

July 1, 2009  
Transatlantic Forum, Berlin  
Dr. Roland Gerschermann

---

Excellencies,

Mr. Maleki,

honored guests,

It is a pleasure to welcome you to this exceptional and highly relevant conference today in the offices of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung in Berlin.

It is a good thing that Americans and Germans are cooperating closely on finding solutions to the challenges of our times, marked by global economic turmoil and new political confrontations.

The dramatic events in Iran, the nuclear conflict posed by North Korea, the ongoing destabilization of Afghanistan and Pakistan by Islamist terrorists, climate change and, of course, a new blueprint for the global financial architecture are but a few of the urgent reasons to consider whether multilateral institutions and new forms of cooperation can help us rise to these challenges.

Twenty years after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the world is searching for new mechanisms, new sustainable alliances to ensure peace and freedom.

Without the support of the United States, none of today's global problems can be solved, and no crisis can be managed. Germany and Europe need the USA as a partner. This, in turn, means that we Germans, Europeans in general, but other countries as well must assume responsibility and rise to the global challenges together - just consider the G-20. No doubt, duties go along with economic power.

I am eager to get new insights; and I am sure this conference will provide interesting perspectives on these issues.

At the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, we are glad to sponsor this event. Ever since the newspaper was founded nearly 60 years ago, the F.A.Z. has considered itself an active partner and supporter of German-American relations.

The United States is the country where we have our greatest number of foreign correspondents. Many of our journalists have attended college in the United States or have been Congressional fellows. Our staff accompany the members of our cabinet on trips to the States, they serve as experts at symposia and discussion forums and, of course, they constantly stay in touch with their American colleagues.

But the foundation for the good relationship between our newspaper and the United States was laid much earlier.

The predecessor of our newspaper, the Frankfurter Zeitung, was established in 1856 by Leopold Sonnemann, a Frankfurt businessman who later became a member of the Reichstag. From the very beginning, he maintained a close relationship with the United States – and so did the newspaper's editorial staff.

During the American Civil War, the Frankfurter Zeitung was the only German newspaper that supported the Union and steadfastly maintained this position. In both the political and business sections, the newspaper backed President Lincoln's cause. Thanks to this newspaper's authoritative voice, Germany and the Frankfurt Stock Exchange maintained their trust in the financial solvency of the North. On the Frankfurt Stock Exchange alone, Union bonds worth \$600 million were sold at a time when the government debt of the Northern states totaled \$3 billion. Even back then, the newspaper recognized that only a truly *United States of America* could unleash the energy that would quickly turn the country into a rich, influential nation.

Ulysses S. Grant, the victorious general who became the 18<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, visited Germany in 1877 near the end of his second term in office. In Frankfurt, he met with the editorial staff of the Frankfurter Zeitung and its publisher, Leopold Sonnemann.

Reportedly, Grant felt obliged to express his personal gratitude to this newspaper that “so courageously and successfully spoke out for the Union's cause.”

In his memoirs, Sonnemann wrote that the two men went for a walk in the Frankfurt Palm Garden. In a later address, President Grant thanked the citizens of Frankfurt for the trust they put in the United States by investing their savings in the North during the violent conflict.

We are proud of our history of transatlantic trust - and happy to host today's conference. I'm looking forward to an exciting event with many interesting discussions. Thank you for being here.