

DAS DIREKTORIUM DER GESELLSCHAFT
FÜR DIE VERLEIHUNG DES INTERNATIONALEN KARLSPREISES
ZU AACHEN E. V.

In the year in which with great interest the people of the world have followed the efforts of the United States of North America and the efforts of the Soviet Union to keep and ensure peace,

in the year in which on the occasion of the 950th anniversary of the death of Stephen I, Saint Stephen, the founder of the Hungarian kingdom, the old friendship between Hungary and Aachen has been officially renewed,

in the year in which the partnership between the cathedral city of Aachen and the cathedral city of Naumburg has been ceremoniously concluded,

in the year of 1988 the Europeans have had to think anew of their relationship to one another and make Europe's identity evident. The first great aim to be realised, in 1992 to attain one common domestic market, must be pursued in the same way as having open relations with those states with whom through the easing of restrictions economic cooperation will be effectively built up. Economic cooperation will then not be the end. The Franco-German treaty of friendship, which in 1988 has become 25 years old, is a good example of how in a measurable length of time differences have been overcome and a community of common interests found - never thought of as the formation of a block, only as efforts to master the difficulties which stand in the way of the unification of the whole of Europe.

The French diplomat Jean Laloy summed up the uncertainties in Franco-German relations after 1945 with the words: "In Franco-German relations the year 1945 marked an historic turning point. After 1871 came 1919, after 1940 came 1945. That was absolutely enough. It was necessary to put an end to this senseless state of affairs."

The first bearer of the Charlemagne Prize, Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, said in 1950: "It was a bold initiative, by the bringing into being of the International Charlemagne Prize, to build a bridge over eleven centuries - from the magnificent tradition of the Empire of the Franks to the greatest hope of our day: the United States of Europe." Speaking in 1953 in the large Coronation Chamber of the Aachen City Hall, Jean Monnet called it an encouraging sign that the Prize had been awarded to a man born on French soil. In that he saw the expression of a great hope which was in the process of becoming reality: the disappearance for good and all of the centuries old, destructive Franco-German differences by the finally successful union of the European peoples. The bearer of the Charlemagne Prize of 1954, Konrad Adenauer, stated that in the fact of the award of the Charlemagne Prize to a German he read a request addressed to the politicians and to both peoples at last to overpower the Franco-German contrasts. Thereby the last great obstacle to the unification of Europe would be removed.

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In 1958, Robert Schuman in expressing his thanks for the honour accorded him in Aachen said that in the very first place the main problem facing European efforts had been that of France and Germany, and that there could be no solution for Europe as long as this problem was not solved. The bearer of the Charlemagne Prize of 1970, François Seydoux de Clausonne, in his speech reminded his hearers of the meeting in 1958 of Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer, and thought that fate could not have chosen better than to bring together these two great men, men who were fully aware of their mission. Both had finally turned over the leaf on Franco-German differences.

In the past years there has been no lack of French and German personalities - independent of party and political ties - who have made outstanding contributions for the Franco-German approach to one another, and in this way also for Europe. Bound by personal friendship, two statesmen in Helmut Schmidt and Valerie Giscard d'Estaing thus came together so as to impart new impulse to the monetary integration process with the founding of the European monetary system, as an intermediate stage on the way to the monetary union. The point of time and the procedure have not yet been firmly decided on, but the fundamental thought of both fathers of the European Monetary System has probably been reflected in the idea of creating a community feeling among Europeans.

The award of the International Charlemagne Prize 1988 to the President of the French Republic, François Mitterrand, and to the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Helmut Kohl, honours both statesmen, the Franco-German treaty of friendship, and the consistent pursuit of the goal of European unity by the governments in France and in the Federal Republic of Germany. A fortunate coincidence determines the day of this year's award: on All Saints' Day (1 November 1988) the inauguration of the restored shrine of Charlemagne, the father of Europe, takes place in the cathedral in Aachen.

Aachen, 22 July 1988