Statement by Konrad Adenauer at the Meeting of Military Governors, Representatives of the Parliamentary Council, and Minister Presidents (May 12, 1949)

Abstract

On May 12, 1949, Christian-Democratic politician and president of the Parliamentary Council Konrad Adenauer thanked the Western military governors for their quick approval of the Basic Law. In doing so, he also made reference to 1933 – the year in which Hitler came to power. Sixteen years later, the Basic Law would finally allow political life in at least one part of Germany to be shaped by democratic principles once again. Adenauer also thanked the Allies for their assurance that they would not allow a regulation for all of Germany that would run counter to freedom, thereby reminding the Western Allies, in the face of the Cold War, that they needed to protect the new state.

Source

Gentlemen, you will appreciate that this hour deeply moves us on the German side. After sixteen years – that is, sixteen years after 1933 – we are finally able to arrange political and governmental matters in at least one part of Germany according to democratic principles. What that means to us can only really be appreciated by those who have lived through those years here as we have done.

We also wish to thank you especially for the very great speed with which you have executed this final survey and approval of the Basic Law. We see in this a new manifestation of the very high concept of your office which you hold and which you have demonstrated to us many times during our negotiations and our work. We ask you also, please, to transmit our very deep and very sincere thanks to your respective Governments. Permit us to hand you, gentlemen, personally as a reminder of this work and this occasion an especially executed copy of this Basic Law in the near future.

Allow me a special word of thanks concerning the statement just made by General Robertson to the effect that no developments of the Foreign Ministers' conference will be permitted to cause a delay in the implementation of this Basic Law. Allow me also to transmit to you the very sincere thanks of the German people as a whole for your statement that your Governments will under no circumstances permit any solution for Germany which will not allow us to live under freedom and law. We ask you to believe that such a very serious matter, such a guarantee given to us in this fundamentally serious hour, is of very great importance to us.

In the very near future the importance of this hour will become manifest. We are convinced that this hour will contribute, not only among us here but in Europe in general, to set up a rule of freedom and law under which we all can live.

Source: Statement by Konrad Adenauer at the Meeting of Military Governors, Representatives of the Parliamentary Council, and Minister Presidents (May 12, 1949), in OMGUS, *Federal Constitution*, p. 137; reprinted in Beata Ruhm von Oppen, ed., *Documents on Germany under Occupation, 1945–1954*. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1955, pp. 390–2.

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