

Speech by Consul General Nikolaus Graf Lambsdorff
on the occasion of the
Celebration of the Day of German Unity
7th October, 2014, at Island Shangri-La Hotel, Hong Kong

Chief Secretary,

Vicepresident of the European Parliament,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Liebe Landsleute,

Welcome to this year's reception on the occasion of the German National Day, the Day of German Unity.

My wife and I are delighted to see so many of you here tonight.

We are particularly delighted that you, Chief Secretary, have accepted our invitation to this event.

We all know, of course, that you have many important tasks and concerns to deal with these days.

Chief Secretary, it is an honour and a pleasure to welcoming you here as the guest of honour representing the Government of the Hong Kong SAR.

And, if you allow me to say so, we wish you well.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Bach choir for presenting our national anthems – as every year, thank you very much!

Allow me also to thank our sponsors.

You see their logos here behind me.

We could not celebrate this evening here without their support.

The year 2014 seems to be a particularly important year for commemorations.

Exactly 100 years ago the First World War began.

75 years ago the Second World War started.

65 years ago the Federal Republic of Germany was established by the adoption of our basic law, the Grundgesetz.

The ensuing and continuing debates on the reasons for and the consequences of two world wars are important to us.

We have been making many efforts to deal with our history of the past century.

And we will continue these efforts, especially in schools and universities.

In a recent, well publicised speech our Federal President Joachim Gauck, who, as you all know, spent much of his life, first in Nazi Germany and then in East Germany under communist rule, spoke about losers becoming winners. He spoke about Germany.

But he ended by asking: "What actually happened to our future?" He pointed out that despite of the many rapid changes in our lives the future is still man-made. Everything we may enjoy today - peace, freedom, well-being - is fragile and needs to be protected, renewed or newly acquired.

It seems to me that here a link to Hong Kong is obvious.

Fast-living, forward-looking Hong Kong is not too much concerned about history.

But Hong Kongers do worry about the future of their city and their own future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is one event which I believe all of us find worth celebrating.

Exactly 25 years ago the Berlin Wall was opened.

This not only symbolises the end of the division of Germany and Europe but it marks the end of the Second World War and of the Cold War.

For centuries, Germans had hoped for a united Germany.

Who would have thought that the only successful, peaceful revolution in German history would start in then communist East Germany?

It remains a wonderful, historic miracle for which we are grateful.

For those of us old enough to remember, and when I look around, many of you are old enough (sorry), the day of the opening of the Berlin Wall remains unforgettable.

I am sure you all remember where you were on the 9th of November, 1989.

And it remains an event worth celebrating.

It is therefore my pleasure to tell you that the German Consulate in Hong Kong together with the Goethe Institute are preparing for a separate event on the 8th November, to celebrate the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The "Berlin Fest", as we call it, will be a celebration with concerts, cinema, exhibitions, theatre and graffiti!

And, of course, with Currywurst and Döner.

And you are all invited.

Details will follow shortly.

Meine Damen und Herren,
Liebe Landsleute,

noch einmal möchte ich mich bei unseren zahlreichen Sponsoren bedanken.

Ohne Ihre Unterstützung müssten Sie jetzt nicht hier stehen und mir zuhören.

Für uns alle waren die vergangenen Tage spannend und aufregend.

Es steht mir nicht zu, über politische Entwicklungen in Hongkong öffentlich zu urteilen.

Aber gerade vor dem Hintergrund unserer eigenen jüngeren deutschen Geschichte glaube ich, dass Hongkong auf seine Jugend stolz sein kann.

Ich bin mir sicher, dass die Bemühungen um mehr Demokratie Hongkong politisch, aber auch wirtschaftlich gut tun werden.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Here is the standard question to us Germans:
Has German reunification been a success?

To our ears - 25 years after - this question borders on the absurd.

Of course, it has been a success.

In fact, we Germans don't even discuss reunification in this way anymore.

Yes, a lot of money had to be spent and some of it was mis-spent,

Yes, we had some unrealistic illusions, and,

yes, not everyone benefitted.

But overall, German unification has not only been an economic success story but, much more importantly, Germany, united Germany, is being recognised as a peaceful, modern, democratic partner, ally and friend by all our neighbours and beyond.

We are grateful to our allies and partners.

Without their support German unification would hardly have been possible.

China, the People's Republic of China, was the only Communist country which has always supported German reunification.

This is not forgotten.

Tonight, ladies and gentlemen, it is therefore a particular pleasure to ask you to raise your glass for a toast

to the people of the People's Republic of China and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.