



**Address  
by Ambassador Géza Andreas von Geyr  
at the reception to mark the Day of German Unity  
Moscow, 3 October 2022**

\*\*\* Check against delivery \*\*\*

Distinguished guests,

Thank you very much for coming.

I would like to offer a very warm welcome to the members of the Diplomatic Corps, the representatives of German companies, our German Russian Chamber of Commerce, German cultural and scientific institutions and teachers from the German school.

I would also like to welcome our civil society Russian friends.

And I'm delighted that the staff members of my Embassy are here today, foreign service staff as well as Russian locally employed colleagues.

Today's reception is different than usual.

The 24th of February, Russia's war of aggression against the sovereign country of Ukraine, and its consequences, have changed everything.

The Russian leadership has categorised Germany and all of our close partners as "unfriendly countries". Our political relations have reached rock bottom and there is no light at the end of the tunnel. Indeed, it's not even possible to see a tunnel.

Since last year, my Embassy has become a very different place. We have become smaller, and almost all of our cooperative partnerships have been put on hold or terminated. Many of our diplomats have been expelled while German foundations, scientific institutions, also journalists, have had to suspend their work. Parts of the German business community have left Russia.

Many of our Russian friends and partners who would have liked to be here today have left the country or have been stigmatized as foreign agents – also on account of their relations with us.

These are exceptional, difficult times. As we meet here today, war is being waged in Ukraine and people are losing their lives. This is another reason why this reception is smaller than usual, and it will be quieter, too.

For us here in Moscow, it is all the more important in such difficult times that we have opportunities to meet, that we engage in dialogue – as Germans here in Russia, as diplomats from around the world – because facing these enormous challenges we need to take a clear stand, we need to know where we stand.

And it is important for us Germans that especially in Moscow we mark this day together and with our guests – the Day of German Unity, which is a symbol of our identity and our values.

**Allow me to share a few thoughts with you on this:**

**For us Germans, our national day is a day of joy.**

After the abyss of the world war and decades of division upheld by force, we were able to regain our unity.

Many of us considered this to be a miracle. In 1989, divided Germany was still the frontline of gigantic potential threats of every conceivable kind. And yet the courageous people of the then GDR managed to topple an oppressive regime with peaceful protests and without violence. The facade collapsed and the regime was forced to reveal the fact it was hollow to the core.

The people achieved what was most important: peace and freedom. This is our joy, which we celebrate on October 3rd: peace and freedom.

**For us Germans our national day is a day of gratitude.**

We know that our reunification would not have been possible without our partners and allies.

We are grateful to all of them: France, the United Kingdom, the United States, our European neighbours.

And we also know that the unification of Germany and Europe would not have been successful if Moscow had intervened militarily in order to assert its dominance over other countries – as had previously been the case in East Berlin, Budapest and Prague.

Mikhail Gorbachev was laid to rest just a few weeks ago. His stance at the time was incredibly courageous. It was forward-looking and focused on peace, peace on our common, war-battered continent. Peace that can only be genuine and lasting without violence – without violence inwards and outwards.

**For us Germans, our national day is also a day of responsibility.** Responsibility of various kinds.

**Responsibility in the face of our own history:** We are proud of the great moments that Germans have created, and we just as well acknowledge the terrible suffering that we inflicted on others as well as ourselves. For us, both of these things belong together; and only a sincere view on the past can create reconciliation.

This is why we pay heed to ensuring that history isn't abused and twisted to fan the flames of hatred, not by anyone.

**Responsibility for the law:** German reunification was not a violent conquest of territory nor did it constitute a breach of international law. On the contrary, it was rooted in a commitment to international law, in respect for agreements and treaties.

It was the strength of the law that brought the Cold War to an end. This is what Germany puts its trust in today and will continue to do in the future. International law provides the essential protection for peace and freedom. And we want to and we must preserve the rules-based international order. Only this rules-based order protects us against a system of the law of the stronger, which leads to chaos, to attacks on neighbours, war and violence.

**Responsibility for human rights:** German politicians cannot and must not remain silent when human rights and civil liberties are trampled underfoot in our country or elsewhere. On this our constitution offers no rebate to any country or potentate.

The German Government has thus also adopted an unequivocal position with respect to the current drastic restrictions to freedoms and the approach to people who think differently in Russia.

**Responsibility for peace:** The reunited Germany is following a clear path. We will not remain silent when peace is violated, when a sovereign state recognised by the international community is attacked and parts of it are occupied. The German Government has adopted a clear position regarding the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine and also regarding the use of instruments of power such as energy and food, which strongly hit many regions of the world.

And my Government is adopting just as unambiguous a stance as regards the sham referenda and the annexation of territories of Ukraine, which we will not recognise under any circumstances.

There is absolutely no justification for these steps – including attempts to lay the blame for everything that is evil in the world at the door of a “global West”, and therefore also my country, which purportedly attacks and wants to destroy Russia.

As the rules that have been broken are so paramount for the peaceful coexistence of states, we are drawing the necessary consequences, even when sanctions are also difficult for ourselves. And we also know how to handle most extreme threats.

**Responsibility for the togetherness of people:** Our national day reminds us of the power of civil society and the importance of the togetherness of people, also beyond borders.

Here in Russia the wealth of our programmes and events, that were taking place until the beginning of this year, were underpinned by an appreciation for this country and its people. Germany was, in spite of all the problems that already existed, committed to the harmonious togetherness of Russians and Germans, to respect and tolerance – and this is what we continue to stand for. This wish for togetherness, Russian and German people ought never to let it be destroyed; history and geography will always connect us.

One of the most famous inscriptions on the Berlin Wall was as follows: “The world is too small for walls.”

Therefore – especially in these so very difficult and tragic times – we remain committed to what our national day calls us to: peace and freedom.

A magnificent exhibition that we held here in Moscow last year bore the title “Dreams of Freedom”.

The memory that peace and freedom are stronger than walls after all gives us hope that the enormous crises of the present too can one day take a peaceful path again.