

Helmut Kohl's Ten-Point Plan for German Unity (November 28, 1989)

Abstract

West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl surprises the public by presenting the Bundestag with a multi-step plan for unification with a democratizing GDR. The first step was closer cooperation between the two German states; this would be followed by the formation of a confederation and finally by the establishment of a federation that was compatible with East-West détente and European integration.

Source

First: To begin with, immediate measures are required as a result of the events of recent weeks, particularly the tide of refugees and the new scale of tourist traffic. The federal government is prepared to provide immediate assistance where it is needed. We will help with humanitarian aid and also with medical provisions to the extent that this is desired and useful.

[...]

Second: The federal government will continue, now as before, to cooperate with the GDR in all areas that directly benefit people on both sides. This applies particularly to economic, scientific-technological, and cultural cooperation. It is especially important to intensify cooperation in the field of environmental protection. Here, it is already possible, regardless of how things may develop, to make swift decisions on new projects. The same holds – and here, the Federal Postmaster General has initiated relevant talks – for the earliest possible and most comprehensive extension of telephone links with the GDR and the telephone network of the GDR. [...]

Third: I have offered to expand extensively our assistance and cooperation, if a fundamental transformation in the political and economic system of the GDR is definitively accepted and irreversibly set in motion. For us, and especially for me, "irreversible" means that the GDR state leadership reaches an understanding with the opposition groups on a change in the constitution and a new election law.

We support the demand for free, equal, and secret elections in the GDR, in which independent – and, of course, that also means non-socialist – parties participate. The SED must give up its monopoly on power. The demand to introduce constitutional conditions means, above all, the abolition of laws on political crimes and, as a consequence, the immediate release of all political prisoners.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, economic assistance can only prove effective if fundamental reforms of the economic system follow. This is demonstrated by the experiences of all COMECON states; it has nothing to do with lecturing on our part. The bureaucratic planned economy must be dismantled.

We do not want to stabilize conditions that have become untenable. We know: there can only be an economic upturn if the GDR opens itself up to Western investment, if it creates conditions for a market economy and enables private economic activity. I do not understand how one can raise the reproach of tutelage in this context. Every day, Hungary and Poland offer the GDR – likewise a COMECON member – examples that it could readily follow.

Once more, I want to emphasize this clearly: these are not preconditions; rather, this is plainly and simply the objective requirement if assistance is to have any chance of taking hold. [...]

Incidentally, there can be no doubt that this is also what the people in the GDR want. They want economic freedom, and they want at last to reap the fruits of their labor and achieve greater prosperity.

Fourth: Prime Minister Modrow has spoken in his policy statement of a contractual community. We are prepared to take up this idea. The proximity of both states in Germany, and the special character of the relationship between them, requires an ever tighter network of agreements in all areas and at all levels.

This cooperation will increasingly require common institutions as well. Already existing commissions can take on new tasks, additional ones can be formed. I am thinking particularly about the areas of the economy, transportation, environmental protection, science and technology, health, and culture. I need not emphasize that in everything that has yet to occur Berlin must remain fully incorporated. That was, is, and shall remain our policy.

Fifth: We are also prepared to take yet another decisive step, namely, to develop confederative structures between both states in Germany, with the aim of creating a federation, that is, a federal order, in Germany. However, that absolutely presupposes a democratically legitimized government in the GDR.

Here, we could imagine the following institutions being established soon after free elections are held: a joint government committee for permanent consultation and political coordination, joint committees of experts, a common parliamentary committee – and several others in view of any completely new developments.

Previous policy towards the GDR, given the circumstances, had to restrict itself essentially to small steps, by which we attempted, above all, to alleviate the effects of [Germany's] division on the people and to keep alive and sharpen consciousness for the unity of the nation. If we find ourselves facing a democratically legitimized, that is, a freely elected, government as a partner, entirely new perspectives will open up. Step by step, new forms of institutional cooperation can emerge and be expanded.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, such a growing-together lies in the continuity of German history. State organization in Germany has almost always meant a confederation or a federation. We can certainly draw on these historical experiences.

No one knows today what a reunified Germany will ultimately look like. That unity will come, however, when the people in Germany want it – of this, I am certain.

Sixth: The development of inter-German relations remains embedded in the pan-European process, that is, within the framework of East-West relations. The future architecture of Germany must fit into the future architecture of Europe as a whole. In this regard, the West has served as a pacesetter with its conception of a lasting and just European order of peace.

In the joint declaration from June of this year, which I have already cited, General Secretary Gorbachev and I spoke of the building blocks of a "common European house." As an example, I should like to mention absolute respect for the integrity and security of every state. Every state has the right to choose freely its own political and social system. I should like to mention absolute respect for the principles and norms of international law, especially respect for the right of national self-determination. I should like to mention the realization of human rights. I should like to mention respect for, and cultivation of, the historically rooted cultures of the nations of Europe. With all of this – as General Secretary Gorbachev and I declared – we want to carry on historically rooted European traditions and contribute toward overcoming the division of Europe.

Seventh: The attraction and appeal of the European Community is, and shall remain, a decisive constant of the pan-European development. We want to, and must, strengthen it further. The European Community now faces the challenge of reaching out with openness and flexibility to the reform-oriented

states of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe. Recently, the heads of state and government of the EC member states also came to this conclusion at their meeting in Paris.

In this regard, the GDR is obviously included. The federal government, therefore, advocates the rapid conclusion of a trade and cooperation treaty with the GDR that broadens the GDR's access to the Common Market, also as far as prospects for 1992 are concerned. For the future we can very well imagine certain forms of association that introduce the economies of the reform-oriented states of Central and Southeastern Europe to the EC and thereby help to eradicate the economic and social differences on our continent. This is one of the most important questions if the Europe of tomorrow is to be a common Europe.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, we continue to understand the process of regaining German unity as something that is also a European concern. It must, therefore, also be seen in connection with European integration. I want to formulate this very simply: the EC must not end at the Elbe; rather, it must also maintain openness towards the East. Only in this sense – for we have always understood the Europe of twelve to be only a part and not the whole – can the European Community serve as the foundation for a truly comprehensive European unification. Only in this sense is the identity of all Europeans maintained, asserted, and developed. This identity, ladies and gentlemen, is based not only in the cultural diversity of Europe, but also, and above all, in the basic rights of freedom, democracy, human rights, and self-determination. In so far as the states of Central and Southeastern Europe fulfill the necessary preconditions, we would also welcome it if they were to join the European Council and especially the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Eighth: The CSCE process is part of the core of this pan-European architecture. We want to push it forward and use the existing forums: the human rights conferences in Copenhagen in 1990 and in Moscow in 1991, the conference on economic cooperation in Bonn in 1990, the symposium on cultural heritage in Cracow in 1991, and not least the upcoming follow-up meeting in Helsinki. There, we should also think about new institutional forms of pan-European cooperation. We could quite easily imagine a common institution for the coordination of West-East economic cooperation, as well as the establishment of a pan-European environmental council.

Ninth: Overcoming the division of Europe and the division of Germany requires far-reaching and speedy steps towards disarmament and arms control. Disarmament and arms control must keep pace with political developments and, if necessary, be accelerated. This is especially true for the negotiations in Vienna on reducing conventional forces in Europe, for the agreement on confidence-building measures, and for the world-wide ban on chemical weapons that I hope will come about in 1990. This also requires that the nuclear potential of the great powers be reduced to the strategically required minimum. [...]

Tenth: With this comprehensive policy we are working towards a condition of peace in Europe in which the German people can regain their unity in free self-determination. Reunification – that is, regaining Germany's state unity – remains the political aim of the federal government. We are grateful that we have received renewed support from our friends and partners in the declaration of the Brussels NATO summit in May of this year.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are aware that the path to German unity poses many difficult questions to which no one today can, by rights, give definitive answers. This especially includes – I want to emphasize this – the difficult and decisive question of the overarching security structures in Europe.

Linking the German Question to the development of Europe as a whole and to West-East relations – as I have explained in these ten points – makes possible an organic development that takes into account the interests of everyone involved and – this is our goal – paves the way for a peaceful and free development in Europe. Only together and in a climate of mutual trust can we peacefully overcome the division of

Europe, which has also always been the division of Germany.

This means that we need prudence, reason, and good judgment on everyone's part so that the recently begun, very hopeful development continues steadily and peacefully. It is not reforms that could disturb this process, but rather their denial. It is not freedom, but rather its suppression, that creates instability. Each successful step towards reform means more stability and an increase in freedom and security for all of Europe.

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, in a few weeks the last decade of this century begins, a century that witnessed so much misery, blood, and suffering. Today there are many hopeful signs that the nineties harbor opportunities for more peace and more freedom in Europe and in Germany. It also depends decisively – everyone senses this – on our, the German, contribution. We must all meet this challenge of history.

Source: Helmut Kohl, “Zehn-Punkte-Programm zur Überwindung der Teilung Deutschlands und Europas” (November 28, 1989), in *Bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung*, November 29, 1989; reprinted in Volker Gransow and Konrad Jarausch, eds., *Die Deutsche Vereinigung: Dokumente zu Bürgerbewegung, Annäherung und Beitritt*. Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1991, pp. 101–04.

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