



German History in Documents and Images

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Lothar de Maizière's Government Program (April 19, 1990)

Prime Minister Lothar de Maizière of the CDU presents his government program to the newly elected *Volkskammer*. He focuses on rapid unification but also insists that West Germany must share its wealth to make conditions acceptable for the East German people.

The renewal of our society grew from the cry "We are the people!" The people have become conscious of themselves. For the first time in decades, the population of the GDR has constituted itself as a people. The elections that led to the formation of this parliament were the people's elections. For the first time, the *Volkskammer* does justice to its name.

And the cry "We are the people!" gave rise to the cry "We are *one* people!" The people of the GDR considered itself part of a people, part of the German people, which is to grow together once again. Our voters gave clear expression to their political will in the elections of March 18, 1990. That will is binding on us. It is our joint responsibility is to fulfill it as best we can. [. . .]

The task given to the government by the voters demands the establishment of German unity in an undivided, peaceful Europe. This demand includes conditions regarding speed and quality.

Unity must come as quickly as possible but under conditions that are as good, reasonable, and workable as necessary.

The debate on a monetary conversion at [an exchange rate of] 1:1 or 1:2 has made it abundantly clear that there is a connection here and that we must agree on conditions that ensure that GDR citizens do not feel like second-class citizens of the Federal Republic. Both goals, speed and quality, can be best guaranteed if our path to unity is based on a treaty in accordance with Article 23 of the Basic Law.

Since last summer we have experienced many wonderful signs of friendship, helpfulness, and openness from the citizens of the Federal Republic. But we are also concerned to see a trend toward decreasing willingness to sacrifice and to show solidarity.

Hence, we extend a heartfelt request to the citizens of the Federal Republic: Bear in mind that we have had to carry the heavier burden of German history for 40 years. The GDR, as is well known, received no Marshall Plan aid; instead, we had to pay reparations. We do not expect sacrifices from you. We expect mutuality and solidarity. The division can only be eliminated by dividing things up.

We will work hard and effectively, but we continue to need your support and solidarity, just as we felt it last fall.

We are asked: Don't you have anything to contribute to German unity? And we answer: Of course, we do!

We contribute our land and our people, our established values and our diligence, our training and our ability to improvise. After all, necessity is the mother of invention.

We contribute the experiences of the past decades, which we share with the countries of Eastern Europe.

We contribute our appreciation for social justice, solidarity, and tolerance. In the GDR, there was education against racism and xenophobia, even if there was little opportunity to exercise it in practice. We must not, and will not, give xenophobia any place in our society.

We contribute our bitter and our proud experiences on the threshold between conformity and resistance.

We contribute our identity and our dignity. Our identity: that is our history and culture, our failures and our achievements, our ideals and our suffering. Our dignity: that is our freedom and our human right to self-determination.

But the issue is more than the last 40 years. Germany has a lot of history to come to terms with – especially that which we have blamed on others and thus taken too little responsibility for ourselves. But whoever lays claim to the positive achievements of Germany history must also acknowledge its guilt, regardless of when he was born or began playing an active role in this history himself.

Germany is our heritage of historical achievement and historical guilt. When we stand by Germany, we also stand by this dual heritage.

Yet we are not stopping at Germany. Our focus is Europe. We know the current weaknesses of the GDR. But we also know: It is a country that is by no means poor in economic possibilities.

The actual problems of our world – we all know it – are not German-German or East-West problems. The actual problems stem from the structural inequity between North and South.

If a mortal threat to human life is not to emerge from this inequity, then we, too, must participate in fighting it. The establishment of a more just international economic order is not only a matter for the Great Powers or the U.N.; rather, it is the task of every member of the community of nations.

The peaceful coexistence of Germans and foreigners in our country can also contribute to a new quality of togetherness among different peoples.

Clarifying the legal situation of our fellow citizens of foreign descent and appointing representatives for foreigners at different levels will be just as necessary as promoting initiatives that allow cultural diversity to be experienced as enrichment. The liberation of Nelson Mandela and the abolition of apartheid in South Africa, the fate of the tropical rain forests, aid for the Third World – these problems concern us just as much as our own do. In fact, they are our own problems.

We know that our ability to solve our own problems depends on how ready we are to see the problems of others as well.

Madam President,
Distinguished members of parliament!

The coalition government that has been formed faces great, difficult, and very concrete tasks that require clear and strategic decisions.

The economic policy goal of the coalition government involves converting the previous state-controlled command economy into an ecologically-oriented social market economy.

As Much Market as Possible and as Much State as Necessary

The transition from a state planned economy to a social market economy must proceed in quick but orderly steps. Over the next several months, both will have to exist side by side, whereby we need to work according to the motto, "as much market as possible and as much state as necessary." In this context, we attach the utmost importance to competition among all enterprises. It is the most important regulating factor in a market economy.

The governing coalition will pass laws to promote the stability and growth of the economy, an anti-trust law, a revision of the banking law, and above all it will introduce a law on breaking up combines and large-scale enterprises in order to create productive enterprise units typical for their respective branches.

In this context, the functions and structure of the Trusteeship Agency [*Treuhand-Anstalt*] need to be fashioned in such a way that an instrument is created with which to break up state-owned enterprises and convert them into appropriate organizational forms. The dismantling of the planning system, as it has existed until now, should be largely complete by the time the monetary union takes effect.

The Monetary, Economic, and Social Union Must Comprise an Inseparable Unit

Proceeding from the offer of the government of the Federal Republic of Germany to the government of the GDR to create a monetary, economic, and social union, the governing coalition has the task of guaranteeing the requisite legal preconditions. In negotiations with the federal government, we proceed from the firm conviction that the monetary, economic, and social union must comprise an inseparable unit, all parts of which must take effect simultaneously. This includes start-up financing, especially in the area of social welfare.

We confirm the oft-made statement that the introduction of the D-Mark to the territory of the GDR should proceed as follows:

- at the rate of 1:1 for wages and salaries,
- also at the rate of 1:1 for pensions, with a step-by-step increase up to a net pension level of 70% after 45 years of insurance payments,
- also at the rate of 1:1 for savings accounts and insurance policies operating as savings, whereby a differentiated exchange procedure should be pursued.

The domestic debts of nationally-owned enterprises, cooperatives, and private firms are to be handled in a more differentiated manner.

Here, the monetary conversion should, in principal, be based on the difference in productivity between the Federal Republic and the GDR. The government is inclined to favor a far-reaching cancellation of domestic debts, particularly in the private and cooperative sectors, in order to strengthen their competitiveness, and to achieve a rate of at least 2:1 for converting the domestic debt of nationally-owned enterprises. Adjustment assistance will also be given to competitively organized firms, for example, by providing debt relief within the framework of typical EC provisions for company reorganization.

Transition provisions applied to Greece, Portugal, and Spain for several years to protect their economies, and we, too, have to agree on comparable protective measures with the government of the Federal Republic.

In adopting the economic and social legislation system of the Federal Republic, we must see to it that the necessary special regulations are in place during the transition period. Here, we have in mind the Saarland model. At the same time, discriminatory economic and trade restrictions should be eliminated. [. . .]

Source: "Lothar de Maizière's Government Program" (April 19, 1990), in *Deutschland Archiv* 23, no. 5 (1990), p. 795ff; also reprinted in Volker Gransow and Konrad Jarausch, eds., *Die Deutsche Vereinigung: Dokumente zu Bürgerbewegung, Annäherung und Beitritt* [German Reunification: Documents on the Citizens' Movement, Rapprochement, and Accession]. Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1991, pp. 157-59.

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