

# Day of German Unity Special

## Prevailing unity and peace symbolize ‘great hope’

**HANS CARL VON WERTHERN**  
AMBASSADOR OF GERMANY



Oct. 3, marks the 28th anniversary of German unification. It is a day of great joy for us Germans, as it is a reminder of the moment our fractured country finally became one again.

The decades when East and West were opponents, when families were torn apart and many Germans lived under dire oppression, now seem far away. Long gone are the times when a chasm ran through Germany, manifested in a long, gray and deadly wall. Its surprising fall in 1989 not only marked the beginning of the end of the division of Germany, but also started a phase of closer European integration. In fact, since Feb. 6 this year, the Berlin Wall has been gone longer than it actually stood — a sign of great hope, showing that change is possible and good can prevail.

Today, many young Germans only know about their country's partition from sto-

ries or history books. About one-third of the German population never lived in the divided Germany. For them, a Europe where they are free to travel — a Europe that stands united for liberal values — is normal. It is a great joy for us that not only Germany became one, but that Europe is also growing closer and closer.

However, freedom and liberal values cannot be taken for granted. We must constantly defend them. And this is the case not only in Europe, where rising populism and nationalism are threatening the liberal foundations of the member states and the European Union itself, but also on the world stage, which is increasingly shaped by self-centered actions and isolationism. Germany and its European partners must stand united here against all attempts to reverse the liberal world order, of which Japan is a well-respected member. Like us, Japan supports multilateralism, which we believe is the foundation of prosperity and freedom worldwide. We are therefore happy that with the signing of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement and the EU-Japan Strategic Partnership Agreement, this year marked a high point in EU-Japanese relations. We look forward

to working closely with Japan on making the world a better place. We need much more global cooperation to overcome divisions, resolve crises and conflicts across the world and promote human rights and the rule of law.

For Germany, Japan is both a partner that shares our liberal values and world view, and an old friend with whom we have long-established ties. 2018 not only marks the 28th anniversary of German unity, but also the centenary of the premiere of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in East Asia. This music, which is loved and regularly played around the end of the year across Japan, is a symbol of this friendship. Its content and meaning, especially the “Ode to Joy,” represent the liberal values we Germans incorporated in our united country, which form the heart of our close ties with friends such as Japan. As the “Anthem of Europe,” this music reminds us that our strength lies in unity — in Germany, Europe and the world.

One lesson from German reunification is that true progress can never be achieved by going at it alone. We are, and will remain, dependent on one another — that is a good thing. Therefore, we happily use the day of

German unity as an occasion to celebrate peace and freedom side by side with our friends from Japan and all over the world. “All people become brothers” is one of the most beautiful lines of the Ninth Symphony, which became true for us Germans almost three decades ago. So, in the spirit of this line, I wish the readers of The Japan Times all the best. May our friendship never end!

*This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.*



People dance in front of Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, an 18th century monument and a symbol of a reunited Germany. GETTY IMAGES



German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier (second from left) and his wife, Elke Budenbender, alongside graffiti artists Justus Becker (left) and Imaone (right) at the launch of the “German Embassy Berlin Wall Project” at the embassy in Tokyo on Feb. 7. The German and Japanese artists created this mural on the outside wall of the embassy. YOSHIKI MIURA

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