I have the honour to pay you a visit in company with some of the members of my Cabinet, thereby establishing the first contact between the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the three High Commissioners. Now that the German Federal Assembly has convened, and the Federal president been elected, and now that I have been chosen Federal Chancellor and the members of the Federal Cabinet have been appointed, a new chapter of German history of the postwar years begins. The disaster of the Second World War has left in its wake a Germany almost totally destroyed. Our cities were in ruins. Economic life was largely smashed. All vestiges of a government had ceased. The very souls of men had suffered such injuries that it seemed doubtful whether a recovery would ever be possible. During the four years following the disaster of 1945, legislative and executive power was largely vested in the occupation powers. It was only step by step that executive and legislative functions were re-delegated to German authorities on various levels, and with a limited power to make decisions. It is fitting and proper to acknowledge gratefully that the German population was saved during these trying years from starvation by Allied help in supplying food which at the time could not be purchased with the proceeds of German exports. It was this help which made possible the start of reconstruction. Now that the governmental and legislative elements of the German Federal Republic are being built up, a
large part of the responsibility and the authority to make
decisions will pass into German hands. We do not, of course,
possess as yet complete freedom; since there are considerable
restrictions contained in the occupation stature. We will do
our part to bring about an atmosphere in which the Allied
powers will see their way clear to apply the occupation
statute in a liberal and generous manner; only in this way
will the German people be able to attain full freedom. We hope
that the Allied powers will, by making a corresponding use of
the revision clause in the occupation statute, hasten the
further political development of our country.

It is the unshakable wish of the new Federal Government first
and foremost to tackle the great social problems. The
Government is convinced that a sound political entity can only
develop when each individual is assured a maximum of economic
opportunity to earn a livelihood. Not until we succeed in
converting the flotsam millions of refugees into settled
inhabitants by providing them with housing and adequate
opportunities for work will be able to enjoy inner stability
in Germany. Disorder and crises in this part of Europe,
however, constitute a serious threat to the security of the
entire content. For this reason, the social programme of the
Federal Government should at the same time act to ensure a
peaceful development in Europe. We will, of course, do
everything in our power to master these problems with the
forces at our command. Nevertheless, I feel I am justified in
believing even now that the problem of expellees is not only a
national, but an international one. To solve it, the help of
the rest of the world is needed. The Federal Government would,
therefore, welcome it greatly if the members of the High
Commission would urge their governments to devote in future
more attention to this problem.

If we want to establish peace in Europe, we can in the view of
the Federal Government achieve this only by working along
entirely new methods. We see opportunities to do so in the
efforts for a European federation which has just borne its first fruits [at] Strasbourg. We do believe, however, that such a federation will only have vitality if built on close economic co-operation among the nations. The organisation created by the Marshall Plan represents a good start in this direction. Germany is fully ready to co-operate responsibly in this regard. We see another opening for creating a positive and viable European federation in the hope that the control of the Ruhr region would cease to be a unilateral arrangement and that it would gradually grow into an organism which would embrace the basic industries of other European countries as well. We are certain that the narrow nationalistic conception of the states as it prevailed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries may now be said to be overcome. This conception gave birth to nationalism, with its attendant splintering of life in Europe. If we now turn back to the sources of our European civilisation, born of Christianity, then we cannot fail to succeed in restoring the unity of European life in all fields of endeavour. This is the sole effective assurance for maintaining peace.