June 02, 1953
USSR Council of Ministers Order, 'On Measures to Improve the Health of the Political Situation in the GDR'

Citation:
http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/110023

Summary:
Council of Ministers of the USSR Order to improve the political and economic situation in GDR

Original Language:
Russian

Contents:
- English Translation
To confirm the proposed draft resolution on measures to improve the health of the political situation in the GDR.

Chairman of the
Council of Ministers of the USSR G. Malenkov

Attachment
to the order of the Council of Ministers of the USSR from 2 June 1953. No. 7576-rs

On Measures to Improve the Health of the Political Situation in the GDR

As a result of the incorrect political line being carried out in the German Democratic Republic, a very unsatisfactory political and economic situation has developed.

There is serious dissatisfaction with the political and economic measures carried out by the GDR among the broad mass of the population, including the workers, peasants, and the intelligentsia. This finds its clearest expression in the mass flight of the residents of the GDR to West Germany. Thus, from January 1951 through April 1953, 447,000 people fled to West Germany; over the course of four months in 1953 alone over 120,000. Many refugees are workers. Among the refugees are about 18,000 workers, about 9,000 middle peasants, land-poor [peasants], artisans and pensioners, about 17,000 employees and representatives of the working intelligentsia, and over 24,000 housewives. From the corps of barracked police, 8,000 people fled to West Germany. It is remarkable that among those who have fled to West Germany in the course of [the first] four months of 1953, there are 2,718 members and candidates of the SED and 2,610 members of the Free German Youth League.

It must be recognized that the chief reason for the situation that has been created is that, in keeping with the decision of the Second Conference of the SED [in July 1952] and as approved by the Politburo of the CC All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) [VKP(b)], a mistaken course was adopted in accelerating the construction of socialism in East Germany without the presence of its real prerequisites, both internally and internationally. The social-economic measures which have been carried out in connection with this include: the forcible development of heavy industry, which also lacked raw materials; the sharp restriction of private initiative, which harmed the interests of a broad circle of small proprietors both in the city and in the country; and the revocation of food ration cards from all private entrepreneurs and persons in the free professions. In particular, the hasty creation of agricultural cooperatives in the absence of the foundations [necessary] for them in the countryside led to: serious difficulties in the area of supplying the population with manufactured goods and food stuffs; a sharp fall in the mark's exchange rate; the ruin of a large number of small entrepreneurs-artisans, workers in domestic industries, and others. It also set a significant stratum of the populace against the existing authorities. The matter has gone so far that at present more than 500,000 hectares of land have been abandoned and neglected, and the thrifty German peasants, usually strongly tied to their plots,
have begun to abandon their land and move to West Germany en masse.

The political and ideological work being carried out by the leadership of the SED is not adequate for the task of strengthening the German Democratic Republic. In particular, serious errors have been committed with regard to the clergy, evident in their underestimation of the influence of the church amongst the broad masses of the population and in their crude administrative methods and repression.

The underestimation of political work amongst the intelligentsia should also be admitted as a serious mistake. To a certain extent this underestimation explains the vacillations, instability, and even hostile relation to the existing order that is evident among a significant part of the intelligentsia.

All of this creates a serious threat to the political stability of the German Democratic Republic.

In order to correct the situation that has been created, it is necessary:

1. To recognize the course of forced construction of socialism in the GDR, which was decided upon by the SED and approved by the Politburo of the CC of the All-Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in the decision of 8 July 1952, as mistaken under current conditions.

2. In the interests of improving the political situation of the GDR and strengthening our position both in Germany itself and on the German issue in the international arena, as well as securing and broadening the bases of mass movement for the construction of a single democratic, peace-loving, independent Germany, recommend to the leadership of the SED the implementation of the following measures:

   a) to halt the artificial establishment of agricultural production cooperatives, which have proven not to be justified on a practical basis and which have caused discontent among the peasantry;

   To check carefully all existing agricultural production cooperatives and to dissolve both those which were created on an involuntary basis as well as those which show themselves to be non-viable. To keep in mind that under the present conditions in the GDR, only the most simple form of productive cooperation by the peasants, such as cooperation in the joint preparation of the soil without collectivizing the means of production, can be more or less viable. Such cooperatives, given the provision of the necessary help to them, can become an attractive example to the peasantry;

   b) to strengthen the existing machine-leasing stations as the main lever of influence on the countryside and as the fundamental means of helping the working peasant in the business of raising agricultural productivity.

   Besides helping cooperatives for jointly working the soil, machine-hiring stations must also serve individual peasant cultivation on a leasing basis;
c) to renounce the policy of limiting and squeezing middle and small private capital as a premature measure. In the interests of stimulating the economic life of the Republic, to recognize the expediency of the broad attraction of private capital in different branches of small and domestic industry, in agriculture, and also in the area of trade, not including in this its large-scale concentration.

In distributing material resources, to see to the apportionment of raw materials, fuel, and electrical energy, as well as to the provision of credits to private enterprises. To re-examine the existing system of taxing private enterprises, which has practically eliminated in them the stimulus to participate in economic life, with a view to alleviating the pressure of taxation. To restore food ration cards to private entrepreneurs and also to persons of the free professions.

d) to re-examine the five-year plan for the development of the national economy of the GDR with a view to curtailing the extraordinarily intense pace of development of heavy industry and sharply increasing the production of mass consumption goods, as well as fully guaranteeing food for the population in order to liquidate the ration card system of providing foodstuffs in the near future;

e) to implement necessary measures for restoring the health of the financial system and curtailing administrative and special expenses, as well as strengthening and raising the exchange rate of the GDR mark.

f) to take measures to strengthen legality and guarantee the rights of democratic citizens; to abstain from the use of severe punitive measures which are not strictly necessary. To re-examine the files of repressed citizens with the intent of freeing persons who were put on trial on insufficient grounds. To introduce, from this point of view, the appropriate changes in the existing criminal code;

g) to consider the wide development of political work among all the strata of the population to be one of the most important tasks of the SED, to eradicate decisively the elements of naked administrative methods. To attain a position whereby the measures taken by the government are understood by the people and meet with support from the population itself.

To assign special attention to political work among the intelligentsia in order to secure a turnabout by the core mass of the intelligentsia in the direction of active participation in the implementation of measures to strengthen the existing order.

At the present and in the near future it is necessary to put the tasks of the political struggle to reestablish the national unity of Germany and to conclude a peace treaty at the center of attention of the broad mass of the German people both in the GDR and in West Germany. At the same time it is crucial to correct and strengthen the political and economic situation in the GDR and to strengthen significantly the influence of the SED in the broad masses of workers and in other democratic strata of the city and the country.
To consider the propaganda carried out lately about the necessity of the GDR's transition to socialism, which is pushing the party organizations of the SED to unacceptably simplified and hasty steps both in the political and in the economic arenas, to be incorrect.

At the same time to consider it necessary to elevate significantly the role of the bloc of democratic parties and organizations, as well as of the National Front for a democratic Germany, in the political and social life of the GDR.

h) To put a decisive end to [the use of] naked administrative methods in relation to the clergy, to end the harmful practice of crude interference in the affairs of the church. To cancel all measures doing harm to the immediate interests of the church and the clergy, that is: the confiscation of the church's charitable establishments (almshouses and shelters), the confiscation by local authorities of neglected church lands, the removal of state subsidies from the church, and so on. To end the oppression of rank-and-file participants in the religious youth organization “Junge Gemeinde,” moving the emphasis of gravity to political work among them. Keeping in mind that repressive measures toward the Church and the clergy can only serve to strengthen the religious fanaticism of the regressive strata of the population and their dissatisfaction, the main means of combating the reactionary influence of the Church and the clergy must be carefully sought through explanatory and cultural-enlightenment work. The broad diffusion of scientific and political knowledge among the populace should be recognized as the basic form of anti-religious propaganda.

3. To recognize that the provision of economic aid to the GDR by the Soviet Union is necessary, especially in the area of supplying food.

4. To oblige the High Commissioner of the USSR in Germany, Cde. Semyonov, and the Supreme Commander of the Soviet occupation troops, Cde. Grechko, to eliminate the present shortcomings in the way the occupation regime is being carried out by Soviet troops. To take measures in order [to ensure] that the presence of the Soviet occupation troops infringes upon the immediate interests of the civilian population as little as possible, [and] in particular, to free up all of the educational premises, hospitals, and cultural establishments, which have been occupied by Soviet troops.

5. Based on the fact that the political and economic condition of the GDR is one of the most crucial factors not only in the resolution of the general issue of Germany but also in the peaceful settlement of fundamental international problems, it is necessary to take strict account of the real conditions inside the GDR, both the situation in Germany and the international circumstances as a whole, when specifying a general political line on this or that period and when realizing each concrete measure to strengthen the German Democratic Republic in the future.

6. Taking into account the fact that at present the main task is the struggle for the unification of Germany on a democratic and peace-loving basis, the SED and KPD, as the standard-bearers of the struggle for the aspirations and interests of the entire
German nation, should ensure the use of flexible tactics directed at the maximum
division of their opponents' forces and the use of any opposition tendencies against
Adenauer's venal clique. For this reason, inasmuch as the Social Democratic Party
[SPD] of West Germany, which a significant mass of workers continues to follow,
speaks out, albeit with insufficient consistency, against the Bonn agreements, a wholly
adversarial position in relation to this party should be rejected in the present period.
Instead, it should be attempted, where possible, to organize joint statements against
Adenauer's policy of the division and imperialist enslavement of Germany.