

On its National Day, Germany hails 'people connection' with PHL

By **Recto Mercene** - October 15, 2017



Story & photos by Recto Mercene

GERMANY recently celebrated its National Day of Unity in Manila led by its Ambassador to the Philippines Dr. Gordon Kricke, who said their peaceful uprising hinted of the same bloodless protest by the Filipinos to oust a dictatorial regime.

“German unification came out of a very special revolution which brought about political change without a single bullet being shot,” Kricke said.



In Photo: Ambassador Gordon Kricke (from left) and wife Anke Mackrodt Kricke converse with former president Fidel V. Ramos.

“I believe the history of the nonviolent fall of the Berlin Wall is close to the hearts of Filipinos, who toppled a dictatorial regime through a peaceful People Power Revolution just a few years earlier,” the German diplomat added.

“During that uprising, Filipino citizens fighting for democracy and human rights, [who, at the same time, were hoping for a fairer society], brought an end to the Marcos regime. This courage and grace against adversity is a history Germans and Filipinos share and a spirit we proudly celebrate today,” Kricke said.

He was referring to the 1986 EDSA Revolution, where Filipinos finally got rid of a dictatorship by massing in millions in the heart of what is now Metro Manila’s main arterial road.

“After more than 40 years of forced separation into two states, Germany reunified in October 1990,” he added in his welcome speech, saying, “This unification was a result of a revolution mainly of brave citizens

from East Germany who fought for their human and political rights, for democracy and the rule of law.”

Furthermore, “We Germans are grateful for the reunification, which marked the end of the Cold War. Essential for German unity was also the European integration. The creation of a politically and economically integrated Europe was the basis for German Unification.”

European integration defender

Kricke said the European Union (EU) promises all its members peace and freedom, human rights and democracy.

“Germany is a staunch defender of European integration. Today, the EU is an important political and economic player in the world. [T]his is why we also celebrate Europe and the EU on the Day of German Unity!”

He noted that Germany is a close economic partner of the Philippines.

“With a bilateral trade volume of \$5.2 billion, Germany is the Philippines’s most important trade partner in Europe. Considering the high economic growth rates in the Philippines and the economic strength of Germany as the world’s third-largest trading nation, we are confident [the] trade between our countries will increase continuously,” the German envoy went on.

Kricke said German firms have been investing in the Philippines for a long time and in a broad variety of fields, some of which with representation in the lounges of the National Day reception.

“German companies are strong pillars of our bilateral relations. They represent a modern, dynamic, innovative country in the heart of Europe closely connected and interacting globally.”

In addition, Kricke said with the bilateral Development Assistance of about \$50 million annually, his country is an important partner of the Philippines in the field of development cooperation. He added topics, such as climate protection and crisis prevention, are becoming more and more relevant for our cooperation.

“Since 2008 Germany has provided about €100 million to the Philippines for projects to fight the negative effects of climate change. Friendship and close bilateral relations between [our two countries] are also reflected in the dense network of our institutions and organizations represented and operating in [this country].”

“The German Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with about 300 members, is the flagship organization representing bilateral business relations. The Goethe-Institute—our German cultural institute—is the place in Manila to learn German and more about our country and its culture. There [is also the] German European School in Manila [which] offers top-class education and excellent preparation to study anywhere,” he volunteered.

Partners from way back

ACCORDING to Kricke, the German political foundations—the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and the Hanns Seidel Foundation—are close partners of their Philippine counterparts supporting development and modern democracy.

He told the BusinessMirror, “German-Philippine bilateral relations are strong today because they are relations involving people in both countries. [Our] people-to-people contacts go back a long way.”

Inspired by German culture and thought, the Philippine national hero Dr. Jose Rizal studied in Germany, mastered its language and published his novel *Noli Me Tangere* in Berlin.

He said more than a hundred years ago—in 1906—German businessmen in Manila founded the German Club, which until now is the place in Manila for excellent German food fare and good company.



The German envoy (right) offers a toast to Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Maria Natividad.

His Excellency concluded, "All these examples show [our] people-to-people contacts have always been the foundation and core element of our bilateral relations."

Guests of the celebration included former President Fidel V. Ramos, former House Speaker Jose C. de Venecia, industrialists, members of the diplomatic community and Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Maria Natividad, among others.

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Recto Mercene

Recto L. Mercene, graduate BS Journalism, Lyceum of the Philippines. First prize winner, News Photojournalism, by Confederation of Asean Journalists, Bangkok, Thailand; second prize winner, Art and Photojournalism Award; San Miguel Corporation. Former Air Traffic Controller and private pilot. Colombo scholarship grantee: Hurn College of Air Traffic Control, Bournemouth, United Kingdom.



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