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**Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker,
at the State Ceremony to mark the Day of German Unity
on 3 October 1990
in Berlin**

The preamble to our constitution, which is now valid for all Germans, expresses the quintessence of what is uppermost in our minds today: We have achieved the unity and freedom of Germany in free self-determination. We are resolved to serve world peace in a united Europe. In pursuing this aim we are conscious of our responsibility to God and man.

Our hearts are filled with gratitude and joy, and at the same time we are aware of the magnitude and seriousness of our commitment. History in Europe and Germany now offers us a chance we have never had before. We are going through one of those rare phases in history when something really can be changed for the better. Let us not for one moment forget what this means to us.

Massive problems confront us at home and abroad. We do not ignore them. We take the reservations expressed by our neighbours seriously. We also realize how difficult it will be to fulfil the expectations placed in us by all sides. But we will be guided by confidence, not fear and doubt. Decisive for us is our firm determination to see our responsibilities clearly and to face up to them together. That determination gives us the strength to see our day- to-day problems in the perspective of our history and future in Europe.

For the first time we Germans are not a source of dispute in Europe. Our unity was not forced upon anyone but agreed peacefully. It is part of a historical process embracing the whole of Europe aimed at securing freedom for the nations and establishing a new peaceful order in our continent. We Germans wish to serve this aim. Our unity is directed to its achievement.

We now have a state which we ourselves no longer regard as provisional and whose identity and integrity are no longer disputed by our neighbours. On this day the united German nation finds its acknowledged place in Europe.

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What this means is obvious from the significance of frontiers. No European country has as many neighbours as we. For centuries frontiers have been a source of violence and terrible bloodshed. Now all our neighbours and we ourselves live within secure borders. These borders are protected not only by the renunciation of force but by the clear awareness of their changed function. Those who were forced to leave their homeland suffered immeasurably. But there is no point in any new dispute over national boundaries. All the greater is our desire to remove their divisive character. We want all Germany's frontiers to be bridges to our neighbours.

The ideals of the French Revolution, together with the constitutional evolution in the United States and the United Kingdom, laid the foundations for Western democracy. A perception of freedom based on humanity and the rule of law emerged which has increasingly become the standard. It cannot be applied everywhere right away, but wherever the urge for political freedom, or a system marked by efficiency, social justice and respect for human rights breaks through - even into the heart of Peking - the values and rules of the Western democracies are everyone's yardstick.

We Germans participated in the democratic evolution at a very early stage but we applied its ideals and principles only half-heartedly. The rule of law in our country had grown from our own traditions. In the Prussian reforms of the Napoleonic era local self-government became the source of democratic convictions. The people sought unity, right and freedom as personified by the St. Paul's Church parliament. They definitely wanted to be united, and this aim was finally achieved in 1871, but they had no say in the matter. Time and again the Germans went on a romantic search for a third road to their country's internal order and its place in Europe. But that was an illusion. The Weimar Republic, too, failed to establish a viable democracy.

When the Federal Republic of Germany was founded there was deep concern at first that its integration with the West might perpetuate the division of Germany. This time, however, the path did not lead to a dead end. Initially only one part of Germany was allowed to follow that path, but from today we can together make a new beginning. The unification of Germany is more than the mere enlargement of the Federal Republic. The day has come when, for the first time in history, Germany as a whole can take its permanent place among the Western democracies.

To us and to all our neighbours this is a process of fundamental importance. It will change the centre of Europe. We shall play a major part in the process, jointly with our Western partners with whom we are closely linked by virtue of our common values and objectives.

Amidst our European neighbours we were destined to remain divided for over forty years. For the one part of the country this proved

to be a boon, for the other a burden, but it was, and remains, our common German fate. A fate which embraces the past and the responsibility for its consequences. The SED (Socialist Unity Party) in East Germany tried to decree the country's division. It thought it sufficient to proclaim the socialist society of the future in order to free itself from the burden of history.

But in the German Democratic Republic the people saw, and felt, it differently. They had to carry a far greater part of the burden of the war than their countrymen in the West and they have always felt that recalling the past with a sense of responsibility would give them the indispensable strength to free themselves for the future. Hardly had the imposed ideological parlance gone then they faced up squarely to history's outstanding questions. The world has noted with great respect how sincerely the free forces, and especially young people, in Eastern Germany considered it their responsibility to make up for the old regime's failure to bear its share of the responsibility for the past. The recent visit to Israel by the presidents of both freely elected parliaments to commemorate the holocaust, the most heinous of all crimes, left a deep impression in that country. It symbolizes the common identity of the Germans precisely as regards their historical responsibility. Nazi tyranny and the war it unleashed brought untold suffering and injustice on nearly the whole of Europe and our own country. We will always remember the victims, and we are grateful for the growing signs of reconciliation between people and nations.

At no time in the post-war era did the Germans, particularly the Berliners, cease to hope that freedom would return and that the division of Europe would be overcome. And yet no one had the imagination to predict the course of events. So what is happening today is to us a gift. This time history was well disposed towards us Germans. But this is all the more reason for conscientious reflection.

After the Second World War the division of Germany epitomized the division of Europe. It was not the result of the joint will of the victors but rather of their disagreement. The growing East-West confrontation cemented that division. But we will not use that as an excuse. No one in our country will forget that there would have been no division if the war started by Hitler had not happened.

Against the background of the Cold War and under the protective shield of the nuclear stalemate, the social systems in East and West competed with one another for over forty years. That phase is now drawing to a close.

The Soviet leadership under President Gorbachev has realized that reforms leading to democracy and a market economy have become inevitable. But without freedom such reforms would be doomed to failure. As a result, courageous decisions were taken. The Soviet Union ceased dominating its allies and respected their right to decide their own

political future. This led to the unprecedented peaceful revolutions in Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe. It led to the acceptance of the German people's free decision in favour of national unity.

The success of the reform course pursued by the Soviet leadership is still in considerable jeopardy, but it has already gone down in history as a worthy endeavour. And many people, including we Germans, have reason to be grateful.

We are grateful to the civil rights movements and peoples in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The citizens of Warsaw, Budapest and Prague have set examples. They saw the path leading to freedom in the German Democratic Republic as part of a common historical process and gave it their encouragement.

Nor will we forget the help they gave to the refugees, which was a very direct contribution towards overcoming the wall and the barbed wire. In future the united Germany will seek an open, a close neighbourly relationship with them.

The defence of freedom and human rights is fundamental to the commitment of our Western allies and friends, above all the Americans, the French and the British. Their protection, their resolve and cooperation, have been of crucial assistance to us. Most important of all, they placed their confidence in us. For this we are deeply grateful.

How important our partners' understanding was for German unification is apparent from the unequivocal and constructive position taken by the European Community. I take great pleasure in welcoming among us today the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, and his colleagues and wish to express our respect and thanks for their far-sightedness.

Our thanks today go out in particular to those Germans in the German Democratic Republic who summoned the courage to rise up against oppression and despotism. For over ten years meetings and prayers for peace in the churches developed and spread the ideas which ultimately sparked the peaceful revolution. But the power of the state security services remained omnipresent. The use of force was imminent well into the autumn of 1989. It would have been quite understandable if the people had backed down and retreated. But it was no longer possible to suppress the hope lodged in their hearts.

"We are the people". With these four simple and magnificent words a whole system was shattered. Those words expressed the desire of the people to take the country, the *res publica*, into their own hands. Thus the peaceful revolution in Germany became truly republican. The fact that it happened after almost 60 years of bitter oppression makes it all the more amazing and credible. Democrats had joined forces in the cause of freedom and solidarity, both forming one mission for us all.

But on this occasion we must also thank the people in the West. If they had not trusted us Germans we would not have been able to unite. That trust has grown with the development of the Federal Republic over a period of forty years. Our people have established themselves in a free and democratic system and in the European consciousness.

The Germans have become predictable, reliable and respected partners. This was a crucial factor which won our neighbours and the whole world's approval for the country's unification.

Now those four words have developed into many thousands. In an almost incredible effort, agreements and treaties have been completed which made it possible for us to set the seal today on both the internal and the external aspects of our unity. The subject-matter was often very complex and there was no lack of controversy. The pressure of time was constantly mounting. All concerned worked day and night - something we can do, of course, when it matters.

In future there will be more than one doubt to clear up, more than one dispute to settle. But all in all we can only admire what has been achieved.

I wish to thank the political leaders on both sides, their parliaments, and not least the many excellent staff of the public authorities for the work they have done. Their devotion to the cause was exemplary. Their accomplishment is reward in itself.

The form of unity has been determined. Now we must give it substance. Parliaments, governments and parties must help in this task, but only the sovereign nation, the minds and hearts of the people themselves, can translate it into practice. Everyone is aware how much still has to be done. It would be neither sincere nor helpful if at this hour we sought to conceal how much still separates us.

The external constraints of division were devised to estrange us. This they failed to do. Inhumane as the Wall and barbed wire were, they only served to strengthen the people's will to come together. We felt this above all in Berlin, that city which was and will remain of crucial significance to the nation. The sight of the Wall day by day never let us stop believing in, hoping for, the other side. Now the Wall has gone, and that's what matters.

But now that we have our freedom we must prove ourselves worthy of it. Today we have a clearer picture of the consequences of our different courses of development. The gap in our material standards is what strikes us most. Although the people in the German Democratic Republic had to cope with shortage day in, day out, made the best of their situation and worked hard - this we will not forget - the magnitude of their problems and the gulf between them and the West became fully clear only during recent months. If we are to close that gap soon we

shall not only have to help but also, and above all, to respect one another.

To the Germans in the former German Democratic Republic unification is a transformation process which affects them directly in their daily lives, touches their very existence. This often confronts them with demands beyond their human capacity. A woman wrote to me that the people in East Germany were sincerely grateful for their freedom but had not realized how nerve-racking changes would be which required them to take leave of them-selves, as it were. After all, they yearned for nothing more than to rid themselves of their regime. But replacing nearly all elements of one's life with something new, something unknown, overnight is beyond human measure.

The people in the West were overjoyed when the Wall came down, but many fail to realize or consider it most unwelcome that unification has something to do with their personal lives. This must not remain so. We shall first have to learn to understand one another better. Not until we really appreciate that both sides have gained valuable experience and acquired important qualities which are worth keeping in unity will we be on the right road.

First, let us look at the West. There is one development here which deserves special emphasis. Over the years the people have developed an affection for their state which is free from ungenue feelings and nationalistic pathos. True, in the forty-year history of the Federal Republic there have been many serious conflicts between the generations and between the different social and political groups. They were often bitter struggles but without a destructive tendency as during the Weimar Republic. The revolt by young people in the late sixties, notwithstanding all the offence it caused, ultimately helped strengthen the people's commitment to democracy.

As we learnt how to settle conflicts we developed a mutual confidence in the constitution. The internal uncertainty has gone. We are no longer constantly comparing ourselves with other nations. Conditions in other countries must not be altogether bad to make ours look good. Conversely, favourable conditions are not only to be found beyond our borders. We have become more self-assured in our judgement, in our awareness of life.

Some in the West are only now really discovering the merits of their own country. Some of the severest critics of conditions in the Federal Republic are worried today that our open-mindedness, our federalism, our integration with Europe, might suffer in the united Germany. I do not share their anxiety.

But I will say this: It is gratifying when especially young people identify themselves with their state in the West and appreciate that the Bonn republic has earned a good reputation. They have grown into an

international and liberal society. They don't want to lose their cosmopolitan outlook. And why should they?

And now let us consider the German Democratic Republic. From its viewpoint, hardship on the one side and prosperity on the other meet on the day of unity. But it would be both foolish and inhumane were we to perceive this as those who have failed and those who have succeeded - or worse still the bad and the good - coming together between East and West. It is the systems that differ in their degree of success, not the people. And that will surely become very clear when the Germans in what used to be the German Democratic Republic at long last receive the same opportunities which the people in the West have enjoyed for decades.

Every life has its meaning and its innate dignity. No period in life is in vain, especially if it is marked by hardship. In human terms, the people in the German Democratic Republic achieved something very substantial under the most difficult conditions and we can only hope that it will be part of the substance of the united Germany.

If we overlooked this we would thoroughly be taken in one last time by the system now gone. Its aim was to control the people's thoughts and aims by means of absolute rules, indeed to create a new, uniform socialist being. If it had succeeded then the people, too, would have had to stand down together with their system. But communism foundered on the futility of that attempt. The freedom of the human spirit prevailed over the presumptuousness of the state, the individual over the collective.

The seeds of liberation took root under the dictatorship. It is precisely political bondage which makes people more aware of the limits of legitimate policy, and that a human freedom exists outside the public domain. Bondage teaches freedom - the people in the German Democratic Republic know this from personal experience.

True, the state did take care of its citizens within the system's meaning. But it did not perceive man's needs and his dignity. Thus in many cases people could only survive in silent, mutual support. Necessity united people. Solidarity did not remain an abstract word in theoretical programmes but became a reality in people's lives. It required courage and self-denial to work for the Church and its charitable organizations. But it was fruitful. It gave inner strength. Disabled people neglected by the state were looked after. Respect for human life was thus translated into practice.

The regime tried particularly hard to make art and culture serve its aims. Now the conduct of artists and the quality of their work are a source of much dispute. Nothing is omitted, and that is a good thing. But a subsequent ethical rigorism is only convincing and helpful if it is used for self-examination. To a large extent art in the German

Democratic Republic did not have any impact as a political force, but certainly as a force able to change and intensify life. Isn't this also proved by the music we have heard last night and this morning?

The regime caused a spiritual drought. Art has often been nourishment for the soul. It has in its own way helped to achieve something which was largely the task of the religious communities: to widen the capacity for inner freedom. This gradually led to the liberation from the compulsory lie, the deadliest poison of recent decades, which undermined confidence in the state and society, between neighbours, and ultimately in oneself. Thus freedom to stick to the truth became the most precious asset which the people acquired through the uprising which was sparked by their own courage.

We in the West have been spared such a test. We can only express our respect and we should demonstrate it in the process of unification.

Since the autumn of 1989 the human substance of the German Democratic Republic has, under incredibly difficult circumstances, become visible in a new way, in the civil rights movements, at the Round Table, and in the renaissance of communal activity.

In the Volkskammer people who were totally unprepared assumed responsibilities which could not have been greater. They were sometimes referred to as amateurs. Was that intended as a reproach? They devoted themselves to the solution of the most difficult problems without cultivating the ritual of party confrontation.

They time and again sought and found the necessary compromises. More than once they showed how helpful it is "not to be constantly expecting, or even hoping for, the worst from the other side so that one's own picture of the world is in order" (R. Schröder). If that's the way amateurs go about it, then that is no bad omen for democracy.

Now we are in the midst of our work. A particularly heavy and depressing burden is the legacy of distrust left behind by the State Security Service. The system's power has been shattered, but the trauma is still there. This cannot be digested from the outside. In this matter there is no external Solomonic authority. Those who were exposed to the poison are the ones most capable of carrying out the detoxification process.

It is not the state's political concept as such that was evil but its equation with absolute truth. The state believed it possessed that truth and presumptuously forced everyone to accept it. And the State Security Service was its instrument. This rendered the moral claims of the leadership deeply immoral. Using methods that were as banal as they were ruthless, the security service spied upon, blackmailed and corrupted people and encouraged denunciation. The most insidious method of all was to make victims accomplices.

It would be unreasonable, from a human point of view, and intolerable in a country based on the rule of law to throw a cloak of oblivion over the Stasi oppression. Justice and the law must take their course. In dealing with the Stasi's files the need to protect personal data must not serve to protect the culprits. But nobody will deny that the means of clearing up these cases are dubious. In a system which can not exist without lies, files too can lie. There is a political-ethical responsibility which cannot be prosecuted. Guilt extends further than punishability. In any case, what now appears to be guilt was in reality at times something quite different. It was often the result of conscientious self-examination under heavy external pressure.

Emotional wounds will heal but slowly. The expunging of mistrust will take time. But it is vital. It would fail if we tried to prosecute every single incident. This would only bring ourselves close to being dangerous moralists. Our aim is justice, not in the sense of reprisal, but of reconciliation and inner peace.

Priority must now be given to economic and social problems. The old system failed not least because of the critical economic situation. This makes it all the more important to ensure that the people in the former German Democratic Republic do not experience their newly won freedom as another period of severe hardship.

They have opted for the social market economy which has proved successful in the West. The monetary union paved the way for the free movement of people and private enterprise. We have pushed ahead with the task of creating the legal basis for the development of competition and social security.

But this framework will not of itself translate into economic output. That is the work of people. Social market economy does not come alive in the statute books but in the minds and actions of the people. By the same token, freedom cannot be secured without making demands on the people, just as an economic upswing will not come overnight. Those affected know this best of all. To many the cut is deep and severe: learning afresh, changing attitudes, moving from one place to another, looking for new opportunities, starting all over again. But experience teaches us that individual initiative is always worthwhile.

No less decisive is our cooperation in the united country. We must now act in solidarity - in our most fundamental interest. Now we share responsibility for economic recovery in the new federal states. The success of our efforts is in our mutual interest, for failures henceforth will in the long term be a burden on the Germans in the West as in the East. The mandate given us by our constitution is to secure comparable living conditions and opportunities for all Germans. At the same time we must be open-minded and fair towards foreigners in our country.

Today it is often said that no one is to be deprived of anything, that it is merely a question of sharing growth. That sounds fine in the marketing language of contemporary political communication, but on sober reflection it means no more than postponing the sharing to a later date. For many people it may come too late.

According to a Chinese proverb, mountains turn into gold when brothers cooperate with one another. It need not be gold, and above all such cooperation is not possible without sisters as well, but there is no getting round the fact that uniting means learning to share. Highly profitable loans alone will not be sufficient to finance German unity. Both public and private readjustments are called for so that we can help, so that we can save and give. There are many good examples which show this is possible - provided by hospitals, schools and universities, factories and associations, clubs and families. Town twinnings, too, can develop into solid foundations of our community.

No theory, however wise, and no calculation, however elaborate, can replace the fundamental experience of all cultures and religions that people do not really care for their fellow creatures until they share with them. We will not be truly united until we are prepared to show such care and concern. We can do so, and many, most people I think, want to do so.

The nation-state has not ceased to exist, but anyone who believes we can cope with the future with the nation-state alone is living in a bygone era. No nation in the world can solve the world's major problems by itself. Modern systems do not think and function nationally. This applies to security and the environment, to industry and energy, to transport and telecommunications. In our age sovereignty means playing our part within the community of states.

The European Community has created a convincing model for such cooperation. It has fused national powers - and precisely those which are crucial for peaceful neighbourly relations - into a supranational framework. In the contest between the systems of East and West it has been the source of powerful impulses for reform in Eastern Europe.

The Cold War is over. Freedom and democracy have prevailed in nearly every country. Not through coercion by the countries that dominated them but of their own free will they can now intensify and institutionalize their relations in order to create, for the first time, a common peaceful order. This marks the beginning of a completely new chapter in the history of the nations of Europe. The goal is pan-European unification.

It is an ambitious goal. We can achieve it, but we can also fall short. There is no time to lose. We face the clear alternative of uniting Europe or relapsing into the sorrowful nationalistic confrontations of the past.

Tangible prospects for the economic and social development of the countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe must now be given priority. The newly acquired freedom must take root. It must not be allowed to wither for lack of nourishment. The European Community can provide crucial assistance. It will above all depend on the Community how the situation in the whole of Europe develops.

We Germans have a key role to play. We speak out in support of a common, constructive Eastern policy by the West as a whole. Now that all Germans have become direct neighbours of the Poles, a nation who are so important to us, it is our duty to urge that the Community conclude an association agreement with them, not in the distant future but very soon. The same applies to Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

The Soviet Union, to mention another extremely important example, needs close European cooperation on its incomparably difficult course. The Soviet Union wishes to close the traditional gap between itself and the rest of Europe. It has realized that German unification is not an obstacle but rather a condition for that step. This is the principal message of the highly significant Two-plus-Four conference. And we all know that Europe's future stability depends to a large extent on Moscow's contribution. The Soviet Union's western frontier must not become Europe's eastern frontier.

When we Germans send such messages to the whole of Europe we do so as an integral part of the Western community. This firm integration has shaped life in the Federal Republic; it has mobilized our resources and generated fresh energy. We will on no account jeopardize our Atlantic and European partnership. That is our very own interest - and it is shared by our countrymen in the new federal states. They know how important friendship, especially with France, will continue to be and are themselves glad to have this direct neighbourly relationship.

We will only make headway if we proceed together with our Western partners, especially within and through the European Community. Everything the member countries do for the whole of Europe through the Community strengthens both the Community itself and its individual members.

We Germans can best look after our interests and dispel our partners' doubts by not allowing ourselves to be outdone in our efforts to strengthen the Community, and by continuing without any hesitation along the road to economic and monetary union leading to political union, as we have promised.

To remain fully integrated within the West and oriented to the whole of Europe, that is the task of the united Germany. We will have accomplished it if, at some time in the future, it is said: The crucial chapter leading to the unification of the whole of Europe began with the termination of Germany's division.

The faster we Europeans settle our own conflicts, the better will we be able to meet our global responsibilities. During the Cold War Europeans time and again exported tension and weapons to the southern hemisphere. Our duty now is to promote the CSCE process, to reduce armaments and to boost assistance for the South.

Swords into ploughshares - this wonderful biblical picture from the days of the peaceful revolution does not imply that we should forego a sensible, adequate defence capability. It means satisfying hunger and alleviating want around the world. We are encouraged in this aim by the many young voices from all parts of Germany.

We share responsibility especially for the environment. Not all of man's technical and economic achievements should be imposed on nature. More is at stake than the earth's fitness for human habitation. Man can destroy what he has not fashioned himself and is not at his free disposal: Creation. He has taken this liberty. We shall see from the way he meets the responsibility inherent in freedom whether he is capable of survival, ethically and thus ultimately biologically.

This is in the truest sense a global undertaking. It places an obligation on every country, every community, and every individual in the world. It is a universal and thus the most political issue we face. As our nation embarks on its new beginning it must find a clear normative answer.

The Basic Law now applies to all Germans. In the Unification Treaty we agreed to consider those provisions relating to national objectives, that is to say, the state's constitutional mandate which should not be subject to re-strictive laws but binding on parliament as on everyone else. Beyond those goals, could there be a more urgent one than that of protecting nature which has no rights? Do we have a greater task than that of preserving Creation and thus protecting posterity? I know of none.

Today, fellow-countrymen, we have founded our common state. What we make of unity in human terms will not be decided by any government treaty, constitution, or law. It depends on the attitude adopted by each one of us, on our own openness and our care for one another. It is the "plebiscite of each single day" (Renan) which will determine the character of our community.

I am confident we shall succeed in filling existing and newly emerging gulfs. We can fuse the constitutional patriotism of the one side with the human solidarity experienced by the other into a powerful whole. We share the will to carry out our great responsibilities as expected by our neighbours.

We realize how much harder life is for other nations at present. History has given us a chance. We must seize it, with confidence and trust. And joy - we heard it last night - the joy we feel, is a divine spark.