

Statement by Lothar de Maizière at the signing of the Two Plus Four Treaty (Moscow, 12 September 1990)

Caption: On 12 September 1990, in Moscow, at the signing of what is known as the '2+4 Treaty' (the two German states and the four occupying powers), Lothar de Maizière, Chairman of the East German Council of Ministers, welcomes the event in his capacity as Foreign Minister of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and emphasises the impact of the Treaty for the reunification of Germany.

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1.

The Government of the GDR has deemed it appropriate, and has always hoped, that the foreign and security policy requirements of German unity would be worked out by common consent before the accession of the German Democratic Republic to the Federal Republic of Germany. With the adoption of the Treaty on the final Settlement with respect to Germany this goal has been attained. It is very gratifying for us to know that the efforts to produce an outcome acceptable to all sides have been successful.

The Treaty on the Final Settlement with respect to Germany is, unquestionably, an historic document. It ranks among the outstanding European treaties of the post-war period. This accord marks the end of the postwar era. It is the foundation stone for an era of peace, freedom and cooperation. At the same time, it prepares the way for the German people to regain its unity in free self-determination.

2.

I would like to thank all those involved very warmly. They have shown great understanding for the fact that the process of German unification has gathered extra momentum in recent months because of the political and economic realities, and the popular desire for unity.

The legitimate interests of all negotiating partners have been taken into consideration in a process of give and take that was by no means easy. Mutual trust and a willingness to meet one another halfway have provided signposts and set new standards during this negotiating process. What has been accomplished here should continue to serve as a pattern as Europe continues to grow together.

It is good to know that under the new political conditions obtaining on this continent even the most complicated and sensitive issues can be resolved. This encourages us to believe in a new quality of good-neighborly relations in Europe. The crux of the matter has been that all were governed by a desire to make use of the opportunities for the establishment of an all-European structure of freedom, peace and cooperation.

3.

The fact that the Two-plus-Four talks are being brought to a successful conclusion here in Moscow is of symbolic importance. It was Mikhail Gorbachev's courageous policy of perestroika and new thinking that opened the way to peaceful change in Central and Eastern Europe. This is renewed evidence that any pattern of security and stability in Europe needs to include the Soviet Union. The vision of a common European home is nearing fulfillment. The awareness of a European identity is overcoming the old divisions, and the greater Europe extending from the Atlantic to the Urals is taking shape again.

4.

For our European neighbors it is a matter of prime significance that the united Germany, too, recognizes her post-war frontiers definitively and without reservations and raises no territorial claims whatever vis-à-vis her neighbors. The statements issued by the Volkskammer and the Bundestag to this effect, the "Principles for the Settlement of the Frontier Question" and the provisions for corresponding amendments of the Basic Law contained in the intra-German Unification Treaty provide reliable safeguards here. The definitive recognition of the frontiers is a requirement of meaningful cooperation in Europe that is imbued with the spirit of reconciliation.

Trust can and must take the place of mistrust, and candour must replace suspicion and scepticism. The Polish Foreign Minister, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, last week described the territorial order that has now emerged in Europe as a basis for reconciliation and for a new departure. This accords with our own notions of future developments in Europe.

5.

In connection with the unification of Germany, it has been necessary to resolve complicated matters of security policy. The consensus reached has taken into account the interests of all involved. This also goes for the special military status of the territory of the present GDR. It will be possible to thin out military forces in the centre of Europe considerably as a united Germany forgoes the possession of ABC weapons and its total armed forces are limited to 370,000 troops, in line with the announcement made in Vienna. To this one should add the agreed withdrawal of Soviet troops from the present GDR territory within the next four years. The German territorial army units in the territory of the present GDR will not have a nuclear capability, nor will they have an offensive one in terms of size, structure and armaments.

It has been possible to master the difficult task of balancing out different interests because all those involved were prepared to stop thinking along the lines of military blocs. This reflected a desire to adapt the security structures in Europe to the new situation. Confrontation and a maximum concentration of military resources are giving way to cooperation and disarmament. In the East-West relationship we can now move on from the preservation of peace to the building of peace.

The new developments in the East-West relationship and in Europe can be partly put down to widespread distrust of outdated military doctrines and to an awareness that ever-mounting military expenditures and a relentless escalation of the arms race would, in the final analysis, serve neither security nor human interests. Far-reaching disarmament measures today hold out the hope that the resources thus becoming available can be used for economic, social and ecological purposes. It should be our aim, by scaling down the armed forces, to continue building mutual trust as we find more and more common ground.

The current crisis in the Gulf region indicates how fragile peace in the world can be. But it also demonstrates how strong the international community is when it comes to jointly standing up to an aggressor. For the first time in such a conflict, the great powers are not facing each other as antagonists. This success is due to trust built up over a period of years.

6.

The results of the Two plus Four talks provide a good basis for taking, at the forthcoming CSCE summit, the decisions needed to end the era of the Cold War and of oppression once and for all. The Iron Curtain has come down. It is being replaced by new bridges, by good-neighborliness and constructive cooperation.

The document to be signed today will restore full sovereignty to a united Germany. A major prerequisite has been the confident belief that no more war would emanate from German soil. The united Germany-to-be will preserve the memory of history and view its lessons as a permanent obligation.

One sign among several is that the two German states, in a letter from their Foreign Ministers to the Four Powers have affirmed that the graves and memorials of war victims will be protected. Political parties and associations directed against the constitutional order of the united Germany or against the notion of international understanding are inadmissible. And the results of the land reform earned out between 1945 and 1919 will be expressly recognized.

7.

Our Government has made a special point of ensuring that in a united Germany protection of good faith will apply, as a matter of principle, to international treaties concluded by the GDR. This finds its binding expression in the letter from the two German Foreign Ministers and in the Unification Treaty between the two German states. The same goes for contractual obligations towards member countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. They will continue to enjoy protection of good faith in a united German state.

8.

Finally, I should like to tell you how happy I am that the whole German people, in concert with its neighbors and the other peoples of Europe, is joining together in a united sovereign Germany. From the experience of the last 40 years people in the GDR know only too well that an absurd policy of self-isolation can only lead to a country being shut out and excluded from the mainstream of international development. We have never seen German unification as a go-it-alone operation, but always as a contribution to overcoming the division of Europe. Therefore, I support the proposal that the participants of the Foreign Ministers' Meeting of the CSCE states in New York should be officially informed about the results of the Two plus Four talks.

Formerly cut by the East-West divide, the united Germany is assuming a bridge-building role in Europe. The great old continent can now address itself to new tasks together with the North American democracies. It can turn its attention to the solution of the most pressing issues facing mankind, which are to preserve peace in freedom, to narrow the gap between North and South, and to maintain the natural foundations of human existence.