

Remarks to Citizens in Hambach, Federal Republic of Germany

May 6, 1985

Chancellor Kohl, honored guests, and my young friends of Germany and Europe, danke schon. [thank you]. Nancy and I are very happy to be with you and to see that the ideals of the first Hambach Fest live on today. To join you at this site so rich in history makes this a very special day.

Already, you have given us a gift of hope and beauty from the site of this sturdy old castle in the spirit of your youth and the spirit of Germany's future and, yes, from the warmth that we feel in German hearts. I may not say it well, but I can truly say, wir fuellen ganz hier zu hause [we feel completely at home here].

In welcoming us, you honor the 237 million Americans that I'm privileged to represent. I might add that, as you've been told, more Americans trace their roots to this land, these towns, and your families than to almost any other place or people in the world.

It's fitting that we meet where so much that is good and worthy of our two nations began. From here in the Rhineland-Palatinate, thousands left to cross a mighty ocean, to push back America's frontiers and to help us win a great struggle for independence. You have been told that, yes, one regiment came from Zweibrucken, led by Count Christian and Viscount Wilhelm von Frobach. They fought by our side. They were with us the day we won the historic battle of Yorktown, the day the American Revolution triumphed.

And it was from this hill on this good soil that freedom was proclaimed and the dream of democracy and national unity came alive in the German soul.

I am only a visitor to your country, but I am proud to stand with you today by these walls of Schloss Hambach. They are walls of time that cradle the glorious past and that reach toward the promise of a future written for eternity across this wide open sky. Think back to that first Festival of Freedom that was held here in 1832. What noble vision it was that inspired and emboldened your first patriots -- not violence, not destruction of society, and not some far-flung utopian scheme. No, their vision and cry were revolutionary in the truest sense of that word. Those first patriots cried out for a free, democratic, and united Germany, and we do so again today. They cried out for solidarity with freedom fighters in Poland, and we do so again today. And they waved the colors of black, red, and gold to announce rebirth of human spirit and dignity, and those colors wave proudly here today.

The dream was voiced by many that year. But there was one student, and I am told that his name was Karl Heinrich Bruggemann, whose passion and eloquence echo with us still. ``All Germanic peoples," Karl said, ``will and must acquire greater dignity; the times of tyranny have passed. Free states will flourish, patriotic nations will in future celebrate the New Europe."

The new Europe. One hundred fifty-three years have come and gone, bringing great change and progress. But the new Europe is yet to be complete. Why is this so? We know the answer. It is not that freedom has not worked for the European people, but that too many Europeans have been forbidden to work for freedom. It's not that democracy was tried and found wanting, but that some forbid democracy to be tried because they knew it would succeed.

Europe today -- divided by concrete walls, by electrified barbed wire, and by mined and manicured fields, killing fields -- it is a living portrait of the most compelling truth of our time: The future belongs to the free.

You are living in the springtime of your lives. The world needs your idealism, your courage, and your good works. From one whose own life spans many years -- my critics in America would tell you too many years -- [laughter] -- permit me to offer you some observations about the future, about the creative future that can be ours if only we apply our wisdom and will to heed the lessons of history. Let me speak to you for a moment about your responsibilities and your opportunities.

In many ways, the challenges of 1832, when thousands of young Germans came here to protest repression, were similar to those you face today. By that year of 1832, Germany was changing rapidly. The Industrial Revolution was sweeping across Europe. But in dealing with these new problems, strong forces inside and outside Germany resisted democracy and national unity.

The great hopes that arose in 1832 and again in 1848 were set back. But despite the difficulties of democratic movements, we know for sure that totalitarianism, by whatever name, will never fulfill German aspirations within a united Europe.

The cause of German unity is bound up with the cause of democracy. As Chancellor Kohl said in his state of the nation address last February, "Europe is divided because part of Europe is not free; Germany is divided because part of Germany is not free." And democracy will only be complete, Europe will only be united, when all Germans and all Europeans are finally free.

But even if national unity cannot be achieved immediately, you, the youth of Germany, you who are Germany's future, can show the power of democratic ideals by committing yourselves to the cause of freedom here in Europe and everywhere.

You know some may not like to hear it, but history is not on the side of those who manipulate the meaning of words like revolution, freedom, and peace. History is on the side of those struggling for a true revolution of peace with freedom all across the world.

Nothing could make our hearts more glad than to see the day when there will be no more walls, no more guns to keep loved ones apart. Nothing could bring greater happiness than to reach an agreement that will rid the Earth of nuclear weapons forever, and we will never stop praying, never stop working, never stop striving one moment to bring that day closer.

But my young friends, I must also plead for realism, for unless and until there's a changing by the other side, the United States must fulfill a commitment of its own -- to the survival of liberty. The first frontier of European liberty begins in Berlin, and I assure you that America will stand by you in Europe, and America will stand by you in Berlin.

Understanding the true nature of totalitarianism will be worth as much to us as any weapons system in preserving peace. Realism is the beginning of wisdom, and where there's wisdom and courage, there will be safety and security, and they will be yours.

Your future awaits you, so take up your responsibilities and embrace your opportunities with enthusiasm and pride in Germany's strength. Understand that there are no limits to how high each of you can climb. Unlike your cousins on the other side of the wall, your future is in your hands -- you're free to follow your dreams to the stars. And, you know, we have something so precious if we'll just remember: The eternal youthfulness of freedom makes it irresistible to people everywhere.

And we who live in this great cathedral of freedom need to remind ourselves that we can see our future shining, we can see new freedom spires rising, and yes, we can see the times of tyranny passing if we will just believe in our own greatest strengths -- our courage, our worthiness, our unlimited capacity for love.

Let us ask ourselves: What is at the heart of freedom? In the answer lies the deepest hope for the future of mankind and the reason there can be no walls around those who are determined to be free. Each of us, each of you, is made in the most enduring, powerful image of Western civilization. We're made in the image of God, the image of God, the Creator.

This is our power, and this our freedom. This is our future. And through this power -- not drugs, not materialism nor any other "ism" -- can we find brotherhood. And you can create the new Europe -- a Europe democratic, a Europe united east and west, a Europe at long last completely free.

Now, we hear it said by some that Europe may be glum about her future, that Europe dares no more. Well, forgive me, but I think this kind of talk is nonsense. And I hope you think it's nonsense, too. It is you, Germany, and you, Europe, that gave the values and vitality of Judeo-Christian civilization to America and to the world. It is Europe that has known more tragedy and triumph than any place in history. Each time you suffered, you sprang back like giants -- the giants, Adenauer and Schuman, Churchill and Monnet.

Today, only 40 years after the most devastating war known to man, Western Europe has risen in glory from its ruins. Today Europe stands like Schloss Hambach, a magnificent monument to the indomitable spirit of free people.

No country in the world has been more creative than Germany, and no other can better help create our future. We have already seen one miracle, your Wirtschaftswunder. The experts expected it would be decades before Germany's economy regained its prewar level. You did it in less than one. The experts said the Federal Republic could not absorb millions of refugees, establish a democracy on the ashes of nazism, and be reconciled with your neighbors. You did all three.

Germany's success showed that our future must not depend on experts or on government plans, but on the treasures of the human mind and spirit -- imagination, intellect, courage, and faith. We remembered Ludwig Erhard's secret, how he blazed Germany's path with freedom by creating opportunity and lowering tax rates, to reward every man and woman who dared to dream and to create the future -- your farmers, labor leaders, carpenters, and engineers -- every German hero who helped to put the pieces of a broken society back together.

I want to encourage you today to consider joining with your friends now or in the future to start up your own business, become part of a great new movement for progress -- the age of the entrepreneur. Small businesses will be the biggest job creators for the future.

Human faith and skill discovered oil where once there was only sand. Today we're discovering a new world of computers, microchips, and biotechnology. The new technologies can bring opportunities, create more jobs, produce medical breakthroughs, make our world cleaner and more humane, and provide better means of communication to bring the people of the world closer together. One top American computer firm was actually started by two college students in a garage behind their house.

Technology developed in the Federal Republic can make your air and water more pure, preserve the environment for your children. And because you're free, because you live in a democracy, you can help make all these things happen. You can make your voices heard so that technology works for us, not against us. My young friends, you can not only control your lives, you can help invent the future.

New technologies may someday enable us to develop far safer defenses -- a nonnuclear defense not to harm people, but to prevent missiles from reaching our soil; a nonnuclear defense not to militarize space, but to demilitarize the arsenals of Earth. For now we must rely on a system based on the threat of nuclear retaliation called mutual assured destruction. But someday, your children may be protected and war could be avoided by a system we would call mutual assured survival. Someday, technology developed by your generation could render nuclear weapons obsolete.

Working together in space -- as we've done with your fine astronaut, Ulf Merbold -- we can create the future together. We've learned enough from our shuttle flights to believe that we'll be able to manufacture in space rare crystals and medicines in far greater quantities, medicines to treat diseases that afflict millions of us. In the zerogravity of space, we could make medicines to treat victims of heart attack and manufacture factor 8, a rare and expensive medicine used to treat hemophiliacs. We could study the beta cell, which produces insulin and which could give us mankind's first permanent cure for diabetes. We know from one of our flights this is possible in space. In your lifetime, men and women will be living and working in space.

We're going to make the extraordinary commonplace -- this is freedom's way. And those secrets for our future belong not just to us in Europe and America, but to all people, in all places, in all time. Look at Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan -- tiny specks on the globe, densely populated, and with few natural resources. But today they are stunning success stories -- mighty little engines of growth and progress, pulling the world forward, thanks to their dynamic policies of incentives that reward innovation, risk-taking, and hard work.

The future awaits your creation. From your ranks can come a new Bach, Beethoven, Goethe, and Otto Hahn for Germany's future. Your future will be a way station further along that same journey in time begun by the great patriots at Hambach 153 years ago -- a journey that began in a dream of the human heart; a journey that will not be complete until the dream is real, until the times of tyranny have passed, until the fear of political torture is no more, until the pain of poverty has been lifted from every person in the world forever. This is freedom's vision, and it's good. And you must go out from here and help make it come true.

My young friends, believe me, this is a wonderful time to be alive and to be free. Remember that in your hearts are the stars of your fate; remember that everything depends on you; and remember not to let one moment slip away, for as Schiller has told us, ``He who has done his best for his own time has lived for all times."

I'd like to insert something here that isn't in the scripts that you may have. [Laughter] There is a poem in our country, born of a story of ours, in which the words are, ``breathe there a man with soul so dead who never to himself hath said, this is my own, my native land."

Thank you. Thank you for welcoming us. Thank you for your warmth and your kindness. Thank you for this very wonderful day. I will always remember it, and I'll always remember you.

Mein herz ist mit ihnen. [My heart is with you.] Gottes segen. [God bless.] Thank you very much.

Note: The President spoke at 12:42 p.m. at Hambach Castle. Following his remarks, the President traveled to Madrid, Spain.

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1985/50685a.htm>