

Statement by Willi Stoph (Erfurt, 19 March 1970)

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Statement by Minister-President Stoph Stressing the Need to Recognize the Existence of Two German States, Made at the First Meeting Between the East and West German Heads of Government, Erfurt, East Germany, March 19, 1970

[...]

Our meeting is undoubtedly an event of political significance. For the first time in the existence of the GDR and the FRG their heads of government are meeting to discuss basic questions concerning normalization of relations between the two independent sovereign states. The citizens of the GDR and FRG and all peoples of Europe are watching this meeting with understandable attention. In view of the tension in Europe they expect a constructive contribution to safeguarding peace in the heart of our continent.

We certainly agree, Herr Federal Chancellor, that in the interest of the matter we should talk to each other quite openly, without belittling anything or remaining silent about anything. The governments of the states which you and I represent here bear a great responsibility for ensuring that war never again starts on German soil. Two dreadful world wars have, after all, been caused in this century by governments of imperialist Germany.

[...]

Everyone knows that we have not come together here to settle second or third-rank questions. The issue is the all-decisive question of bringing about a turn in GDR-FRG relations in the interests of European security, of the peaceful life of the peoples of our states.

The relations between states are now completely abnormal. Serious dangers arise from this. Therefore, the permanent and fundamental settlement of the relationship between the GDR and FRG is on the agenda. It can consist only of the establishment of relations under international law on the basis of complete equal rights. For this all the prerequisites exist on the GDR side.

We do not expect — as our draft treaty proves — the FRG Government to do more than we are ready to do ourselves. That is an attitude of genuine equal rights and nondiscrimination. Therefore, the talk that it was a matter of one or the other side capitulating is a complete distortion of the real facts of the matter. It is not a question of prestige, either. It is — let me again underline this — the most humane cause, the safeguarding of peace, which is the issue. This basic question cannot be bypassed by suggestions that all contested issues should be excluded.

Obstacles and barriers erected in pursuance of a policy seeking to change the European status quo and frontiers and revising the results of World War II must be removed. That applies undoubtedly to the policy of the Federal Republic, which for more than two decades bore the stamp of the forces of restoration and revenge led by the CDU-CSU.

You, Herr Federal Chancellor, frequently speak of intra-German relations in regard to GDR-FRG relations. One of your ministries also bears this name. However, after the partition and the signing of the Paris agreements by the government of the Federal Republic, this is absurd and betrays political intentions which are not compatible with normal, equal relations between our states. After the Federal Republic, in the face of all warnings, integrated itself with the NATO system by means of the Paris agreements, thus declaring itself a foreign country toward the GDR, there can be no intra-German relations. The assent by the Government of the Federal Republic to the Paris agreements not only had an antinational but beyond that, indeed, an aggressive imperialist character. Permit me to refer to Article 2 of the “German Convention” which, it will be remembered, says that the Western powers retain as a whole all rights with regard to Germany which they had hitherto exercised or which had been invested in them. Article 7 goes even further. It proclaims as an aim that the GDR is to be incorporated into the monopoly-capitalist social system of the Federal Republic and to be integrated in the Western imperialist pact system.

If, according to your own statements, these treaties are the foundation of the present Federal Government

policy, the formula of intra-German relations can only mean that the Federal Republic system of imperialist domination is to be extended to the GDR and the GDR is to be incorporated into the NATO Pact. Quite as untenable is the thesis held in the Federal Republic of four-power responsibility for the GDR and its capital Berlin as well. Regarding the GDR, it can be easily seen from our constitution and treaties, concluded by the GDR in this respect under international law, that it is not subject either to a four-power or a three-power competency. The GDR is an independent and sovereign socialist state.

Inherent in the formula of “special intra-German relations” is the old claim for subordinating the GDR to a relationship of dependency. Such claims, which are contrary to reality, merely seek to maintain the old presumptions to sole representation in a varied form and continue the discrimination against the GDR by different methods. You will understand that this is entirely unacceptable for us and is no subject for negotiations.

[...]

The GDR places nothing in the way of a relationship of peaceful coexistence. The GDR and FRG are subjects of international law with equal rights. We have never questioned the existence of the FRG state as a subject in international law. We have been and are ready to conclude treaties under international law on the settlement of relations.

The Federal Republic Government thinks differently. It continues to make the unacceptable precondition that we should forego recognition under international law, that is, full equality of rights as a sovereign state. But it was the GDR which has consistently carried out the basic provisions of the Potsdam agreement. The question is whether your government, Herr Federal Chancellor, is ready to alter the destructive attitudes toward the GDR which prevailed hitherto. There cannot be talk of normal relations as long as it is also the practice of your government to discriminate against and injure the GDR on the international level. How can one speak seriously of equal rights if your foreign minister issues official service directives to prevent the establishment of normal relations by other states with the GDR and even the establishment of trade missions? We have watched precisely the vehemence with which the representatives of the FRG Government proceed against any step by third states to regulate their relations with the GDR. That also applies to the constant attempts to keep the GDR from cooperation on terms of equality in international organizations.

[...]

A GDR draft treaty lies on the table, a draft treaty which makes it possible to solve the main question, the establishment of equal relations based on international law between the GDR and the FRG. The GDR Government is ready to consult with the FRG Government about this treaty and to conclude it. Conclusion of such a treaty on opening equal relations under international law would open a new page in the book of the relations between GDR and FRG.

The existence of such a treaty in accordance with the generally recognized principles of international law would be a great relief for people in the Federal Republic and GDR and in all European countries, because it would achieve a little more peace, a little security.

Let us bear in mind: The establishment of normal relations alone will not yet banish the dangers arising from the activity and mighty power of the arms combines, neo-Nazis, revanchist associations, and daily dissemination of revanchist thoughts of revenge and crusades in the Federal Republic. But a practical first step would have been taken in the right direction, after many hundreds of steps in the wrong direction in the past 25 years — starting with the separate currency reform and the separate formation of the Federal Republic, via rearmament and the Paris treaties, right up to membership in NATO.

Apart from the establishment of equal diplomatic relations between our states, our draft treaty contains the proposal to agree on the renunciation of force between the GDR and the FRG. In this we naturally presume that renunciation of force will be based on mutual recognition of the contracting states and their frontiers

under international law. Renunciation of force agreements valid under international law can thus be concluded only between states which recognize each other as what they are, namely, subjects of international law.

Renunciation of force without this elementary prerequisite would be without substance, would be hollow. I emphasize: It is not a matter of mere noncommittal respect, but unreserved recognition under international law of state frontiers and territorial integrity.

The GDR draft treaty also contains the significant provision that the GDR and FRG shall, without delay, apply for their admission to the United Nations. No one can deny that it would be in the interest of both states and their citizens, as well as in the interest of the universality of the world organization, if the GDR and FRG with their considerable political, economic, and cultural potentials, were to take part in the worldwide work of the United Nations with equal rights. In this way they would contribute to the peaceful cooperation of the peoples in all fields.

Finally, the GDR draft treaty provides that both states renounce nuclear weapons in any form, do not manufacture, station, or store chemical or biological weapons on their territories, and that they undertake to support holding negotiations on disarmament.

The GDR Government renews its proposal to agree with the FRG on disarmament steps binding under international law. I ask you, Herr Federal Chancellor, whether it would not be one of the most humane acts to free man from the fear of the most dreadful and dangerous weapons, from the fear of poisons, gases, and bacteria.

Our talk provides an opportunity for speaking directly about the decisive questions of safeguarding peace in the heart of Europe which have been raised and constructively answered in the GDR draft treaty. If the GDR and the FRG began normal relations under international law in the process of enforcing peaceful coexistence, if all hostile policies against the GDR were abandoned, it would be also possible to turn to other questions. However, solution of the basic questions of peaceful coexistence is the prerequisite of everything else.

I propose to you that we begin discussion of the GDR draft treaty. It should be the aim of our talks to agree that the GDR and the FRG establish equal relations under international law. In this context, the GDR Government deems it necessary that in the further course of the deliberation we turn toward the following fundamental questions, starting from the draft treaty submitted to you:

1. Establishment of normal equal relations between the GDR and the FRG on the basis of international law and free from all discrimination; abandonment of the FRG Government's claim to sole representation in any form.
2. Noninterference with foreign-political relations of the other state; final and unequivocal renunciation of the Hallstein Doctrine.
3. In accordance with Article 2, Paragraph 4, of the UN Charter, renunciation of force between the GDR and the FRG with unrestricted mutual recognition of their status of subject [*Subjectivitaet*] under international law, their territorial integrity, and the inviolability of their existing state frontiers.
4. Application for UN membership of the GDR and FRG.
5. Renunciation of the acquisition or control in any form of nuclear weapons; renunciation of the production, use, and storage of chemical and bacteriological weapons; reduction of arms expenditure by 50 percent.
6. Discussion of questions concerning the necessary removal of all vestiges of World War II.

7. Settlement of all FRG debts to the GDR and regulation of the reparation on obligations by the FRG.

In conclusion, Herr Federal Chancellor, I should like to reaffirm again the GDR Government's determination to arrive at a constructive solution. My premise is that, in view of the importance and complicated nature of the matter, it will be necessary for the heads of government themselves to come together for possible further discussions. In this case I state my readiness to meet you for another conversation in an FRG locality near the frontier.

I am convinced that if the FRG Government looks forward, and shows courage and resolution, prerequisites can be created for a settlement of the relations between the GDR and FRG in the interest of peace and European security.