Foreign Ministers once a quarter, and the innumerable gatherings of experts in the most diverse areas of knowledge have promoted the emergence on that basis of an extensive network of positive cooperation activities.

And yet the question arises whether we have fully exploited the opportunities available to us. This is a question that I personally ask myself when I observe the tensions and misunderstandings which emerge at regular intervals in Franco-German relations, stoked and blown out of all proportion by not always impartial press campaigns: 'It is the world's misfortune,' wrote Renan at the end of the last century, 'that France does not understand Germany and Germany does not understand France.' We have come a long way since then, and nowhere else in the world are two countries to be found whose governments maintain such an intense dialogue and whose leaders are bound by such exceptional ties of friendship. How then is it possible for the general public on both sides to appear ever ready to view events across the Rhine with suspicion and adopt an unfriendly stance?

I realise that there are many people in both countries who feel offended at the unjustified accusations levelled by their neighbours. I wonder whether we ought not simply to see in this situation a reflection of the progress that we have made. France and Germany, now that they have at long last become friends, have developed a demanding vision of their friendship.

For our part, we have high expectations of Germany. But above all we expect Germany to be itself. Your country's economic success does not worry us. On the contrary, we admire that success and see it as an encouragement and motive to compete. But we would not wish your country, as a result, to lose its traditions, its culture, its identity and its attachment to an essential Europeanness.

You too have high expectations of France, although you are sometimes impatient at our ways of doing things. It is perhaps useful here to stress that France, belying a certain clichéd image of an unduly backward-looking land, is, and is intent on remaining, a youthful, industrious, imaginative country, one which has already joined the research and technology avant-garde in a number of areas and attaches importance to a continued outward-looking approach, for international competition on a stable and fair basis is the most fundamental precondition for a nation's dynamic development. At the same time, we hope for ourselves, as we hope for you, that the progress thus achieved will enrich rather than destroy our heritage and the values of our civilisation, in such a way that Europe comes to exist through that progress rather than disappear in a soulless construct.

Europe will be neither French nor German. If we French and Germans can become more than just the peoples bordering the same river; if we succeed in building a Common Home, then we shall lay the foundations of a European Europe, using our combined, balanced resources to achieve this aim.

All our partners, and we ourselves, know that Franco-German understanding is a precondition for that Europe; and at every new stage on this long road that we have chosen for ourselves, from the Coal and Steel Community to the Agreement on a European Monetary System to be concluded just a few days hence, the truth of that assertion has been brought home to us.

I am happy to have contributed to the establishment of this Europe from the position that I have held over the last two years, years in which many often dramatic events have directed our attention to other regions of the world. But those events have left me more convinced than ever of the need for stronger union, not only between the governments of Europe but also between its peoples.

Nothing that we do in furtherance of the European Union will achieve depth or permanency without the

participation of our peoples. This is why I personally attach great importance to direct, general elections to the European Parliament.

Allow me to relate another personal recollection. In 1952 or 1953, while I was in the United States, shortly after leaving the post where I had been working for Ambassador André François-Poncet, I encountered a former colleague, Dr Grewe, while visiting a radio station. As a member of Professor Hallstein's team, Dr Grewe had been one of my opposite numbers in the negotiations on Petersberg. The programme's host asked us about the future of European integration. I remember saying that within 15 years there would be a European Parliament with directly elected Members. Dr Grewe did not contradict me. I was just a decade out. I could not at that time imagine that I would one day have the honour of signing the document by which the Communities decided to proceed with such elections and, a task which proved more difficult, of arguing the merits of the Decision of 20 December 1976 on behalf of the Government when that decision went before the French Parliament. I am convinced that the poll in June next year will help lend new vigour to the European idea.

Dear Hans-Dietrich, I would not like to conclude without saying how much the personal friendship which has developed between us has helped me in the exercise of my duties. I have always found in you an attentive, understanding, and at the same time open and direct interlocutor. This quite spontaneous bond of closeness has stood both of us in good stead on many occasions. And while it certainly deepens the sadness that I feel today, it also gives me confidence in the contribution which you will continue, in the discharge of your duties, to make to Franco-German friendship.

I now call upon all our friends gathered here today to raise their glasses and drink to the health of President Walter Scheel, to the health of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, to your health, Mr Vice-Chancellor, to your personal happiness and success in your work, to France and Germany, to their friendship, their cooperation and their joint contribution to European integration.