



The Holy See

*Discurso al Embajador de la República Federal de ALEMANIA,
Excmo. Sr. Don Hans-Joachim HALLIER**

8 de noviembre de 1990

Thank you very much for the kind words which accompanied the presentation of the letters accrediting you as the new Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Holy See. I welcome you to the Vatican as you begin your mission and I express my wishes for your noble task, so laden with responsibility.

I also thank His Excellency the President of the Republic as well as the Government for the very friendly greetings you have conveyed.

1. Our first meeting today, as you yourself mentioned, takes place under the influence of the political events of recent months and the completion of German unity on 3 October of this year; it was achieved not least of all through the collaboration of the Churches in your country. It is a special joy for me to be able to greet in your person the first representative of united Germany. This is an occasion for profound, but happy and hopeful thoughts which do not extend to Germany alone, but also to East and West Europe, and finally to the whole world, North and South.

It was really the Second World War which came to an end on 3 October and made many people aware of what fate and guilt mean to all peoples and individuals. We think of the millions of people most of them totally innocent, who died in that war: soldiers, civilians, women, the elderly and children, people of different nationalities and religions.

In this context we should also mention the tragedy of the Jews. For Christians the heavy burden of guilt for the murder of the Jewish people must be an enduring call to repentance; thereby we can overcome every form of antisemitism and establish a new relationship with our kindred nation of the old Covenant. The Church, «mindful of her common patrimony with the Jews, and motivated by the Gospel's spiritual love and by no political considerations,... deplores the hatred, persecutions and displays of antisemitism directed against the Jews at any time and from any

source» (Vatican II, Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, n. 4). Guilt should not oppress and lead to self-agonizing thoughts, but must always be the point of departure for conversion.

Throughout the last 40 years the German people and their government have shown that a new Germany has come into being, one which, as you have pointed out already in your speech, is motivated by the endeavour to foster a responsible coexistence in peace and well being throughout all of Europe. You have done this also out of responsibility towards the 17 million citizens of the Eastern part of your country, who until recently could not participate in the economic progress and development of freedom in the postwar era. In view of the confidence which the Federal Republic of Germany has earned throughout the world since the war, in the future your country will be aware of its great responsibility towards its immediate neighbors towards Europe and the whole Family of nations. With great satisfaction I can affirm that your Government has clearly expressed that it will make every effort to reconstruct the eastern part of your country as well as Central and Eastern Europe while continuing to be aware of its responsibility towards the Third World.

2. The breakthrough in Europe also raises questions about the spiritual forces which influence our history. Totalitarian ideologies from now on are permanently discredited. Reconstruction is not easy. The material need is great, and the spiritual hunger even greater. This especially presents new tasks to the Church, and the ever-new evangelization efforts will have to reckon with this state of affairs. The national motivation stemming from 3 October should also spring from the recognition that God is the unchanging foundation of the life of individuals and peoples alike. The socialized market economy system which your country, most of all in consideration of the weaker social stratas, has continually built up and improved over the years, has proved successful, as has your democratic form of government which has weathered many storms. The ordered and well-channeled participation of all the citizens has won the ideological struggle which shook the 20th Century. The battle was won in a peaceful and orderly way, which only serves to increase the value of the democratic system.

The free exercise of rights for everyone has been the goal of the unions and the Church's social movement since the end of the last century. I can affirm this with satisfaction also in light of the coming centenary celebrations of the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII. The reconstruction of a part of your own country as well as Central and Eastern Europe is now going to require much energy. That, however, should not prevent you from continuing to be attentive to the social structure and from deciding to stand up for the preservation of basic values in society, values which are basic to the West. The protection of life, both born and unborn, is a great good, which must not be sacrificed to superficial considerations. This is not a question of fulfil challenges it because of her own mission and the Gospel's humanizing influence, as well as its ethical demands.

Convinced of the continuing fruitful and responsible collaboration between Church and State

resulting in the continuation of the friendly diplomatic relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Holy See, I ask God's blessing and help for you and your embassy collaborators in your important task, and for your distinguished family as well.

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n. 47 p.2.*

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