

Statement by Lothar de Maizière at the signing of the treaty between the FRG and the GDR (Bonn, 18 May 1990)

Caption: On 18 May 1990, at the signing of the Treaty establishing an economic, monetary and social union between the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Lothar de Maizière, Prime Minister in the East German Government, emphasises the importance of the agreement for the reunification of Germany.

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Statement by Lothar de Maizière, Prime Minister of the German Democratic Republic, on the occasion of the signing of the Treaty, Bonn, 18 May 1990

This is an important day for us; it marks the beginning of the realization of Germany's unity. Monetary, economic and social union makes the unification process irreversible. What we are doing here today constitutes a decisive step towards our goal of achieving German unity in freedom within a peaceful European order.

The State Treaty is a treaty between the two Governments in Germany. Its content shows that both Governments are determined not to tailor the unification process from above. The coalescence of the divided Germany begins rather with the people and their living conditions. In our discussions and negotiations over the past few weeks we were guided by the interests of the people in the two German states.

The spirit in which this treaty was formulated is consonant with the aspirations and desires of the people in the GDR for freedom, prosperity and social justice. This was not a case of foreign states negotiating, but of compatriots and friends refusing to be estranged any longer.

Both sides have been working on this treaty at full speed night and day since the policy statement was delivered a month ago. I wish to thank the hundreds of people who were involved in this task. The Treaty is a great accomplishment. I should like to thank in particular the chairmen of the two delegations, Herr Tietmeyer and Herr Krause², and all their staff.

This Treaty is a compromise. Yet it is not the result of haggling, but a good and balanced piece of work. It is a sound blueprint for the introduction of an ecologically-oriented social market economy.

At this juncture I should like to turn first of all to the citizens of the GDR:

The introduction of the Deutschmark, of dynamic pensions and unemployment insurance, and the aid for the GDR's national budget, are a generous political gesture on the part of the Federal Republic of Germany. No one should forget what the Ostmark would really be worth today on a free market. And no one should be under any illusion as to the seriousness of the crisis in the GDR's economy. We could not and cannot carry on as before.

Not every rosy dream which some people have associated with the State Treaty³ could be fulfilled. But no one will be worse off than before. On the contrary: what country has ever been afforded as good a starting position as we have with this Treaty?

We in the GDR must now make the best of it. Adopting a realistic view of the situation, we must set to work with a new pioneering spirit, with commitment, faith and confidence in our own strength. In doing so, we will never lose sight of social justice. Our social commitment will hardly be surpassed by anyone.

To the citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany I should like to say the following:

My Government is responsible first and foremost for the Germans in the GDR and for their interests. This is in line with the mandate given us by the electorate in our newly-won democracy.

At the same time, however, we and the Federal Government are jointly responsible for an undivided future. Our aim in the GDR, too, is to ensure the stability of the Deutschmark and to safeguard an overall economic balance in the Federal Republic and in the GDR, in other words in the new joint economic area. I promise that we will do everything in our power to ensure that the funds from the Federal Republic of Germany are invested wisely.

We consider your aid to be help for self-help. In the long term, we want to receive no free gifts. We wish to safeguard our future through our own efforts.

In view of the scope of the proposed monetary, economic and social union, it is quite natural that discussions should take place in both German states. I find it astonishing, however, that in some places there is more concern than hope. Too many of us feel discouraged by the host of problems which we undoubtedly face.

Perhaps we Germans should not focus excessively on ourselves in this regard either, but rather look to Europe. I am confident that no German will be poorer as a result of the unification process, but that we will all be better off. And this will not be at the expense of Europe, but in the interest of pan-European development in peace, freedom, prosperity and social justice.

German unity should thus emerge not from envious confrontation, but from fruitful cooperation. We and you, "Wessis" and "Os-sis" - these and similar words should soon disappear from our vocabulary.

The Government of the GDR will now present this Treaty to the freely-elected Volks-kammer. I underline our firm intention to adhere to the timetable with monetary, economic and social union coming into effect by 2 July 1990.

The outcome of the negotiations on the State Treaty is courageous, unique and promising. Courageous because this Treaty, which directly affects the existence and future of all Germans in the GDR, was negotiated in only 4 weeks, following 40 years of socialist planned economy.

Unique because never before has a command economy been transformed into a social market economy on a fixed date.

And promising. We will succeed because both sides are bound and even condemned to succeed.

We face a truly great and unique opportunity. As a rule, history does not repeat chances like these. We wish resolutely to use the opportunity for freedom, peace and social justice for the sake of Europe in order to create a better world for our children.