

Press Conference by Walter Ulbricht (19 January 1970)

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News Conference Remarks by Chairman Ulbricht on Negotiation of a Treaty Establishing Equal Relations Between East and West Germany, January 19, 1970

[...]

We are very serious about the conclusion of the treaty proposed by us on the establishment of equal relations between the GDR and the FRG. After two decades of noncontractual, and for long periods the poorest imaginable relations between the West German Federal Republic and the GDR, in the interest of the peace and security of the peoples and states of our heavily afflicted continent, we would be gratified if it were possible to guarantee a normal relationship under international law between the two German states, regardless of their social systems. The historical necessity for peaceful coexistence of the two German states and the experiences of the past 20 years make indispensable an agreement on normal, equal relations under international law and free of any discrimination.

[...]

Since West German Chancellor Brandt himself spoke about the existence of two German states, the question arises of how peaceful relations under international law between the two sovereign German states are possible. The state leaderships of both states recognize the fact that antagonistic social systems exist in the GDR and in the FRG, in the GDR the socialist system, in the West German Federal Republic the capitalist system.

From this fact we draw the conclusion that it is necessary to attain peaceful coexistence between these two states of different social systems. Ruling circles of the Federal Republic, in contrast, have drawn from this the conclusion of revanchist policy aimed at incorporating the GDR in NATO. We know that there is only one road for achieving peaceful coexistence. Therefore we again took the initiative and proposed that negotiations on our draft treaty be opened before the end of January between the Chairman of the GDR Council of Ministers and the West German Chancellor.

If we are asked the next goal of our efforts, then we say frankly: We want to prevent West Germany from taking the road of revanchism, atomic arms policy, and war policy and help the people of the West German Federal Republic, especially the West German working people and the West German youth, achieve a peaceful and secure future. This means simultaneously the establishment of good neighborly relations between the GDR and the FRG on the basis of equality and the exclusion of any discrimination. But this requires the conclusion of a corresponding treaty under international law.

[...]

The guarantee of peace and security in Europe and the normalization of the relations of all European states with all European states, regardless of their social systems, must therefore be based on the internationally binding decisions agreed upon in Potsdam — but especially conditions in the two German states must be in conformity with the basic provisions of the Potsdam agreement. There is still a considerable gap in this respect in the West German Federal Republic. This gap must be talked about undoubtedly quite seriously during the proposed negotiations on the conclusion of a treaty based on international law between the GDR and the FRG. Ever since the peace treaty was foiled intentionally by the Paris agreements, and particularly since already one-quarter of a century has passed since the end of the World War II, it is not only unrealistic but inadmissible — even an expression of intentions directed against peace — if the government of the Federal Republic continues with reference to alleged later peace treaty settlements to avoid the necessary unambiguous recognition of the results of the World War II and of the situation stemming from the victory of the anti-Hitler coalition. This tactic has justifiably been interpreted as offering the Bonn government the possibility of maintaining the unrealistic demand that the frontier of 1937 is valid for an unlimited time. That means that the nonexistence of the peace treaty is used as pretext and, at the same time, as camouflage for the policy of revenge of the West German imperialism. A dodging of indispensable internationally binding decisions through a reference to a peace treaty which may eventually materialize obviously provides the West German Government — if the conditions seem favorable to it — with the possibility to wipe off the

table all provisional frontier recognitions and nonuse of force declarations and the like by arguing that the prerequisites for such treaties or statements have become invalid because a peace treaty has not been realized. Yet it is clear that one can talk about efforts for détente in Western Germany only if the Government of the West German Federal Republic legally recognizes the historical changes brought about in Europe as the result of the World War II.

The draft treaty contains no stipulations which permit the conclusion that we wish to obtain privileges for the GDR as opposed to the Federal Republic. Certainly it cannot be considered a maximum demand if we, too, clearly establish that we can under no circumstances concede to the Federal Republic any privileges as opposed to the GDR. Thus it is obvious that our proposals represent minimum demands.

The Federal Republic considers itself as a state recognized under international law. We have nothing to object to in this respect. Of course, the GDR raises the same claim. It cannot be considered as a maximum demand if we establish that the GDR, too, has been a state recognized under international law for 20 years, assumed all obligations resulting therefrom, and of course does not refuse to claim the rights resulting therefrom. We will under no circumstances permit these rights to be disputed by the government of the Federal Republic. The Government of the West German Federal Republic should finally give up its policy of discrimination against the GDR and its citizens and stop constantly interfering in the question as well as in regard to the basic policy line toward the GDR to what extent Mr. Brandt's government persistently continues the wrecked CDU/CSU policy with certain changes under the pressure of united reaction.

[...]

If the Bonn Government really wants to renounce the use of force vis-à-vis the GDR, then it first of all has to prove the sincerity of its intention by recognizing the GDR as a sovereign German state and by establishing equal — that means international — relations with her. History teaches us that agreements on the renunciation of force do not serve their purpose if they are not linked with a recognition of the borders of the respective states under international law.

[...]

By the way, the conclusion of treaties on the nonuse of force between the socialist states and the West German Federal Republic is a common matter for the socialist community of states. For this reason we welcome the fact that talks providing for a treaty on the nonuse of force were started between the Soviet Union and the FRG. It certainly will be understood that, for the time being, we are awaiting the outcome of the talks between the Soviet Union and the FRG before, based on the result of the Soviet negotiations, we conclude a treaty with the FRG.

Of course, the problems of a nonuse of force treaty are among the basic problems which should be discussed during the negotiations which we are still ready to hold. The treaty on the nonuse of force has to be concluded between two sovereign German states. A nonuse of force treaty only has real meaning if it derives from the acknowledgment of the status quo and comprises the renunciation of a policy which only can materialize by force.

[...]

As for the conditions posed by Mr. Brandt with regard to holding a European security conference: In the process of negotiations between the European countries it will be made clear to Mr. Brandt that his preconditions are unacceptable and that the security conference is possible only if it is prepared and carried out on the basis of equality and without any preconditions. We do not pose preconditions to anybody. We hope that the government of the West German Federal Republic will reconsider its stand and that it will drop the conditions it has now formulated. Mr. Brandt hinted at this when he said that he did not want to have his conditions interpreted as preconditions.