



The Day of German Reunification

■ by COL (DEU A) Peter UFFELMANN

This Year the German contingent celebrated the 19th anniversary of German reunification with a party held in the Summer Garden on Monday 5th October.

Addressing the participants before the national anthem of Germany, the German Senior National Representative, Colonel Peter Uffelmann welcomed the guests including the Chief of Staff NRDC-ITA and reminded everyone of the background and historical meaning of the 3rd October 1990, the occasion of the “German Reunification Day”.

Although the 20th anniversary of this very date will be only next year there are the 20th anniversaries of some events, which lead finally to German reunification about one year later.

Most probably the start was in May 1989: On 2nd May the breakdown of the Hungarian border barriers to Austria began, immediately leading to a massive increase in East German visitors to Hungary hoping to find there some possibility to cross this border. On the other hand the already existing and rising dissatisfaction with the overall situation in East Germany, namely in the economical area, but also caused by the obvious incapability of political reforms, was even more increased by the faked results of the local elections in East Germany on 7th May.

Meanwhile ten thousands of East Germans had went to Hungary and hundreds had fled to West German embassies in Prague and Warszawa.

On 4th September the first mass demonstration took place in Leipzig followed by weekly “Monday Demonstrations” with increasing participation up to 300.000 by end of October.

From 11th September Hungary officially allowed the East German refugees to cross the border to Austria leading to 18.000 border crossings in the first three days. From 30th September 17.000 overall were brought by train from Prague via

East to West Germany, however leading to again massive conflicts between demonstrators and security forces on 4th October in Dresden while the trains were passing. With violence already the “Monday Demonstration” in Leipzig on 2nd October had ended and violence again was the only resort of the security forces on 7th October, the 40th anniversary of East Germany, when ten thousands protested in Berlin against the costly celebrations and demonstrated for political reforms.

On 9th and 16th October the local party leaders did not pass the orders for feared and actually armed countermeasures against the weekly “Monday Demonstrations” in Leipzig to the security forces.

Being this already a first indication of internal disagreement within the East German regime the split became obvious on 18th October, when Honecker was forced to resign from all his functions. Even this however did not stop the ever increasing wave of refugees to West Germany: Precondition for any political reform therefore was the question of free travel between East and West Germany leading finally to the unplanned and uncoordinated opening of the border to West Berlin and West Germany in the night of 9th November 1989.

But also free travel between East and West Germany could not stop the Political process calling also for political reforms, which now even got reinforced. While in October the motto of the demonstrators still was “We are the people”, it soon changed into “We are one people”. German reunification became only a question of time and the details and was achieved on 3rd October 1990.

Finally Colonel Uffelmann thanked all for their attendance and participation in celebrating the Day of German Reunification.

The party ended with Bavarian beer and food and many interesting talks. ■