

Day of German Unity

Enjoying close bonds in many areas

Hans Carl von Werthern
GERMAN AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN

Last Nov. 9, we, along with our friends from all over the world, celebrated the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. When the wall came down, this not only heralded an end to the division of Germany, but also an end to the division of Europe, which could no longer be maintained against the free will of the people. However, the fall of the Iron Curtain only marked the beginning of a longer process that, in the end, led to the occasion we are celebrating today.

Twenty-five years ago, on



Oct. 3, 1990, almost one year after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the dreams of many Germans came true and the country was united again. After 41 years of separation, democracy and freedom triumphed over injustice and tyranny. The German Democratic Republic ceased to exist and a bleak chapter of German history was finally closed. However, when we remember what happened during this important moment in history, we must not forget that the reunification of Germany would not have been possible without the help, cooperation and trust of our dear friends and neighbors in Europe. The joint foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, the forerunner of the European Union, triggered the reintegration of Germany into Europe. It was only thanks to this integration process that it was possible to build up trust and to dispel the doubts and fears of a united and strong Germany that were deeply rooted in our neighboring countries for good reason.

Right now, Europe is facing a refugee crisis that cannot be solved by a single country alone. Europe has to act as one. Nonetheless, we Germans feel a special obligation to shelter people who left their war-torn countries in search of a better life. We sense this special obligation because of the support that we received on numerous occasions in history when we were in need of help. Mutual trust is what brought the countries of Europe together after World War II, but

it is also what characterizes more than 150 years of friendly relations between Japan and Germany. Since I arrived in Japan one-and-a-half years ago, my fondness for the country and its people has steadily grown. The close relationships with many Japanese people that I have enjoyed since my arrival reflect the friendly and mutual relations that both countries have enshrined over the years. Together, we cherish the same values of peace and freedom. Both of our countries have established close ties in business, culture and politics. In Germany, we strongly appreciate our close relationship with Japan and hope that the ties between our countries will continue to thrive.

The history of the 20th century has taught us a very important lesson. We Germans have learned that the only way to sustain peace is through multilateral cooperation that goes hand in hand with the abandonment of force and confrontation. Japan and Germany are strong partners in their pursuit of a better world. Together, we are advocates for peaceful solutions to conflicts all over the world. Today, we are delighted to reminisce together with our Japanese friends and celebrate the happiest moment of our recent history. On the Day of German Unity, I extend to all readers of The Japan Times my best wishes for their health, success and happiness. May our excellent relationship continue to flourish.



People celebrate German unification on Oct. 3, 1990 in the center of Berlin. © PICTURE-ALLIANCE / ZB

Getting closer through change

Marcus Schuermann
DELEGATE OF GERMAN INDUSTRY
AND COMMERCE IN JAPAN



With its reunification 25 years ago Germany underwent its most drastic changes since the end of World War II. Besides the political and social transformation that followed, this process also had lasting effects on the economy — both directly and indirectly, for example through the subsequent evolution of the European Union.

It was around this time, when awareness of *kaizen* (continuous improvement) and *kanban* (a form of logistics control) were becoming widespread, that Japan's bubble burst, and the political leadership weakened. Japan sunk into what was later coined the lost decade, which influenced the economy until today.

Both countries have developed very differently as a result of different circumstances. Nonetheless, today, maybe more than ever, Germany and Japan face similar challenges, be it with regard to demographics, energy or globalization. Reality reflects this as we have seen a reinvigoration of mutual interest between both countries on all levels; politically, scientifically and economically. The years 2014 and 2015 saw visits from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Germany and Chancellor Angela Merkel to Japan. Both countries' foreign trade promotion organizations, JETRO and the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan (AHK Japan), have signed a memorandum of understanding for closer cooperation. The work on the EU-Japan free trade agreement continues and is making progress; however, the finalization of the negotiations requires more time. New business alliances have been forged between large multinational companies, which work together in new areas such as mobility. Industry and government must be nimble in meeting the challenges of new development such as "Industry 4.0" and the "Internet of Things."

However, there is much room for both countries to ex-



International exhibitors and visitors attend the IFA 2015 held in Berlin from Sept. 4 to Sept. 9. One of the oldest industrial exhibitions in Germany, IFA (International Radio Exhibition Berlin) is one of world's leading trade shows for consumer electronics and home appliances today. MESSE BERLIN

change, learn and benefit even more from each other. There is much untapped potential. One example concerns the common challenge of the globalization of small and medium-sized enterprises, what we call *Mittelstand* in Germany, the backbone of both our countries' economies. In the past three years, AHK Japan has been consulted time and again by Japanese official bodies and industry representatives wishing to learn more about the alleged secret of the German *Mittelstand*'s success. One simple tool to propel global business opportunities that are open to any company in the world is trade fairs. Germany boasts some of the world's largest and most important international trade fairs, with the emphasis on the word "international." Be it rolling stock, consumer electronics, energy storage, health-care, construction equipment or environmental technologies — these fairs are gateways not only to Germany, but also to the whole European market and beyond. Every year they attract roughly 3 million foreign visitors. Furthermore, they show growing interest in attracting more Japanese small and medium-size exhibitors with outstanding technologies, products and services. Also, more and more of these renowned platforms open their

floors in Asia, too. Today, German trade fair organizers run more than 150 trade fairs in the Asia Pacific region — right at the doorstep of Japanese companies and only a short hop to globalize one's own business.

No straight story: History provides a multitude of perspectives

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History is truly unpredictable. As soon as someone declares things over and done with, history simply marches on, and all notions of continuous progress towards a unified humanity are lost. Just as we prepare to remember the momentous changes in Europe 25 years ago, as we prepare to celebrate once more the fall of walls and borders — we are confronted yet again with the raising of new fences. In the wake of the recent great migration in Central Europe, some governments in Europe build barriers to gain time and to distance themselves as they scramble to organize their population policies. The situation is unclear: How will history remember this time in Germany and Europe, and what will be written about it?

What kind of historiography will it be? There are few other disciplines within the sciences, and historiography has always considered itself to be a science, that have so often changed and diversified their methods and procedures. Few other disciplines have such a broad, varied perspective. Few other



disciplines have the ability to interpret data and writings in ways that constantly analyze both national and international events and constellations, sort them, question them, describe them — and also judge them. Dissension within the discipline is frequent (as can be seen in the recent historians' quarrel in Switzerland), as is the complete reinterpretation of events (such as Christopher Clark's "Sleepwalker" interpretation of the European nations' entry into World War I) and also controversial reevaluations (such as that Germany was, after all, a driving force in overestimating its own capabilities and in denying reality). The change of perspective can be very exciting. It reaches from national perspectives (such as Ki-yoshi Inoue's "History of Japan") to continental and vortorial (Heinrich August Winkler's "History of the West") and ultimately global ones ("A History of the World" by the Japanese historian Akira Iriye and the German historian Jürgen Osterhammel).

Things become problematic, if not dangerous, as soon as nations attempt to explain their histories to one another or seek to reckon the past; and when they look backward to find their positions on present-day political problems. That is where a culture of remembrance, or even shame, clashes with a culture of forgetting and

suppressing.

But history can be given a face beyond classical historiography: in the form of stories that are told, filmed, depicted artistically and defamiliarized. The richness of history and also its wiles are found in the stories contained within it, for they relentlessly demand ever-new approaches and interpretations. And historians are, in a way, always storytellers.

Trying to give history a concrete form is a gamble — on the stage, on film, but especially in museums, where carefully curated exhibitions attempt to process historical eras and make them accessible in ways that are both educational and artistic. "The telling of stories is, however, not just a beautiful, but also a dangerous form of culture. For thousands of years, and ever since the cognitive revolution, no painting, no weapon, no food or melody has ever been as powerful as a good story. That is why one must not be surprised or disappointed when history is argued over. That is how it has to be. It would be foolish to expect a 'right' or 'wrong,'" said Andreas Spillmann, director of the Zurich Swiss National Museum.

When many different voices create a picture of history, ideally going beyond national borders, they generate something like a "collective diary" of, at times, contradictory sensations and

voices. The great German author Walter Kempowski (1929-2007) was inspired by this idea and used it several times; most famously in his great oeuvre "Das Echolot" (Sonar) on which he worked for decades and which describes World War II. In it, he collects statements from all kinds of people, but also a great number of everyday observations. The result is a ten-volume collection of voices, but also pictures, photographs, and literary quotations, which provide for a multifaceted view of Europe during the war-time years. In Europe, May 8, 1945 — 70 years ago now — is seen as the end of World War II. But there are historians who favor a different end date for that war, especially in a wider view that includes East Asia and Japan.

With the liberty of an artist, the composer of voices Walter Kempowski finished the eighth or ninth of May, 1945, with the poem "Der Frühling" (The Spring) by Friedrich Hölderlin, written in 1839; and specifically with these lines:

*"Der Menschen Tätigkeit beginnt mit neuem Ziele,
So sind die Zeichen in der Welt, der Wunder viele."
(The work of man begins with aims renewed,
As worldly signs and many wonders can be viewed)*



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