



### ST. JAMES'S PALACE

Cultural contacts between the countries and regions of Europe have, for centuries, been rich, rewarding and varied. I am, accordingly, delighted to contribute a few words to this collection of essays on relations between Britain and Saxony over the last couple of hundred years. Published in the wake of earlier editions of the Hefte, that looked at Saxony's cultural links with its neighbours in Italy, in Poland and in Bohemia, it is a reminder that the interaction that we now think of under the epithet of the 'global village' has long been (and in so many fields) a vibrant force throughout Europe.

It is a source of satisfaction to all in the United Kingdom that our forefathers played an important part in building Saxony's first railways and early 19th century industries, and that today the commercial relationship is strong and thriving. It is equally important, however, to recall that in all the major cultural spheres – in theatre and literature, in painting and music, in architecture and planning – the influences have also flowed, to our mutual benefit, in both directions. The fact that the old pre-war Dresden had a large British community, with both English and Scottish churches, speaks volumes for the myriad of personal and professional links between Britain and Germany, of which – in its way – my own family is an eloquent symbol.

In the disastrous disruption brought upon us all by two world wars, and notably by the inexpressible tragedy of the 1945 Dresden raid, much of value disappeared. Thankfully and particularly because of the activities of organisation like The Dresden Trust, British public consciousness of all that was fine in Dresden and Germany's central European regions has re-awakened. Many people in the United Kingdom are closely following Dresden's rediscovery of its heritage and its courageous attempts to recreate something not only of its physical beauty, but also of its cultural significance. We have long admired the re-establishment of the fine art collections and the re-emergence of operatic and musical excellence. We are reverently watching the Frauenkirche rise and we are holding our breath as the reconstruction of a historically-faithful Neumarkt is about to begin ...