

“This Is Not A Politburo, But A Madhouse”¹

The Post-Stalin Succession Struggle, Soviet *Deutschlandpolitik* and the SED: New Evidence from Russian, German, and Hungarian Archives

*Introduced and annotated
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Since the opening of the former Communist bloc archives it has become evident that the crisis in East Germany in the spring and summer of 1953 was one of the key moments in the history of the Cold War. The East German Communist regime was much closer to the brink of collapse, the popular revolt much more widespread and prolonged, the resentment of SED leader Walter Ulbricht by the East German population much more intense than many in the West had come to believe.² The uprising also had profound, long-term effects on the internal and international development of the GDR. By renouncing the industrial norm increase that had sparked the demonstrations and riots, regime and labor had found an uneasy, implicit compromise that production could rise only as long as norms remained low and wages high — a compromise that posed a severe restraint for Ulbricht when, in the early 1960s, he sought to reform the GDR economy through his “New Economic System.”³ Moreover, instead of allowing for greater political liberalization, as the Soviet-decreed New Course had envisioned at least to a certain degree, the eventual triumph of the hardliners headed by Ulbricht resulted in a dramatic expansion of the apparatus of repression and in the encrustation of an essentially Stalinist system in the ensuing months.⁴

Even more surprising, important and controversial are the international repercussions of the crisis. How did it intersect with the power struggle that was taking place in the Kremlin in the weeks following Stalin’s death on 5 March 1953? Recently, this question has received impetus by the publication of new materials on the activities of KGB chief and Minister of the Interior, Lavrentii Beria. A number of formerly secret internal party documents and memoirs seem to suggest that Beria was ready to abandon socialism in the GDR, in fact to give up the very existence of the East German regime, which had been set up with Soviet support in the Soviet occupation zone in Germany in October 1949.⁵ Did Beria’s alleged plan — the reunification of Germany as a democratic and neutral country — represent a missed opportunity for an early end to Germany’s division and perhaps the Cold War? Some historians have questioned the new evidence and the existence of a serious policy alternative, arguing that the disagreement on German policy among the Soviet leadership was “not as serious as it looked.”⁶

1953 also looms large as a defining moment in Soviet-

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East German relations as Ulbricht seemed to have used the uprising to turn weakness into strength. On the height of the crisis in East Berlin, for reasons that are not yet entirely clear, the Soviet leadership committed itself to the political survival of Ulbricht and his East German state. Unlike his fellow Stalinist leader, Hungary’s Matyas Rakosi, who was quickly demoted when he embraced the New Course less enthusiastically than expected, Ulbricht, equally unenthusiastic and stubborn — and with one foot over the brink — somehow managed to regain support in Moscow. The commitment to his survival would in due course become costly for the Soviets who were faced with Ulbricht’s ever increasing, ever more aggressive demands for economic and political support.

Curiously, the 1953 East German uprising also turned out to be crucially significant for Western, in particular American, policy. The uprising did not only undermine British premier Winston Churchill’s grand scheme for an East-West deal on Germany and help West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer win a sweeping victory at the federal elections later that fall.⁷ The uprising also jolted the U.S. administration, first into believing that the dawn of “liberation” had arrived, and then, after a US-sponsored food-aid-program evoked much more of a response among East Berliners and East Germans than the Americans had expected, into reassessing the feasibility of a “rollback” strategy.⁸

Perhaps the most fascinating meaning of 1953 lies in the impact of these events on the mindset of the SED and Soviet leaders. Much like the discourse among dissidents and the population at large, in which 1953 became an almost mythological, though ambiguous, point of reference, the crisis became deeply embedded in the collective memory of a generation of East German leaders and a powerful symbol within the “discourse” among East bloc leaders. 1953 came to stand for a hardline repressive resolution of internal unrest and the ultima ratio of Soviet military intervention, and as such was central Ulbricht’s (and later Erich Honecker’s) hardline approach to crises in Eastern Europe in 1956, 1968 and 1980/81. “This is our experience from the year 1953,” Honecker reminded Polish party chief Stanislaw Kania and his colleagues during the December 1980 East bloc summit at the height of the Polish crisis, urging a crackdown on the oppositional “Solidarity” movement and holding out the possibil-

ity of Warsaw Pact intervention.⁹

Given the importance of the 1953 East German crisis, it is little surprising that Soviet policy towards Germany and the East German uprising in the spring and summer of 1953 have come under intense scholarly scrutiny since the opening of the Russian and East German archives in 1990-1992.¹⁰ Yet key aspects of this episode of the Cold War remain controversial. Historians, in particular Germans, still fiercely debate the essential character of the crisis: was it basically labor unrest against industrial norm increases or a failed popular rebellion?¹¹ Even more controversial are the international ramifications of the East German crisis in the spring and summer of 1953. What were the intentions of Stalin's successors with regard to Germany? Did Beria favor "a grand bargain that would reunify Germany as a capitalist, neutral government?"¹² What role did the German question play in the post-Stalin succession struggle. What effect did the East German uprising have on the policy-making process in Moscow?

The documents edited below, obtained in preparation or as a result of the November 1996 conference on "The Crisis Year 1953 and the Cold War in Europe," co-sponsored by the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Studien (Potsdam), the National Security Archive (Washington), and the Cold War International History Project, shed new light on these questions and contribute in important ways to our understanding of the 1953 crisis.¹³ The following essay will briefly introduce the documents, highlighting the significance of the new evidence.

Soviet policy toward Germany after 1945 has been a hotly contested field of research. Recent studies on the Soviet occupation zone in Germany have revealed that Stalin's policy was deeply conflicted and inherently contradictory. Soviet policy options in postwar Germany — the Sovietization of the Eastern occupation zone, the creation of a unified, socialist Germany, or the establishment of a demilitarized "neutral" Germany — remained essentially unresolved during the early years of the Cold War.¹⁴ Even after the establishment of the German Democratic Republic, run by the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands = SED), Stalin's policy remained, by all indications, torn between the full satellization of the new state and all-German aspirations. Stalin's hopes for gaining influence over all of Germany notwithstanding, by early 1953 his policies had driven East Germany's economy into the ground, and socio-economic conditions had become critical.

Reparations and occupation costs had taken a heavy toll on East Germany's economic resources since the end of the war.¹⁵ In early April 1952, Stalin had told visiting East German leaders that "you must organize your own state," demanding that they turn the relatively open demarcation line between East and West Germany into a "frontier" and that everything be done to "strengthen the protection of this frontier."¹⁶ Stalin apparently also decreed the creation of an East German army — "Every-

thing without clamor but persistently" — and announced that the "pacifist period" was over. He also sanctioned the socialization of GDR agriculture and industry, again "without much clamor."¹⁷ That summer, at its Second Party Conference (July 9-12), the SED announced the policy of "the forced construction of socialism," following final approval by Moscow on July 8. The crash socialization and collectivization course quickly aggravated economic dislocations and popular discontent. Extraordinarily harsh regimentation and persecution, massive arrests and trials accompanying the new policy added to the strains on the social and economic fabric of the GDR. By early 1953, East Germans were fleeing their homeland by the thousands.

The mounting crisis in the GDR coincided with a change of leadership in Moscow: Stalin died on 5 March 1953. Even as the dictator was still dying at his dacha in the Moscow suburb of Kuntsevo, Beria and Georgii Malenkov plotted to seize the reins of power. The two quickly coopted Nikita Khrushchev, Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, into the leading "troika," and secured the state and party apparatus under their control. Lacking both stature and legitimacy, they put Viacheslav Molotov in charge of foreign affairs, leaving the defense ministry to Nikolai Bulganin. Breaking with the hard-line and paranoid policies that had put Soviet policy on the defensive worldwide, the new leadership immediately moved to put Soviet foreign policy on a more calm and flexible track. Shortly after Stalin's death, Malenkov announced a "peace initiative," arguing that there were "no contested issues in U.S.-Soviet relations that could not be resolved by peaceful means." Within weeks, the Soviet leadership indicated its desire to end the Korean War, and deal with lingering disputes such as those over Austria, Iran, and Turkey. While terrified to let any internal dissension leak out to the West, Malenkov and Beria soon began to press the more conservative "Stalinist" Molotov to reconsider Soviet policy on these critical issues. Slowly but persistently, Malenkov and Beria sought to limit Molotov's prerogative over foreign affairs.

Germany loomed large in the minds of the Soviet leaders in those days. In March, the Deutsche Bundestag, the West German parliament, had sanctioned the Bonn Treaty (General Treaty) which provided the Federal Republic with a broad degree of sovereignty, and it had passed the government's decision to join the European Defense Community (Paris Treaty). Brainstorming within the Soviet Foreign Ministry, therefore, was initially concerned with finding a response to the Bonn and Paris Treaties, with regaining the initiative on the German question, rather than with solving the East German crisis per se. Initial memoranda were drafted in the Foreign Ministry by German specialists Georgii Pushkin and Jakob Malik on April 18 and 21 for the Presidium meeting on April 22. They suggested a nation-wide plebiscite on the "immediate establishment of a provisional all-German Government appointed by the parliaments of the GDR and

West Germany, while preserving Germany's two existing governments." Expecting that the measure would be opposed by the Western powers, the memoranda suggested as an alternative option a GDR government appeal to the Soviet government for the conclusion of a treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance. Wary of the possibility, as remote as it may have seemed, that the West might take the Soviets up on their proposals, Molotov remained skeptical of the exercise, reminding his subordinates at one point that they "failed to understand the essence of the policy of the three [Western powers] — to pull Germany to the bourgeois rails."¹⁸

Significantly, the proposal for a separate treaty with East Germany did not contain any references to the crisis in the GDR, but rather assumed the continued existence, even strengthening, of the East German regime until the conclusion of a peace treaty. As early as the beginning of April, Moscow had apparently hinted at a relaxation of the harsh socialization measures (only to be ignored by Ulbricht), and on April 18, the Soviet government promised aid in copper, steel and other raw materials to the GDR.¹⁹ Only after Vladimir Semenov, the Political Adviser to the Soviet Control Commission in Germany, had been recalled to Moscow on April 22 to head the Third European Division within the Foreign Ministry, did further concerns about the GDR enter the policy-making process. The April 28 version of the memorandum on Germany, entitled "Further Soviet Measures on the German Question,"²⁰ continued to call for the formation of a provisional all-German government by the East and West German parliaments "while preserving the existing governments of the GDR and West Germany" for an interim period. The provisional German government would draft an all-German electoral law, carry out free all-German elections and represent Germany in the quadripartite peace treaty negotiations. Once a provisional German government had been formed, the occupation powers would be obliged to withdraw their troops simultaneously. To raise the GDR's international prestige, however, the draft memorandum also called for the elimination of the Soviet Control Commission, the establishment of a Soviet embassy in its place and the return of German prisoners of war. It also suggested reducing reparation payments by 50%, returning all Soviet-owned enterprises in Germany to the GDR, and inviting a GDR government delegation to Moscow.

MID officials believed that such a proposal would not only "represent a new concrete step by the Soviet Government" on the issue of reunification and evoke a "broad positive response among the German people," but also "expose" the Western opposition to German unification on a "peaceful and democratic basis." Since it was likely that the Western powers would reject a troop withdrawal which, as the MID planners clearly recognized, would effectively upset "the aggressive plans of the North Atlantic bloc in Europe," the Soviet Union would gain considerable propaganda advantages.

Semenov continued to draft memoranda which sought to conceptualize the ministry's approach to the German question.²¹ Thus, in line with earlier planning papers on May 2, he suggested the elimination of the Soviet Control Commission, the domineering presence of which "emphasiz[ed] the inequality in relations between the USSR and the GDR," and reflected a degree of "political mistrust" in the SED regime, impeding the development of qualified East German cadres. Semenov also argued in his May 2 memorandum, in a statement that in retrospect turned out to be a gross miscalculation, that the SED had "strengthened and matured enough to manage on their own the leadership of the country."²² Semenov's insistence on reducing reparations apparently proved successful. On May 4, Molotov forwarded to Malenkov another draft of the proposals on Germany for discussion at the May 5 Presidium meeting, according to which reparations from the GDR for the 1953/55 period would be limited to the "sum of payment set for 1953" and terminated altogether by 1956. The document also suggested June as the date for the official state visit by an East German delegation, headed by Grotewohl and Ulbricht, to Moscow.²³

Sometime after mid-May 1953, the Soviet Foreign Ministry altered — or was forced to alter — its position, now taking a more critical attitude towards Ulbricht's policy of the "forced construction of socialism." Historians have long wondered what might have caused this change.²⁴ In light of the documents presented below, one very probable explanation is the growing number of reports critical of the deteriorating situation in the GDR and the SED's handling of crisis. The crucial point is that these reports emanated not only, and perhaps not even primarily, from the MID representatives in Germany, many of whom were ideologically committed to the GDR and inclined to underestimate the problems, but from the Soviet intelligence community. As early as March 9, Soviet intelligence officials in Berlin sent a pessimistic report to Berlin pointing to the "worsening class conflict in the GDR."²⁵ On May 6, Beria circulated an intelligence report among senior members of the CPSU presidium that argued that the dramatic rise in the number of refugees²⁶ could not "only be explained by the hostile propaganda directed by West German organs at the population of the GDR." Rather, it was the "unwillingness of individual groups of peasants to enter the agricultural production cooperatives now being organized, the fear on the part of small and middle-level businessmen of the abolition of private property and the confiscation of their goods, the desire of the youth to avoid military service, and the difficulties experienced in the GDR in supplying the population with foodstuffs and consumer goods" that caused the mass exodus. The Beria report blamed the SED and GDR government of not conducting "a sufficiently active fight against the demoralizing work carried out by the West German authorities," and charged that the SED "falsely assume[d] that as long as free circulation exists between West Berlin and the GDR, such flights are

inevitable.” Beria hence proposed to ask the SCC to submit proposals on ways to gain control over the mass flight “in order to make the necessary recommendations to our German friends.”²⁷

Given the later accusations against Beria, it is interesting that Beria apparently managed to receive the Presidium’s approval for his initiative on Germany. Very likely in response to the May 6 report, the head of the Soviet Control Commission (SCC), Vladimir Chuikov, Deputy Political Adviser to the SCC, Pavel Iudin, and USSR mission chief Ivan Il’ichev sent a memorandum to Moscow that criticized the SED’s handling of the implementation of “accelerated construction of socialism.”²⁸ Significantly, the memorandum was not addressed to Molotov but to Premier Malenkov, perhaps reflecting the impatience and annoyance of the Soviet representatives in Germany with the staunchly orthodox position of the Soviet Foreign Ministry on the German question (and Semenov’s key role in shaping that position).²⁹ Chuikov’s, Iudin’s and Il’ichev’s lengthy report on developments in the GDR gave an in-depth analysis of the mounting crisis and was highly critical of the SED, particularly its indifference to the mass flight of East Germans to the West. Foreshadowing the new course adopted in early June, Chuikov, Iudin and Il’ichev recommended an increase in consumer goods production, support of private artisanal production and individual farmers, a decrease in agricultural requisitions and a termination of the ration card system on basic foodstuffs. Nevertheless, the three Soviet officials eschewed more radical recommendations, and instead sought to suggest ways which would improve the efficiency and success of the socialization program.

On political administrative issues, the May 18 report similarly recommended changes while avoiding a call for more drastic steps. Thus, Chuikov, Iudin and Il’ichev wanted the SED to acknowledge the serious problem posed by the mass exodus of East Germans, reduce the massive number of those arrested as a result of excessive and arbitrary criminal codes, and reinstall some sense of reason, moderation and lawfulness in judicial and criminal procedures. At the same time, however, they emphasized increased and improved propaganda efforts as adequate ways to deal with the mass flight and opposition sentiment within the population. Chuikov, Iudin and Il’ichev hence seemed to have embraced Ulbricht’s witch hunt policies which blamed foreign propaganda, especially the US-controlled radio station in West Berlin, RIAS,³⁰ and internal subversion for the problems in the GDR.³¹

The discussion of the German problem among the Soviet leadership reached a climax in late May, at a meeting of the Presidium of the USSR Council of Ministers, which, chaired by Malenkov, had for a short time surpassed the CPSU Presidium as the main collective decision-making body.³² At the May 27 session, called to “analyze the causes which had led to the mass exodus of Germans from the GDR to West Germany and to discuss measures for correcting the unfavorable political and

economic situation in the GDR,” the Presidium members apparently agreed that the policy of the “forced construction of socialism” had to be terminated in order to avert a full-blown crisis.³³

According to the testimony by Malenkov, Molotov, Bulganin and Khrushchev at the July 1953 CPSU plenum as well as later accounts by Khrushchev, Molotov, and Gromyko, Beria was not satisfied with solely adjusting the pace of socialization in East Germany. Instead of terminating the forced construction of socialism, he allegedly shocked his colleagues with a proposal to abandon socialism in the GDR altogether in favor of the creation of a united, neutral and non-socialist Germany. “We asked, ‘Why?’” Molotov later recounted: “‘And he replied,’ ‘Because all we want is a peaceful Germany, and it makes no difference whether or not it is socialist.’”³⁴ According to Molotov, Beria kept insisting that “it made no difference whether Germany was socialist or otherwise, that the most important concern was that Germany be peaceful.” Beria’s proposal was reminiscent of Stalin’s earlier musings on Germany, but since then had been superseded by Soviet — indeed Stalin’s own — commitment to the build-up of the Communist German state. The proposal, moreover, ran counter to the German initiative that Molotov’s foreign ministry had been carefully and stubbornly drafting. Molotov, therefore, raised strong objections to Beria’s proposal. A special committee consisting of Beria, Malenkov and Molotov was created to consider the matter, and, following several discussions and a late evening phone conversation, Beria finally gave in: “To hell with you! Let’s not go to another meeting. I agree with your stand.”³⁵

Beria’s alleged zigzags on policy towards the GDR conform to what we know about his views. Much less ideologically committed than Molotov, or, as Molotov put it himself, “lacking deeper interest in fundamental policy decisions,” Beria would not shy away from unorthodox, “heretical” solutions.³⁶ With a wide-ranging intelligence apparatus at his command, Beria was better informed about the growing crisis in the GDR than many of his rivals, even Molotov, and he used his unmatched sources to challenge Molotov in the field of foreign policy.³⁷ His unique knowledge of the recent strides in the Soviet nuclear weapons development (later that year the USSR successfully tested a thermonuclear bomb) might have caused him to experience less concern about the wider repercussions of any radical solution in Germany.³⁸ It was also fully in line with what we know about his personality to withdraw proposals as soon as he faced fierce opposition, such as Molotov and Khrushchev seem to have mounted within the Presidium.

Declassified documents and more recent recollections seem to confirm the existence of divisions within the Soviet leadership on Germany. In his letters from prison,³⁹ Beria acknowledged having displayed “inadmissible rudeness and insolence on my part toward comrade N.S. Khrushchev and N.A. Bulganin during the

discussion of the German question” while “along with all of you” introducing “initiatives at the Presidium aimed at the correct solution of issues, such as the Korean one, the German one.” A year-and-a-half later, at the January 1955 CC CPSU Plenum, Beria’s ally in 1953, Malenkov, now under attack by Khrushchev and Molotov, “admitted” that he had been wrong in 1953 when he held the view that “the task of socialist development in Democratic Germany” was “incorrect.” “Today I admit that I essentially took a wrong position on the German Question.”⁴⁰

Additional evidence is provided by secondary figures such as KGB operative Pavel Sudoplatov, a close collaborator of Beria. In his memoirs *Special Tasks*, Sudoplatov recounts that as early as April, “[p]rior to the May Day celebration in 1953, Beria ordered me to prepare top-secret intelligence probes to test the feasibility of unifying Germany. He told me that the best way to strengthen our world position would be to create a neutral, unified Germany run by a coalition government. Germany would be the balancing factor between American and Soviet interests in Western Europe. East Germany, the German Democratic Republic, would become an autonomous province in the new unified Germany.” According to Sudoplatov, Beria intended to air the idea through his intelligence contacts in Central Europe and “begin negotiations with the Western powers.”⁴¹ Similarly, Vladimir Semenov, who, as head of the responsible division within the Soviet Foreign Ministry, participated in the key meetings of the Soviet leadership on Germany (as well as the later meetings with the SED leaders), charges in his 1995 memoirs that Beria was pursuing a line on Germany which would have “disrupted the continuity of our policy on the German question and aimed at shocking the Soviet Union and eliminating the GDR.” Semenov reports that during a Presidium meeting “in the second half of May, 1953,” Beria, once called on, “took a paper out of his jacket pocket, without haste, as if he was the master of the house, put on his glasses and read his own draft on German policy. It differed fundamentally from the one which I carried in my bag.”⁴²

Serious doubts, however, have been raised about the existence of a “Beria plan.” Thus far, the evidence on Beria’s role in the decision-making process within the Kremlin is fragmentary, biased and contradictory. The transcript of the May 27 Presidium meeting at which Beria supposedly made his proposal remains classified in the Presidential Archive in Moscow. Mention of Beria’s alleged initiative on the German question was first made by his opponents at the July 1953 CPSU Plenum that condemned him, following his arrest on June 26.⁴³ It is probable that the charges about Beria’s views on the German question, made by Khrushchev and others at the Plenum, were motivated largely by a desire to portray Beria in most sinister ways and to characterize him as a traitor to the socialist cause, as a Western agent and provocateur. United in their fear of the brutal KGB chief and desirous to eliminate a strong competitor in the

struggle for supremacy within the Kremlin, Beria’s opponents might well have fabricated, distorted or exaggerated any difference of opinion on his part.⁴⁴

The documents presented here suggest a somewhat different interpretation. They certainly reflect Beria’s activism in the foreign policy field, especially on the German question. What is striking, however, is the fact that Beria managed to gain Presidium approval for the demarche to the Soviet Control Commission, which in turn, with its May 18 critique of the SED’s indifference and mishandling, set the tone for the May 27 meeting and the June 2 “New Course” document. Beria’s initiative in early May thus turned into a Presidium-approved SCC investigation into and review of the situation in Germany which most likely forced the Foreign Ministry to take a much more critical attitude towards the SED’s policy. At least initially, therefore, Beria’s views on Germany apparently corresponded with the thinking within the SCC and were not blocked within the Presidium. Beria’s continued prominence in foreign affairs after the May 27 meeting — see his active participation in the discussions with the German and Hungarian leaders — also lends weight to this argument.

The available documentation through May 27, of course, does not preclude the possibility that Beria put forth a more drastic approach to the German problem at the Presidium meeting. Whether he did so or not, within days the Council of Ministers agreed on a draft resolution, which was adopted as an order “On Measures to Improve the Health of the Political Situation in the GDR,” dated June 2. Thus far, only draft versions of the document and its German translation have been available to scholars.⁴⁵ For the first time, an English translation of the original Russian version is printed below. Sharply criticizing the “incorrect political line” of forced construction of socialism in the GDR, the resolution called for an end to the “artificial establishment of agricultural production cooperatives” and to the prohibitive taxation of private enterprise, for support of small and medium-size enterprises, for an increase in mass consumption production at the expense of heavy industry as well as for the elimination of the ration card system. The resolution also recommended strengthening democratic rights in East Germany, changing the excessively punitive criminal code, ending the crude interference in church affairs, and “eradicating” the brutal administrative methods by which the SED regime had been ruling. Significantly, the order also emphasized that it was necessary to put the “tasks of the political struggle to reestablish the national unity of Germany” at the center of attention.

The same day, the Moscow leaders expressed their concerns about the GDR to an arriving East German delegation, composed of Ulbricht, GDR Premier Otto Grotewohl and Fred Oelßner, confronted it with the resolution and, after Oelßner had translated the document, asked for a response by the next day. According to Grotewohl’s fragmentary notes, the East German propos-

als, half-heartedly drafted during the night and tabled the next day in their meetings with Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Mikoian, Kaganovich, Semenov and Grechko, apparently fell short of Soviet expectations. "Our document is a reversal, yours is [just] reform," an exasperated Kaganovich exclaimed.⁴⁶ According to the memoirs of SED Politburo member Rudolf Herrnstadt, the editor of the party organ *Neues Deutschland*, the SED leaders had to take quite a beating as all of the Soviet comrades rejected the superficial draft. Beria displayed particular aggressiveness, allegedly throwing the documents at Ulbricht across the table with the words: "This is a bad remake of our document!"⁴⁷

The Soviet leaders acknowledged that "we all have made mistakes" and that the recommendations were not meant as "accusations," but insisted that "everything has to be based on a change in the conditions in the G.D.R." Demanding that the SED leaders should "not worry about [their] prestige," Malenkov warned that "if we don't correct [the political line] now, a catastrophe will happen." The Soviet leaders appealed to the Germans to "correct fast and vigorously." "Much time has been lost. One has to act quickly." And in a manner, as Molotov curiously added, "that all of G[ermany] can see it."⁴⁸

The June 2-4 talks with the East German leaders have to be viewed against the background of a larger effort by the post-Stalin Soviet leadership to halt and mitigate some of the worst excesses of Stalinist rule in East Central Europe. Similar talks, which, in each case, resulted in the announcement of a "New Course" program were held with the Hungarian leadership (13-16 June 1953)⁴⁹ and the Albanian leader Enver Hoxha later that month.⁵⁰ The transcript of the Soviet-Hungarian talks on June 13-16,⁵¹ are instructive for several reasons: Much fuller than the fragmentary Grotewohl notes,⁵² the transcript of the Soviet-Hungarian meeting is striking for its similarities: as in the German case, the discussion focused on the "audacious" industrialization and socialization drive and the abuses of power (especially by the security police), though cadre questions received considerable attention, too. As before with the East Germans, the Soviet leaders "urgently" demanded changes and warned that "a catastrophe will occur if we do not improve the situation." Once again, Malenkov and Beria were harshest and most "passionate" in their criticism, though Molotov and Bulganin did not lag behind. Unlike the earlier talks with the German leaders, however, Soviet criticism was vented primarily at premier and party chief Matyas Rakosi, the leading proponent of Stalinist rule in Hungary. Criticism of Rakosi's rule, his personal involvement in most political issues, and his "personality cult" quickly produced changes within the leadership: within days of their return from Moscow, Rakosi resigned from the premiership which was given to the agrarian specialist Imre Nagy (though Rakosi stayed on as party leader).⁵³

Grotewohl's notes of the June 2-4 Kremlin meetings do not reflect any personal criticism of Ulbricht, who had

stood for the accelerated socialization program. Following their return to Berlin on June 5, however, discussion within the SED Politburo of how and when to publicize the New Course document quickly turned into criticism of Ulbricht's dictatorial leadership style. During SED Politburo meetings on June 6 and 9, fellow Politburo members vented their dissatisfaction with the Ulbricht's personality cult and management of the Secretariat. Semenov, who had returned with the SED delegation from Moscow and participated in the sessions, seemed increasingly inclined to support Ulbricht's critics.⁵⁴ Arguing against any great celebration planned for Ulbricht's 60th birthday (June 30) during the forthcoming 13th Central Committee Plenum, Semenov recommended that the SED leader celebrate the way Lenin did his 50th birthday, by "inviting a few friends to drop in for dinner."⁵⁵ The Politburo finally decided to draw up a comprehensive statement on "the self-criticism of the work of the Politburo and the Secretariat" which would be presented to the CPSU Central Committee Presidium. It also resolved to set up a commission, composed of Ulbricht, State Security chief Wilhelm Zaisser, Oelßner, Herrnstadt, and Berlin SED boss Hans Jendretzky, to "prepare an organizational reform of the working methods of the Politburo and Secretariat."⁵⁶

A recently declassified report to the USSR Minister of Internal Affairs, S. Kruglov by the KGB deputy resident in Berlin, Ivan Fadeikin, throws new light on the events within the SED Politburo. In a June 30 conversation with Soviet officials, the GDR Minister of Trade and Supply Curt Wach reported on the opposition which the New Course instructions from Moscow, particularly the shift of resources from the heavy to consumer goods industries, had encountered within the SED Politburo on June 9. Just about everybody seemed to oppose a plan tabled by the Minister of Machine Construction, Hermann Rau according to which 1.3 billion marks would be reallocated to light industries. Key members of the SED leadership — Rau himself, Wilhelm Leuschner, Chairman of the State Planning Commission, Fritz Selbmann, Minister for the Ore-Mining Industry, Fred Oelßner, Anton Ackermann — opposed the plan to cut back on heavy industry. According to Wach, Ulbricht most vehemently spoke out against the plan, arguing that "[w]e cannot free up such resources. Rau's plan disorganizes the national economy, and our economy is already disorganized as it is." With the GDR lacking sufficient resources, Ulbricht instead favored a different approach. Shifting the burden to the Soviets, who after all, had decreed the policy shift, he argued that "we should turn to the Soviet government with the request that they lower the reparations payments." A fellow Politburo member succinctly pointed to the thought that must have been on everybody's mind: the only way "to get out of this catastrophic situation and improve our position" was for the Soviet Union to "[render] us the same help that the USA is giving Western Germany through the Marshall Plan." As Wach recounted, "[n]oone reacted to this

statement.”⁵⁷

Most Politburo members agreed that the announcement of the New Course program warranted careful preparation of the party and the population at large, but Semenov urged speedy implementation of Moscow’s instructions. When, on the evening of June 10, Herrstadt pleaded with Semenov to give the SED two week’s time to prepare the policy change, the High Commissioner insisted that “the communiqué has to be in the paper tomorrow, warning the *Neues Deutschland* editor that “you may not have a state for much longer.”⁵⁸

Heeding Semenov’s order, the Politburo announced the “New Course” liberalization program in *Neues Deutschland* on June 11. As expected by Herrstadt and others, the communiqué with its frank admission of past mistakes came as a surprise to many in and out of the party. Reports from local party organizations, carefully monitored by the SED headquarters in Berlin indicated with great candor the widespread disappointment, disbelief, confusion and shock within party ranks as well as the populace. To many, the communiqué signaled the SED’s final bankruptcy and the beginning of its demise. Party members felt betrayed and “panicky,” others even called for Ulbricht’s resignation. Many thought the SED retreat from crash socialization resulted from pressure by the West German government under Konrad Adenauer and the Western powers, evidenced by such reports as the one from the small town of Seehausen where “the entire village is in the bar, drinking to the health of Adenauer.” To make matters worse, the only segment of the population which seemed to have been excluded from the New Course liberalization were — paradoxically — the workers: the raised work norms arbitrarily imposed on May 28 remained in force. Labor dissatisfaction was further fueled when the SED regime, groping to maintain its authority, confirmed the controversial norm increases on June 13.⁵⁹

The internal events in East Germany from the New Course announcement through the first days of the uprising have been treated elsewhere.⁶⁰ Suffice it to say that the riots and demonstrations, which climaxed on 17 June, eventually engulfed more than 350 cities and villages in the GDR, and more than 500,000 people throughout the GDR marched in defiance of the regime. Both the SED leaders and the Soviets were surprised by the extent of the uprising. Underestimating the crisis situation and eager not to precipitate bloodshed, the Soviet Berlin commandant, General Dibrova, balked when East Berlin police chief Waldemar Schmidt requested authority on the morning of June 16 to clamp down on the demonstrators.⁶¹ Complaining about the hesitant, even passive, initial response on the part of the Soviets, Schmidt later charged that “if we had taken strong action immediately, the whole thing would have been forgotten.”⁶² Fearful of wider unrest the next day and a statewide general strike, Soviet troops did finally, in the early morning hours of June 17, enter East Berlin, and by 1 p.m. that day, Soviet military authorities

declared martial law. In the evening, Berlin’s citywide traffic was interrupted and the East sector sealed off.

The reaction to the crisis by Soviet diplomatic and military observers in East Germany can now be documented in detail.⁶³ What is striking about the reports is how quickly the Soviet representatives assumed that the uprising had been instigated by the West. As early as the evening of June 16, High Commissioner Semenov and General Grechko, in reporting on the day’s events, pointed to the fact that persons from West Berlin participated in the demonstrations in increasing numbers. According to Semenov and Grechko, “large crowds started arriving from West [Berlin]” late on June 16, and it was “mainly West Berliners” who were rioting in the streets of Berlin. Citing the evening edition of the local newspaper *Der Abend*, they concluded that it was “clear from the reports of the West German press and radio that the above-mentioned hostile actions have been organized from West Berlin.”⁶⁴ The next day, Grechko cabled to Bulganin that “[i]t may be considered that a special organization based in West Berlin has directed the strikes in East Berlin.” “Analyzing the situation,” Grechko continued, “I have also come to the conclusion that the provocation was prepared in advance, organized and directed from the Western sectors of Berlin. The simultaneous actions in the majority of the big cities of the GDR, the same demands of the rebels everywhere as well as the same anti-state and anti-Soviet slogans have proved such a conclusion.”⁶⁵ KGB sources soon provided details on alleged Western subversion, mentioning in particular the activities of the Berlin-based anti-Communist organization “Fighting Group Against Inhumanity.”⁶⁶ General Vasilii Sokolovskii, deputy USSR defense minister confirmed this judgement the day after his arrival in Berlin. Given that the disorders had erupted simultaneously in Berlin and other major cities and that “the same tactics of action were used everywhere,” the uprising had to have been “prepared beforehand on the entire territory of the German Democratic Republic and aimed at making a coup d’état.”⁶⁷

Considering the perception that the West had instigated the crisis, Soviet authorities in Berlin — as well as the Soviet leadership in Moscow — were carefully monitoring Western troop movements on the GDR border. Semenov remembers that during those days, “the telephones kept ringing. Khrushchev called several times, even more often did Molotov and others.”⁶⁸ The Soviets knew that U.S., British and French troops in the Western sectors of Berlin had been put on higher alert status on June 17. In the early morning hours of June 18, Soviet military intelligence learned that the 7th U.S. Army and the 12th Air Force unit in Western Germany, as well as NATO headquarters, were put on alert. Within three hours, however, Grechko could reassure Moscow: The alert of U.S. forces had been cancelled.⁶⁹ Given the restrained and passive Western response to the events in the East sector, it must have been evident to Soviet authorities that Western troop alerts had likely been defensive in nature.

According to Semenov, Sokolovskii in turn ordered the state of alert for Soviet border troops canceled and took precautions to avoid unintended incidents, which could have caused a military confrontation with the West. As Semenov put it in his memoirs in rather dramatic terms: "The danger of events developing into a Third World War had been banished."⁷⁰

For days if not weeks Soviet military authorities remained concerned about continuing signs of resistance — in particular continuing strikes — throughout the GDR, and arrests continued in high numbers through the end of June. Yet as early as June 19, Moscow was receiving clear signals that the immediate danger to the SED regime had passed. That day, Grechko informed the Soviet leadership that "street disorders on the territory of the GDR have ended everywhere." A growing number of workers were resuming work, and SED activists were back in the factories, propagandizing the SED's interpretation of the riots. Much to the Soviet observers' satisfaction, more and more people were distancing themselves from the disturbances. By July 4, the Soviet High Commission was even considering easing travel restrictions between the Eastern and Western sectors in Berlin and reopening the sector border.⁷¹

While for the Soviet observers, the peak of the crisis seemed to have passed by June 19-20, tensions were mounting within the SED regime. "This is not a Politburo, but a madhouse," one GDR minister had characterized the situation within the top party committee as early as June 9.⁷² The uprising paralyzed the SED leadership and froze the discussion on internal renewal. In the early morning hours of June 17, Semenov ordered the SED Politburo to evacuate to the more secure Soviet headquarters, cynically commenting that "it is almost true" when RIAS allegedly reported that the GDR government had fallen apart.⁷³ After the acute crisis had passed, dissensions within the SED leadership heightened dramatically. Key SED functionaries, such as Fred Oelßner, who had just accompanied Ulbricht and Grotewohl to Moscow, now mounted criticism against the party chief. According to Fadeikin's report, Oelßner stated in conversations with Soviet officials on July 1 that "Ulbricht most of all has not understood the erroneousess of his conduct. He has not understood that as a matter of fact he lost touch with the masses and that his methods of dictatorial leadership were one of the serious reasons that errors were committed." Despite Moscow's New Course instructions, "Ulbricht had not changed and continued to work as before," though Oelßner noted that he had become somewhat more passive. But he was still inclined to create an atmosphere of pomp around his person." With telling understatement, Oelßner revealed to his Soviet interlocutors that "no complete unity of views existed in the Politburo."⁷⁴

Another one of Ulbricht's close collaborators, Hermann Matern, registered his views with the MVD [KGB predecessor] the next day. Reflecting the paralysis and catharsis prevalent within the SED in the aftermath of

the uprising, Matern argued that the party was lacking militant leadership. Politburo meetings were "disorganized" and not well attended, and the body had "made almost no practical decisions." The work of the secretariat had come to a standstill after Ulbricht left for Moscow in early June and left much wanting in general. In Matern's opinion, the "secretariat has been turned from a political organ into Ulbricht's personal office, and its members "nodded their heads in agreement with all the proposals of the secretary-general." Matern also complained about the state of local and regional party leadership, which, not used to independent decision-making, totally depended on direction from above. Communications with the central leadership were difficult since, as Matern explained, on Ulbricht's orders, "telephone operators did not connect them [the local party leaders] with him." All of this "was the result of the defective leadership methods on the part of Ulbricht whose motto was "'No one can do anything without me.'" Matern announced that he would speak out against Ulbricht at the forthcoming Central Committee Plenum.⁷⁵

The opposition to Ulbricht within the Politburo crystallized around the issue of the leadership structure. On June 25, the "organization commission," set up on June 6 to improve the workings of the Politburo, met for the first time and discussed key issues such as the dualism of Politburo and Secretariat, collective decision-making, and Ulbricht's leadership methods. The results of the discussion, tabled at the second meeting on July 2, called for an elimination of the post of secretary general — Ulbricht's position — and an enlargement of the Politburo which, following the Soviet model, would henceforth be called the "Presidium of the Central Committee." While the secretariat of the Central Committee would be dissolved, a 4-man "Permanent Commission of the Presidium" would direct the implementation of the New Course according to Soviet instructions.⁷⁶

The organization commission's recommendations were similar to proposals which Semenov, Sokolovskii and Iudin sent to Moscow on June 24/25.⁷⁷ Besides calling for additional aid to the GDR to improve the food supply of the population, a sharp reduction of GDR exports and occupation expenses, and greater internal party democracy, the Soviet representatives in Germany also favored a reorganization of the GDR government. The Soviet High Commissioner and his colleagues considered it necessary to "liquidate the Ministry of State Security" and to "relieve com[rade] Ulbricht of the responsibility of deputy prime minister of the GDR so as to enable him to concentrate his attention on the work of the C[entral] C[ommittee of the] SED." At the same time, the position of general-secretary should be abolished, the secretariat itself should be limited in its functions, re-staffed, and reduced in size. The proposals suggested to "radically renew the personnel of the Politburo," removing from it those who do not "demonstrate the necessary capabilities" required for the leadership of the party and state in the current circum-

stances. The People's Chamber should take on the responsibility for dismissing "less capable and less popular ministers" and replacing them with more popular personalities, "drawing more widely from among representatives of other parties." Semenov, Sokolovskii, and Iudin also called for investigations into the union leadership, a strengthening of the People's Police and changes in the Free German Youth. In order to raise its international and domestic prestige, the new GDR regime should be invited to Moscow for an "official visit."⁷⁸ According to Semenov's memoirs, Molotov's overall reaction to the report was "positive," but "as far as Ulbricht is concerned, Semenov has drifted to the right."⁷⁹

Molotov's reaction, if reported correctly, spoke not only of his commitment to Ulbricht but also might have indicated the shifting balance of forces in Moscow in the latter's favor. The day after the organization commission's meeting, on June 26, Beria was arrested in Moscow. Most likely, the arrest had little to do with Beria's views on Germany, but his more flexible position on socialism in the GDR, if he indeed had taken such a position, was quickly seized by his opponents within the Kremlin to justify the action. Beria's arrest probably brought any discussion and reassessment of Soviet policy towards Germany to an abrupt halt. By the second meeting of the organization commission on July 2, B. Miroshnichenko, who was participating in the meeting on Semenov's behalf,⁸⁰ objected to any immediate changes to the secretariat structure, thus indirectly reinforcing Ulbricht's position. Semenov himself apparently withdrew some of his earlier recommendations. About the same time, moreover, a Foreign Ministry subcommittee headed by first deputy Foreign Minister Andrej Vishinskii, "canceled" or postponed the implementation of key measures in the Semenov-Sokolovskii-Iudin report, particularly those which affected Ulbricht's control of state and party.

Grotewohl's notes on the night session of the Politburo on July 7-8, shortly before he and Ulbricht were to leave for Moscow, reflect the volatile balance of forces within the SED Politburo.⁸¹ There was still considerable criticism of Ulbricht, led by Zaisser's statement that, while Ulbricht was "no more responsible for the wrong course than we all," he was to blame for the brutal administrative methods which had "spoiled the Party." To leave the party apparatus in Ulbricht's hands, Zaisser argued, would "be catastrophic for the new course." Several Politburo members sided with Zaisser. Hermann Rau, for example, doubted that Ulbricht had the will to change his working methods and favored a change at the top. Anton Ackermann argued that the party had to recover but could not do so with Ulbricht in the leadership. Alluding to the divisions within the Politburo, Fred Oelßner stated that "U. has considered all of us as stupid. W. has not learned his lessons." There would not be "any need for a first secretary." Faced with such criticism, Ulbricht acknowledged that the criticism was correct and his behavior regarding the ostentatious birthday celebration mistaken. He pro-

fessed that he did not have to be first secretary: "This takes confidence which has to be renewed."

Yet Ulbricht called the elimination of the secretariat "dangerous" and considered Zaisser's nomination of Herrstadt as first secretary "the logical consequence," thus reneging on the "agreement" that had been reached in the organization commission. Moreover, some members now spoke up in his defense. Arguing that Ulbricht's resignation would "cause damage to the party," Erich Honecker objected to blaming Ulbricht alone for the situation, and Hermann Matern flatly stated that "U. must be first secretary." Playing for time, Ulbricht announced that he would "take a stand in the C[entral] C[ommittee]" plenum scheduled for later that month.

In Moscow on July 8, Ulbricht and Grotewohl apparently learned about Beria's arrest and his alleged plans for the GDR. It is likely that Ulbricht turned the Beria affair to his advantage, using his short presence in Moscow to garner support for his position. It may not have been by accident that on the following day, Vyshinskii was informed of the cancellation of several of Semenov's, Sokolovskii's and Iudin's recommendations. In any case, upon his return to Berlin, Ulbricht, probably backed by the Soviets, went on the offensive, turning first against Zaisser and Herrstadt. Ulbricht used the resolution on "The New Course and the Renewal of the Party," drafted in June by Herrstadt in preparation of the forthcoming 15th SED Plenum, to launch a massive attack against both Herrstadt and Zaisser when the Central Committee met on July 24-26. Accusing Herrstadt and Zaisser of behavior "hostile to the Party" and alleging a connection between both of them and Beria, Ulbricht managed to achieve the expulsion of his two opponents from the Politburo.⁸² By late July, Ulbricht had weathered the most dangerous challenge to his leadership thus far.

Ulbricht's survival did not only mean the survival of his hard-line policies and Stalinist practices, many of which were gradually reintroduced in the following months. With the decision to continue the support for Ulbricht and the East German regime, Moscow shed the last ambiguities in its German policy. In the following months, the Soviets took steps to boost the East German regime's economic viability and internal support, first by agreeing to provide East Berlin with an extensive economic aid package, and later by an official termination of the reparations' payments. In the international arena as well, Moscow sought to raise the prestige of its client regime. In August, the Soviet leadership announced its decision to turn the High Commission into an embassy. In March 1954, Moscow officially announced the GDR to be a "sovereign state." The road was set for the "two-Germany doctrine," espoused by Khrushchev in 1955, which guided Soviet policy in Germany until 1989.

Although the documents presented below shed much new light on the 1953 crisis, the documentary record is fragmentary at best. While we have a pretty clear sense of what went on in the SED Politburo, the decision-making

process in Moscow still remains elusive. Key documents, such as the transcripts of the May 27 USSR Presidium meeting or the June 2-4 meeting with the SED leadership, have not yet been declassified by Russian archival authorities. Little is yet known about Malenkov's, Beria's or Khrushchev's reaction to the events of June 16-17 or their conversations (if any took place) with Ulbricht and Grotewohl in early July. What role exactly did Semenov or Sokolovskii play? Fuller documentation from the Russian archives might allow for more conclusive answers to these questions.

¹ Kurt Gregor, GDR Minister for Foreign and Inner-German Trade, during the 9 June 1953 SED Politburo meeting. See Note from S. Kruglov to Malenkov with an accompanying communication from the representatives of the MIA USSR P. Fedotov and I. Fadeikin (printed below).

² Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, Armin Mitter, Stefan Wolle (eds.). *Der Tag X. 17. Juni 1953* (Berlin, 1995).

³ See the path-breaking work by Jeffrey Kopstein, *The Politics of Economic Decline in East Germany, 1945-1989* (Chapel Hill, 1997), 36-38.

⁴ Armin Mitter/Stefan Wolle, *Untergang auf Raten* (Berlin, 1993).

⁵ See D.M. Stickle (ed.), *The Beria Affair* (New York, 1992); Delo Beria. Plenum Ts KPSS. Ijul' 1953 goda. Stenograficeskij otchet. *Izvestija Ts KPSS 1* (1991), 139-214; 2 (1991), 141-208.

⁶ Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity. The Stalin Years* (New York, 1996), 180.

⁷ On Churchill's initiative. see Klaus Larres, *Politik der Illusionen* (Göttingen, 1996).

⁸ Christian F. Ostermann, "Keeping the Pot Simmering, the United States and the East German Uprising of 1953," *German Studies Review* 19:1 (March 1996), 61-89.

⁹ "Stenographic transcript of the meeting of Warsaw Pact leaders on 5 December 1980 in Moscow," Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO-BArch), DY 30 J IV 2/2 A-2368; Michael Kubina/Manfred Wilke (ed.), "Hart und kompromißlos durchgreifen" *Die SED contra Polen 1980/81* (Berlin, 1995), 170.

¹⁰ The best surveys to date are Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, Armin Mitter, Stefan Wolle (eds.). *Der Tag X. 17. Juni 1953* (Berlin, 1995) and Manfred Hagen, *DDR. Juni '53. Die erste Volkserhebung im Stalinismus* (Stuttgart, 1992).

¹¹ For a survey of the current state of the debate, see Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk, "Die Ereignisse von 1953 in der DDR," *Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung* (1996), 181-186; and Torsten Diedrich, "Zwischen Arbeitererhebung und gescheiterter Revolution in der DDR," *Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismusforschung* (1994), 288-305.

¹² Amy Knight, "Beria the Reformer," *New York Times*, 3 November 1993.

¹³ For a report on the conference, see Ruud van Dijk, "Der 17. Juni als Krise im Kalten Krieg," *Deutschland Archiv* 1 (1997), 291-293; *CWIHP Bulletin* 8/9 (Winter 1996/97), 355-357.

¹⁴ Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany. A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation* (Cambridge, MA, 1995).

¹⁵ Rainer Karlsch, *Allein bezahlt? Die Reparationsleistungen der SBZ/DDR 1945-53* (Berlin:1993).

¹⁶ See *CWIHP Bulletin* 4 (Fall 1994), 34-35, 48, for an English

translation of both Russian and German versions of the 7 April 1952 conversation. For an excellent recent treatment of this problem, Stefan Creuzberger, "Abschirmungspolitik gegenüber dem westlichen Deutschland im Jahre 1952," *Die sowjetische Deutschland-Politik in der Ära Adenauer*, ed. Gerhard Wettig, (Bonn, 1997), 12-36.

¹⁷ See SED leader Wilhelm Pieck's notes on the meeting with Stalin, as published in Wilfried Loth/Rolf Badstübner (eds.), *Wilhelm Pieck – Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschlandpolitik 1945-1953* (Berlin, 1994), 396-397.

¹⁸ Vladislav Zubok, "Unacceptably Rude and Blatant on the German Question." The Succession Struggle after Stalin's death, Beria and the significance of the debate on the GDR in Moscow in April-May 1953." Paper presented at the conference on "The Crisis Year 1953 and the Cold War in Europe," Potsdam, November 1996, 5.

¹⁹ Hope Harrison, "Politics in East Germany and Soviet Policy Towards East Germany Leading Up to and Following the June 1953 Uprising. Summary of Paper Prepared for the conference on "The Crisis Year 1953 and the Cold War in Europe," Potsdam, November 1996; Gerhard Wettig, "Zum Stand der Forschung, ber Berijas Deutschland-Politik im Frühjahr 1953," *Die Deutschlandfrage von der staatlichen Teilung Deutschlands bis zum Tode Stalins* (Berlin, 1994), 190; James Richter, "Reexamining Soviet Policy Towards Germany During the Beria Interregnum," *Europe-Asia Studies* 4 (1993), 677.

²⁰ Printed below.

²¹ Wladimir S. Semjonow, *Von Stalin bis Gorbatschow. Ein halbes Jahrhundert in diplomatischer Mission 1939-1991* (Berlin: 1995), 290.

²² AVP RF, f. 6, op. 12, p.16, por. 261, ll. 6-7. The document was provided and translated by Hope Harrison (Lafayette College) for the conference on "The Crisis Year 1953 and the Cold War in Europe," Potsdam, November 1996. See the conference document reader *The Post-Stalin Succession Struggle and the 17 June 1953 Uprising in East Germany: The Hidden History*, ed. Christian F. Ostermann (Washington, DC, 1996). On 28 May, the Soviet Control Commission was indeed dissolved and replaced by a Soviet High Commission, which, at least in name, resembled its Western counterparts. Semjonow, *Von Stalin bis Gorbatschow*, 291.

²³ Zubok, "Unacceptably Rude and Blatant on the German Question," 5-6.

²⁴ Gerhard Wettig, "Zum Stand der Forschung über Berijas Deutschland-Politik im Frühjahr 1953," *Die Deutschlandfrage von der staatlichen Teilung Deutschlands bis zum Tode Stalins* (Berlin, 1994), 183-197.

²⁵ Report is quoted, without source reference, by David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev and George Bailey, *Battleground Berlin* (New Haven, CT, 1997), 156.

²⁶ Refugee numbers had significantly declined from 1950 to 1952 but almost doubled in 1953 (1953 total: 408,100). For an in-depth analysis of the East-West German migration see Helge Heidemeyer, *Flucht und Zuwanderung aus der SBZ/DDR 1945/1949-1961* (Düsseldorf, 1994).

²⁷ Report No. 44/B, Beria to CPSU Presidium, 6 May 1953, Archives of Sluzhba vneshnei razvedki (SVRA), file 3581, vol. 7, quoted in David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev and George Bailey, *Battleground Berlin*, 157-158.

²⁸ Printed below.

²⁹ Semenov hints at his uneasy relationship with Chuikov in his *Von Stalin bis Gorbatschow*, 293.

³⁰ Radio in the American Sector.

- 31 Printed below.
- 32 On the succession struggle, see the remarkable presentation by Mark Kramer on "The Post-Stalin Succession Struggle and the Soviet Bloc: New Courses, Upheavals and the Beria Affair" at the conference "The Crisis Year 1953 and the Cold War in Europe," Potsdam, November 1996. A revised published version of the presentation is forthcoming.
- 33 See "Delo Beriia," 2 (1991), 144.
- 34 Nikita Khrushchev, "Die Aktion," in Vladimir F. Nekrassow (ed.), *Berija. Henker in Stalins Diensten. Ende einer Karriere* (Berlin, 1992), 323-324; Albert Resis (ed.), *Molotov Remembers. Inside Kremlin Politics. Conversations with Felix Chuev* (Chicago, 1993), 334-335.
- 35 Resis, *Molotov Remembers*, 335. See also Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, 180.
- 36 James Richter, *Reexamining Soviet Policy towards Germany During the Beria Interregnum. CWIHP Working Paper No.3* (Washington, DC, 1992), 15-16.
- 37 Vladislav Zubok, "Soviet Intelligence: The 'Small Committee of Information, 1952-1953,'" *Diplomatic History* 19 (1995), 453-72 (first published as CWIHP Working Paper No. 4 (Washington, DC, 1992)).
- 38 Vladislav Zubok/Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA 1996), 159-162.
- 39 Printed below.
- 40 Stenographic Report of the Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee, 31 January 1955, TsKhSD, f. 2, op.1, d. 127, ll. 65-66. Other excerpts from this and other CC CPSU plenums appear in this issue of the *CWIHP Bulletin*.
- 41 Pavel and Anatoli Sudoplatov, with Gerold L. and Leona P. Schecter, *Special Tasks, The Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness — A Soviet Spymaster* (New York, 1994), 363-365. For a review of Sudoplatov's memoirs see Wettig, "Zum Stand der Forschung über Berijas Deutschland-Politik im Frühjahr 1953," 196-197; and Vladislav Zubok, "Atomic Espionage and Its Soviet 'Witnesses'" *CWIHP Bulletin* 4 (Fall 1994), 50, 52-53.
- 42 Semjonow, *Von Stalin bis Gorbatschow*, 290-291. SED functionary Karl Schirdewan, who headed the Department of "Leading Organs of the Party and the Mass Organizations," writes in his 1995 memoirs that at that time, "Soviet comrades" told him that "your party will have to solve a great and difficult task and prepare for free and secret elections." *Aufstand gegen Ulbricht* (Berlin, 1995), 47-48.
- 43 For details on Beria's arrest, see Amy Knight, *Beria: Stalin's First Lieutenant*. (Princeton, 1993).
- 44 See statements by A. Filitov at the conference on "The Crisis Year 1953 and the Cold War in Europe," Potsdam, November 1996.
- 45 Rolf Stöckigt, "Ein Dokument von großer historischer Bedeutung vom Mai 1953," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung* 32:5 (1990), 648-654.
- 46 Document printed in full below.
- 47 Herrstadt, *Herrstadt-Dokument*, 59.
- 48 Document printed in full below.
- 49 Document printed in full below.
- 50 Enver Hoxha, *The Artful Albanian*, ed. Jon Holliday (London, 1986), 147-151.
- 51 Printed below.
- 52 Unfortunately, it is still hard to follow exactly the dialogue, as for political reasons, the statements by the Soviet leaders were recorded separately from those of the Hungarians.
- 53 György Litvan, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Reform, Revolt and Repression 1953-1963* (London, 1996), 24-25.
- Curiously, the East German crisis was not mentioned in the talks with the Hungarian leadership.
- 54 Herrstadt, *Das Herrstadt-Dokument*, 65.
- 55 Hope Harrison, "Politics in East Germany and Soviet Policy Towards East Germany Leading Up to and Following the June 1953 Uprising. Summary of Paper Prepared for the conference on "The Crisis Year 1953 and the Cold War in Europe," Potsdam, November 1996.
- 56 Grotewohl Notes, SAPMO-BArch, NY 90/699; "Protokoll Nr. 33/35 der außerordentlichen Sitzung des Politbüros des Zentralkomitees am 6. Juni 1953," SAPMO-BArch J IV 2/2/287; Elke Scherstjanoi, "'Wollen wir den Sozialismus?' Dokumente aus der Sitzung des Politbüros des ZK der SED am 6. Juni 1953," in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung*, 33:5 (1991), 658-680; Nadja Stulz-Herrstadt, *Das Herrstadt-Dokument. Das Politbüro der SED und die Geschichte des 17. Juni 1953* (Hamburg, 1990), 74.
- 57 Printed below.
- 58 Herrstadt, *Das Herrstadt-Dokument*, 74.
- 59 One of the events leading up to the June 16/17 uprising, see Christian Ostermann (ed.), "New Documents on the East German Uprising of 1953," *CWIHP Bulletin* 5 (Spring 1995), 10-20.
- 60 See note 1.
- 61 Heinz Brandt, *The Search for a Third Way*, (Garden City, NY, 1970), 212; Fritz Schenk, *Im Vorzimmer der Diktatur* (Cologne, 1962), 203-204; see Harrison, "Politics in East Germany and Soviet Policy Towards East Germany Leading Up to and Following the June 1953 Uprising. Summary of Paper Prepared for the conference on "The Crisis Year 1953 and the Cold War in Europe," 7.
- 62 Brandt, *The Search for a Third Way*, 225.
- 63 See the documentation printed below.
- 64 Semenov and Grechko to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Mikoian and Bulganin, 16 June 1953, Archives of the Russian General Staff [AGSh], f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 1-3.
- 65 Grechko and Tarasov to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Mikoian and Bulganin, 17 June 1953, AGSh, f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 12-14.
- 66 Report by Col. Fadeikin to Sokolovskii, 19 June 1953, AGSh, f.16. o. 3139, d. 155, ll. 217-222.
- 67 Sokolovskii and Govorov to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Mikoian and Bulganin, 18 June 1953, AGSh, f. 16. op. 3139, d. 155, l. 4-5.
- 68 Semjonow, *Von Stalin bis Gorbatschow*, 294.
- 69 Grechko and Tarasov to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Mikoian and Bulganin, 18 June 1953, AGSh, f. 16. op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 19-20.
- 70 Semjonow, *Von Stalin bis Gorbatschow*, 295.
- 71 Memorandum, Miroshnichenko and Lun'kov to Semenov, 4 July 1953, courtesy National Security Archive (Washington, D.C.).
- 72 Note from S. Kruglov to Malenkov with an accompanying communication from the representatives of the MIA USSR P. Fedotov and I. Fadeikin, AP RF, f. 3, op. 64, d. 925, ll. 156-165. (Printed in full below.)
- 73 Herrstadt, *Das Herrstadt-Dokument*, 74.
- 74 Printed below.
- 75 See also the memoirs of SED leader Karl Schirdewan, *Aufstand gegen Ulbricht* (Berlin, 1995), 49.
- 76 Wilfriede Otto, "Dokumente zur Auseinandersetzung in der SED," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* 5:32 (1990), 655-672.

⁷⁷ The report, published in excerpt by the Cold War International History Project in 1995, was completed and most likely sent on 24 June. See Christian Ostermann, "New Documents on the East German Uprising of 1953," 10-21. Semenov maintains that the report was sent 25 June. *Von Stalin bis Gorbatschow*, 297.

⁷⁸ Sokolovskii, Semenov and Iudin to Molotov and Bulganin, 24 June 1953, AVP RF, f. 06, op. 12a, p. 5, d. 301, ll. 1-51. See Ostermann, "New Documents on the East German Uprising of 1953;" Faina Nowik, "Die sowjetische Deutschland-Politik, 1953-1955," *Die sowjetische Deutschland-Politik in der Ära Adenauer*, ed. Gerhard Wettig, (Bonn 1997), 57. In his memoirs, Semenov points out that the report also described the role Karl Schirdewan, the head of the important Central Committee department "Leitende Organe and Massenorganisationen der Partei" and later an outspoken critic of Ulbricht, had played. Semenov seemed to have favored Schirdewan's promotion to the Politburo at this time (Schirdewan was eventually promoted to the top party organ in at the 15th plenum).

⁷⁹ Semjonow, *Von Stalin bis Gorbatschow*, 297.

⁸⁰ Semenov was probably in Moscow for the CPSU Central Committee Plenum 2-7 July 1953.

⁸¹ Printed below.

⁸² See Ulbricht's final speech at the 15th Plenum, in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (12 June 1957), 364-370.

MASTNY WINS

1997 GEORGE LOUIS BEER PRIZE

CWIHP is pleased to note that **Dr. Vojtech Mastny** has been awarded the *George Louis Beer Prize* of the American Historical Association for his book *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (Oxford University Press, 1996). The prize is given for the best book on European international history in the 20th century. A close collaborator of CWIHP and the National Security Archive for many years, Dr. Mastny is currently in Europe as a fellow of the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities in Essen, Germany, as well as the Manfred Woerner Fellow of NATO. In the fall of 1998, he plans to return to Washington to resume work on his next book about the origins of détente in the 1960s.

II.

Soviet Foreign Ministry Memorandum "On Further Soviet Measures on the German Question," ca. 28 April 1953

Top Secret
Copy # 1

ON FURTHER SOVIET MEASURES ON THE GERMAN QUESTION

Considering that lately a number of important events have taken place concerning Germany (the Bundestag's ratification of the Bonn and Paris "agreements,"¹ the intensification of militarization and fascism in Western Germany, Adenauer's trip to France, England, and the United States), and also stemming from the necessity for the USSR to retain the initiative on the German question, we should plan our further measures concerning Germany. These measures should promote the increase of Soviet Union's authority among the German people and contribute to further development of the movement of German democratic forces for the unification of Germany, against the Bonn and Paris "agreements," against the militarization and fascization of Western Germany.

For these purposes it is necessary:

1. To advance a proposal for the formation of a [unified] German Provisional Government, by the parliaments of both the German Democratic Republic and Western Germany, while preserving the existing governments of the GDR and Western Germany, with the aim of reunifying Germany on a democratic and peaceful basis.

The chief task of the all-German Provisional Government should be the preparation and carrying out of free all-German elections without foreign interference. The Provisional Government will work out a draft of the all-German electoral law on the basis of the electoral laws of the GDR and Western Germany and also bearing in mind the electoral law of the Weimar Republic. The Provisional Government will organize, if it deems necessary, an inspection of available conditions for carrying out democratic all-German elections, and it will also take the necessary measures to create the requisite conditions for carrying out such elections.

The Provisional Government will represent Germany in quadripartite negotiations on the question of concluding a peace treaty with Germany, which should begin without further delay.

Furthermore, the Provisional Government should be entrusted with discussing and resolving questions touching upon common interests of Germany, namely: representation of Germany in international organizations, questions of German citizenship, trade between the GDR and West Germany, postal and telegraph communications, railway and water communications [transportation links], scientific and technical collaboration, and other issues of an all-German character.

After carrying out all-German democratic elections, the National Assembly of Germany, elected by the people, will ratify the German Constitution and will form the permanent Government of a united and independent Germany. With this in mind, the united democratic Germany will be allowed to field its own national armed forces, necessary for the defense of the country.

The proposal on the formation of an all-German Provisional Government will represent a new concrete step by the Soviet Government towards the national reunification of Germany, which will evoke a broad positive response among the German people. This proposal will help expose the position of the [other] three great powers [i.e., USA, Great Britain and France] on the German issue, directed at preventing German unification on a democratic and peaceful basis. The three great powers will have difficulty objecting to the formation of an all-German Provisional Government, since the existing governments of Western Germany and the GDR will be retained, and the Provisional Government, as its main task, will be responsible for preparing and carrying out all-German elections.

If the United States, England and France object to the proposal on the formation of an all-German Provisional Government by the parliaments of both the GDR and Western Germany, we, on our part, should offer to conduct a referendum amongst the entire population of Germany on this issue.

2. In order to create conditions that provide for the realization of truly equal and democratic elections without foreign interference on the whole territory of Germany, [we should] advance a proposal on the simultaneous withdrawal of all armed forces of the occupying powers, immediately after forming the all-German Provisional Government. At the same time, all foreign military bases located on German territory should be liquidated and the armed forces of any foreign power or a group of great powers, should be prohibited on German soil. Also prohibited should be the use, in any form, of human and material resources, of the German territory or any of its parts for purposes of war by one or another of the great powers or a coalition of great powers.

The proposal for simultaneous withdrawal of all occupation troops out of Germany in order to provide freedom for the all-German democratic elections will thoroughly undermine the slogan advanced in first order by the three great powers to carry out free all-German elections under international control. The great powers are very likely to decline the proposal to withdraw troops, but this would place them in a difficult situation in front of the German people. Accepting this offer would mean the withdrawal of American troops back across the ocean and the effective derailment of the aggressive plans of the North Atlantic [NATO] bloc in Europe. At the same time, the Soviet Government proposal for simultaneous withdrawal of occupation troops out of Germany, following the formation of an All-German Provisional Government, would find warm approval among the people of Germany,

including Western Germany and amongst certain parts of the German bourgeoisie.

3. For the purpose of further strengthening the German Democratic Republic, raising its own all-German and international prestige, as well as for the purpose of strengthening the USSR's influence on the German people and equally emphasizing the peaceful and friendly character of mutual relations between Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic, it is advisable to carry out the following measures:

a.) To remove the control exercised by Soviet occupation authorities over the activities of GDR government organs and accordingly liquidate the Soviet Control Commission in Germany² with its central and local agencies.

b.) Instead of the currently existing Soviet diplomatic mission in Berlin, establish an Embassy of the Soviet Union in the German Democratic Republic, entrusting it with functions of an all-German nature, stemming from the quadripartite agreements on Germany as a whole. In large cities of the GDR [we should] establish 7-8 Soviet consulates, to serve the needs of Soviet citizens and troops and to carry out other consular functions.

c.) To declare amnesty and return to their homeland the [German] prisoners of war, held in the USSR, [including those] convicted for crimes against the Soviet people, except those who have committed particularly grave crimes.

Removing control over the activity of governmental bodies of the GDR would promote the normalization of our relations with the GDR as a people's democracy, and strengthen the position of the Soviet government on the all-German question, described above in articles 1 and 2. The German population would see that the Soviet Union, not only in its diplomatic speeches but also in practice, adheres in its relations with Germany to a policy that takes into account the fundamental national interests of the German people.

4. For the purpose of rendering assistance to the German Democratic Republic for further development of its peaceful economy, building the basis of socialism, and raising the well-being of the working people, it is advisable to carry out the following measures:

a.) To reduce by half the remaining sum of reparation payments from the GDR;

b.) To transfer to the government of the GDR, on favorable terms and for the appropriate recompensation, all enterprises of GUSIMZ,³ located on GDR territory.

c.) To enter into negotiations with the GDR government on establishing a joint Soviet - German joint-stock company "Wismut," on the basis of [the] already existing enterprise of "Wismut."⁴

d.) To establish an official exchange rate for the German mark of the GDR in terms of the Soviet ruble.

5. To invite in the near future a government delegation from the GDR for an official visit to Moscow. To discuss with this delegation the aforementioned questions,

including the proposal for the formation of an all-German Provisional Government, and look into questions of an economic character, presented in article 4, as well as questions of broadening scientific-technical collaboration and exchange of specialists between the USSR and GDR, of the education of German students in higher educational establishments, etc.

[Source: AVP RF f. 6, op. 12, p.16, d. 259, ll.45-46. Provided by Vladislav M. Zubok (National Security Archive). Translated by Daniel Rozas (Johns Hopkins University)]

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**Memorandum, V. Chuikov,⁵ P. Iudin,⁶ L. Il'ichev⁷
 to G. M. Malenkov,⁸
 18 May 1953**

Soviet Control Commission in Germany

Secret

18 May 1953

copy No. pg. 00195

In the Presidium of the Central Committee of the
 Communist Party of the Soviet Union

to comrade G.M. MALENKOV

In keeping with instructions from the CPSU C[entral] C[ommittee], the Soviet Control Commission in Germany presents this report on the reasons for the departure of the population from the German Democratic Republic to West Germany, and also on proposals to end these departures.⁹

In its note to the CPSU CC of 15 March 1953, the Soviet Control Commission in Germany delivered a detailed analysis of the economic and political situation of the German Democratic Republic.

Despite the general economic improvements and political strengthening of the GDR, the departure of the

population from the GDR to West Germany is growing, as is confirmed by the data furnished below:

Detailed data on social and age composition are contained in Appendix No.1.¹⁰

Of this number, 320 persons exited across maritime and zonal borders during the [first] four months of 1953; the rest left through Berlin.

The increase in the number of persons moving from the GDR to West Germany can be explained by an intensification of the class struggle in the city and the countryside, and also by the fact that in the practical work of implementing major economic and political measures, administration often is substituted for political mass work, and certain ministries [and] local party and state organs commit gross errors and excesses in regard to different strata of the population.

After the second conference of the SED [in 1952], the government of the GDR and the SED CC took a number of important decisions aimed at limiting capitalist elements in industry and trade, as well as the kulak class in the countryside.

All of this led to the fact that a portion of the peasantry, chiefly large [peasants], began to give up their land. On 1 April 1953, 442,8 thousand ha., or 7.3% of the entire arable agricultural area of all peasant farms, including 393,0 thousand ha. from farms having over 20 ha. land, or 26% of the agricultural area of these sorts of farms, were abandoned and vacant.

It should be noted that the measures to limit capitalist elements in the city and the countryside in many cases are implemented without sufficient political and economic preparation, as a result of which some party and governmental measures have found insufficient support among a significant portion of the populace.

II

With the general rise in the standard of living of the



populace, a disjunction between the growth of the populace's income and the growth of commodity circulation developed toward the beginning of 1953. The fund of wages paid out in the first quarter of 1953 was 17.3% greater than that of the first quarter of the previous year; the volume of commodity circulation over this period rose by only 10% at comparable prices, while commodity circulation in the first quarter of 1953 compared with the fourth quarter of 1952 shrank and consisted of 6.030 million marks against 7.361 million marks in the fourth quarter of 1952.

The under-fulfillment of the production plan of consumer goods in the absence of corresponding reserves and the non-fulfillment of the export-import plan, led to a sharp shortage of goods in the commercial network. In this way, the elevated requirements of the population were not wholly satisfied.

The autumn and winter of 1952-1953, which were difficult for the GDR, and the weak organization of harvest work led to a significant drop in the harvest of sugar beets, oil crops, potatoes and vegetables. Besides this, the unsatisfactory fulfillment of the plan for stockpiles and purchases of agricultural goods in 1952 led to difficulties in the supply of food to the populace.

This made it necessary to halt commercial sales of fats and sugar in the first quarter of 1953, to substitute partially rationed fats and sugar with other goods, to abolish ration cards for private-capitalist elements and persons of free professions (this affected about 500 thousand people), to abolish some additional ration cards for the intelligentsia, and also to raise the prices for meat given out through ration cards by 10-15%, and for commercially sold confectioneries by 12-50%.

With the cancellation of ration cards for footwear and for knitted goods, the general price level was left close to the previously effective commercial prices. Prices were raised on a significant portion of imported consumer goods.

During the entire winter, interruptions in the supply of coal and electricity to the populace in the republic occurred, as a result of which many schools, residential buildings, and socio-cultural [*kul'turno-bytovye*] establishments often went unheated.

III

Recently the government of the GDR made a series of decisions on strengthening punitive policy in the struggle against the theft of the people's property, on criminal sanctions for evading state agricultural quotas and taxes, on limiting the activity of private wholesale firms, and on purging certain regions of dubious elements of questionable class.¹¹ These decisions are basically correct. However, during the implementation of these decisions manifold excesses are being committed, as is expressed in the intensification of different sorts of repressive measures in relation to the populace. As a result of this the arrest of citizens and convicted persons significantly increased: if in

the first half-year of 1952, 11,346 arrests were carried out, [and] in the second half-year – 17,471, then during just the first quarter of 1953, 14,348 arrests were carried out.

By the directive adopted by the GEC¹² on 23 September 1948, "On punishments for violations of economic order," which is currently in effect, the police are given the right broadly to carry out arrests and searches only on the grounds of suspicion of economic crimes. On the basis of this directive, in 1952, 16,482 proceedings were instituted and 4,185 persons were arrested. In 1953, in only the first quarter, 5,094 proceedings were instituted and 2,548 persons were arrested.

There are many cases of incorrect arrests, unlawful and groundless searches in apartments and offices, [and] violations of the established arrest and custody procedure.

On 1 April 1953, there were 54,876 persons in the jails of the GDR; of these, up to 13,141 had not yet had their cases reviewed by the courts.

IV

In the SED CC and in local party organs, there is an underestimation of the political significance of the populace's departure from the GDR to West Germany. This underestimation has manifested itself, in particular, in the SED CC directives. Thus, in letters from 6 January and 30 April of this year, no political evaluation was made of the issue and no measures are planned which would help bring about a fundamental change in the situation. In CC directives, the departure of party members from the GDR is not characterized as a party crime. Meanwhile, 2,718 members and candidates of the SED, and of these, 175 functionaries, were counted among those who left the GDR during the [first] four months of 1953. In addition, in that period, 2,610 members of the Union of Youth left.

Party organs exert almost no influence over the mass democratic organs—labor unions, the Union of Youth, and the Women's League—in inducing them to carry out work to prevent the departure of the population from the GDR.

The press and radio of the GDR weakly expose the slanderous propaganda emanating from West Germany about the refugees, weakly publicize the measures taken by the government of the GDR to accommodate refugees who have returned to the Republic, by giving them work [and] living quarters, and guaranteeing other rights to them, [and they] rarely organize statements by persons who have returned from West Germany. Newspapers, as a rule, remain silent about the facts of the migration of residents of West Germany to the GDR, and do not use their statements for propaganda purposes.

Party and governmental organs commit serious distortions in the implementation of the SED's policy with regard to the intelligentsia.

In the second half of 1952, the SED CC and the GDR government undertook a series of economic and political measures aimed at drawing the intelligentsia into active participation in cultural and economic construction. From 1 July 1952, the pay for engineering-technical and

scientific workers was significantly increased, and for the most outstanding scientific and technical personnel, high personal salaries of up to 15 thousand marks a month were established.

Despite this, the role of the intelligentsia in building the Republic and the necessity of involving the old intelligentsia is still underestimated within the party and the country. In a significant portion of enterprises, a sectarian relationship to the intelligentsia has still not been overcome. The intelligentsia is not drawn into active participation in the productive and social life of the enterprises.

There are serious drawbacks in the way ideological work with the intelligentsia is handled. In a crude and clumsy manner, demands are made for the reconstruction of all scientific work on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. Due to this, scientists of the old school consider that, insofar as they are not Marxists, they have no prospects in the GDR.

Little attention is paid by the SED to organizing scientific discussions, to the free exchange of opinions, [and] the discussion of different problems in advanced science and practice, in the intelligentsia's milieu.

To date, the linking and exchange of scientific activity between scientists of the GDR and scientists of the Soviet Union and social democratic countries is still insufficiently developed.

A feeling of anxiety for their personal safety is evident among broad circles of the intelligentsia and most of all among the technical intelligentsia.¹³ The instances of groundless accusations of sabotage constitute the reason for this sort of mood. The absence of the necessary explanatory work on this issue creates favorable conditions for the activity of enemies and the broad dissemination of all sorts of slanders.

V

West German and Anglo-American authorities are carrying out economic and political diversion aimed at disrupting the five-year plan and at discrediting the policy of the GDR government before the populace. They have worked out a system of measures to entice engineering-technical, scientific and highly-qualified workers from the enterprises and establishments of the GDR.

In West Berlin, a high exchange rate of the Western mark in relation to the Eastern mark is being artificially maintained, making it profitable for the West Berlin population to buy food in the GDR. On the other hand, the acute shortage of high-quality consumer goods in the GDR and their presence in West Berlin attracts a large mass of the residents of the GDR into the Western sector of Berlin. Providing West Berlin with a high level of supply of every imaginable good and lower prices for goods compared to the rest of West Germany has the aim of creating the impression among the population that a high standard of living in West Germany exists in comparison with the GDR.

One of the methods of enemy activity is to dispatch special recruiters to the GDR who engage in the enticement of qualified workers, engineers and technicians, and teachers of secondary and higher schools, to the West.

The West German authorities, the Americans, English, and French, systematically conduct propaganda on the radio in favor of the GDR population's departure for the West, send large quantities of provocative letters, and give provocative telephone warnings of allegedly imminent arrests of GDR citizens.

VI

The church, especially of late, is displaying an active role in enemy propaganda against the GDR. The leaders of the Protestant and Catholic Churches located in West Germany have taken the path of open struggle against the GDR; in sermons and in multiple letters, the clergy calls upon the populace to flee to the West.

The SED CC is committing some mistakes in its relations with the Church.

On 27 January 1953, the SED CC made a decision on exposing the anti-democratic activity of the church youth organization "Junge Gemeinde."¹⁴ It was proposed not to start the exposure of the reactionary activity of "Junge Gemeinde" with broad propaganda work among the populace, but with the organization of trials. In connection with this instruction, the organs of the MfS carried out the arrests of some clergymen and members of "Junge Gemeinde" in February and March. Due to the inadequacy and unconvincing character of the material, however, the trials have not yet been held. Then the SED CC gave an order to begin unmasking "Junge Gemeinde" in the youth press. During the implementation of these instructions, the accusation was made across-the-board that all of the members of "Junge Gemeinde" were members of the terrorist West German youth organization (BDJ).¹⁵ As a result of this, the campaign to expose the reactionary activity of "Junge Gemeinde" has currently aggravated relations between the church and the state.

At one of the meetings with the first secretaries of the SED district committees, W. Ulbricht¹⁶ gave the order that open meetings were to be held in all institutions of higher learning and 12-grade schools of the League of FGU¹⁷ to expose the "Junge Gemeinde," in the course of which the expulsion of the leaders and most active members of "Junge Gemeinde" from schools and educational institutions was to be demanded. In certain schools the number of those expelled reaches 20-30 persons, and in each institution of higher education, the number of expelled students ranges from 5 to 20 persons, this in particular, has led to the fact that in March and April of this year alone, 250 people from 39 twelve-grade schools have fled to the West.

VII

In the interest of halting the departure of the population to West Germany, it seems expedient to recommend

the implementation of the following measures to the leadership of the GDR:¹⁸

On economic issues:

1. To take measures toward the unconditional fulfillment of the industrial production plan for 1953, which is decisive for the fulfillment of the five-year plan. To liquidate the lag which took place from the beginning of the year and especially to devote attention to assuring the fulfillment of the plan for machine-building [industry], the introduction of electric power, and the development of the metallurgy [industry].

2. Over the course of a month, to work out measures to increase the 1953 consumer goods production plan and the development of commodity circulation.

For this purpose, the government of the GDR must take additional measures to import necessary raw materials: cotton - 15-20 thousand tons, wool - 3 thousand tons, heavy leather - 2.5 thousand tons. To increase imports of food stuffs (fats, fruits, and others) and some high-quality manufactured consumer goods. For this purpose, to assign additional output of high-quality production for export, in particular to capitalist countries, having found the necessary raw materials locally, using the free [industrial] capacities at hand, especially in precision mechanics and optics.

The GDR Ministry of Foreign Trade makes insufficient use of the possibilities of trade with capitalist countries. It is desirable to render necessary aid to the GDR Ministry of Foreign Trade through the trade representatives of the USSR and the people's democracies in capitalist countries.

3. To oblige local organs of power to improve the leadership of local industry significantly. To oblige the GDR Gosplan to re-examine within a month the 1953 production plans for local industry with a view to significantly expanding them.

4. In noting the underestimation of the role of manufacture in supplying the population with consumer goods, it is necessary to take governmental measures in support of craftsmen production. It is expedient, in keeping artisans' cooperatives, to organize supplies of raw materials for them on a contractual basis on the condition that they hand over their completed products to the state commercial network; to work out measures to offer artisans tax and credit advantages, and also to equip artisans' cooperatives and individual enterprises with industrial equipment.

5. Considering that one of the reasons for the departure of peasants from the GDR to West Germany is the high norms for quotas of agricultural deliveries to the state, to reduce by 5-10% the differentiated norms in effect in 1953 for compulsory supplies of grain crops and meat by peasant farms

6. To cancel ration cards for meat, fats and sugar from the autumn of 1953, thereby completing the elimination of the rationing system in the GDR, keeping in mind that the per-capita consumption norms that have been attained furnish the possibility of a transition to free commerce.

7. To work out a three-year plan on mechanizing agriculture, developing the MTS network, and equipping it with tractors and agricultural machinery in order to have the possibility of fulfilling the needs for mechanized cultivation of the land not only of agricultural cooperatives, but also of individual peasant farms.

8. To halt the practice of using tractors and agricultural machines from private cultivators through the MTS for work on other farms.

9. To work out a three-year plan to develop animal husbandry and to create a fodder base, assuming the need for the future improvement of supplies for the populace from their own resources.

10. To work out a production plan for fertilizer in quantities that will meet in full the needs of agriculture, including large private farms.

11. To concentrate the attention of state and party organs on the organizational-economic strengthening of the agricultural production cooperatives which have been created in order to ensure even this year a harvest in the cooperatives that is larger than that of the best individual agricultural farms, and the income of cooperative members exceeds the incomes of individual peasant farms.

12. In carrying out measures on limiting private-capitalist elements, to differentiate between attitudes toward large and small retailers and other small entrepreneurs (proprietors of small restaurants, hairdressers, bakers, and so on), as to taxes, credits, issuing food ration cards, supplying goods to merchants, and to use private commerce in the capacity of a commodity distribution network to serve the populace.

13. Considering the great popular demand for construction materials, [as well as] agricultural and gardening equipment, to organize broad rural and urban trade in them, having ensured a portion of additional funds for cement, timber, tiles and machine-manufactured articles; to increase the production of agricultural and gardening equipment.

On administrative issues:

1. In the near future, to carry out a broad amnesty both with regard to persons convicted in the first period for Nazi crimes, and, in particular, persons convicted in the most recent period, with the exception of persons convicted for espionage, terrorist acts, diversions, premeditated murder and for large thefts of the people's property. Fifteen to 17 thousand persons could be freed from prisons by the amnesty.

2. To take measures quickly toward the introduction of strict order and the observance of lawfulness in the procedure for arresting and detaining citizens.

3. To organize expediently social courts [*obshchestvennye sudy*] in enterprises, in institutions, and at people's estates [*narodnye imeniia*], to examine minor economic and administrative violations.

4. To re-examine the current criminal code to remove those articles of criminal law which permit their applica-

tion to even the most inconsequential violations.

5. To cancel all criminal-legal orders containing the directives and circulars of separate ministries. Henceforward, to establish a procedure by which criminal-legal sanctions can be stipulated only in laws of the People's Chamber, and in exceptional cases, in a decree by the government of the GDR.

6. To consider it crucial to carry out a reorganization of the communities [*obshchiny*] in the direction of enlarging and strengthening the local authorities.

7. To carry out, in 1953, an exchange of passports for the entire population of the GDR and, first and foremost, for the population of the democratic sector of Berlin and its surrounding districts.

8. To re-examine the GDR government's decree of 5 March 1953 on mass criminal indictments for the non-fulfillment of supply quotas [*postavki*] [to the state] and taxes.

9. In view of the fact that the migration of the population from the GDR to the West is taking place through Berlin, to consider it expedient to require GDR citizens to have passes [*spravki*] and business travel papers [*komandirovochnye udostovereniia*] from local institutions or organs of power upon entry into Berlin.

On political questions:

1. To end the political underestimation of the significance of the issue surrounding the departure of GDR citizens to West Germany that currently exists in party and state organs and among party workers. To oblige party organs and primary party organizations to analyze with care and to study all cases of departure and to take effective measures to ascertain the reasons influencing the population's migration to West Germany.

To view the departure of members of the SED as a betrayal of the party. To investigate according to party procedure each case of departure by members of the SED to the West and to discuss [it] at general meetings of the party organizations and regional committees of the SED.

2. To commit the party and the mass democratic organizations of the GDR to conduct systematic explanatory work among the GDR populace against leaving for West Germany, exposing with concrete examples the slanderous fabrications, [and] the essence and methods of the subversive work which is being carried out by West German agents.

3. To take concrete measures to strengthen counter-propaganda, organizing it in such ways that the press and radio of the GDR systematically carry out the exposure of mendacious Western propaganda on the issue of refugees from the GDR. To set aside the necessary resources for this.

4. In the interests of an effective struggle against the reactionary broadcasts of "RIAS,"¹⁹ to ensure the completion in 1953 of the construction of powerful radio stations in Magdeburg, Schwerin, and Dresden. To build 15 medium-wave low-power radio stations with up to 5

kilowatts of power and 10 short-wave stations each with up to 2-3 kilowatts of power. To manufacture and deploy 400-600 "Gebor" radio sets.²⁰

5. In the interests of strengthening counter-propaganda, to organize through the KPD²¹ the systematic collection of information about the refugees' difficult conditions and the poor material and legal conditions of different strata of the West German populace.

6. In order to expose the reactionary propaganda of the church, to explain in a detailed and systematic way through the press and in oral propaganda, that the government of the GDR unswervingly observes the freedom of conscience, of religion, and of religious observance, as provided for in the GDR constitution. To explain that the actions of the authorities are directed only against those church officials and leaders of "Junge Gemeinde" who conduct hostile subversive work against the democratic tradition of the GDR.

7. To take measures to correct the excesses which have been committed with regard to students expelled from school and from institutions of higher learning for belonging to the "Junge Gemeinde."

8. For the SED CC to examine in particular the issue of improving work among the intelligentsia and to correct the mistakes that have been committed.

9. To take measures to improve scientific and cultural links between scholars in the GDR and in the Soviet Union and the people's democracies, as well as to supply the GDR intelligentsia with foreign scientific and technical literature.

V. Chuikov
P. Iudin
I. Il'ichev

18 May 1953.

[Source: Archive of the President, Russian Federation (AP RF), Moscow, f. 3, op. 64, d. 802, ll.124-144. Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie (CWIHP).]

CWIHP FILLER

(WEBSITE LOGO)

USSR Council of Ministers Order
“On Measures to Improve the Health of the
Political Situation in the GDR,”
2 June 1953

Com. Sneshnoi T. K.

Top secret

Council of Ministers of the USSR
 Order

2 June 1953. No. 7576-rs
 Moscow, Kremlin

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

No. 10

Top secret

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 thousand people fled to West Germany; over the course of four months in 1953 alone over 120 thousand. Many refugees are workers. Among the refugees are about 18 thousand workers, about 9 thousand middle peasants, land-poor [peasants], artisans and pensioners, about 17 thousand employees and representatives of the working intelligentsia, and over 24 thousand 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 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 and as approved by the Politburo of the CC All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), a mistaken course was taken 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 foundations for it in the countryside led to serious difficulties in the area of supplying the population with manufactured goods and food stuffs, to a sharp fall in the mark's exchange rate, to the ruin of a large number of small entrepreneurs-artisans, workers in domestic industries, and others, and set a significant stratum of the populace against the existing authorities. The matter has gone so far that at present more than 500 thousand 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 the necessary measures on 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.²²

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 center 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 combatting 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, com. Semenov,²³ and the Supreme Commander of the Soviet occupation troops, com. Grechko,²⁴ 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 oppositional 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.

[Stamped by the General Office of the Administration for the Affairs of the Council of Ministers of the USSR].

[Source: AP RF, f. 3, op. 64, d. 802, ll. 153-161. Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie (CWIHP).]

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Notes of GDR Premier O. Grotewohl²⁵ on Meetings between East German and Soviet Leaders in Moscow, 2-4 June 1953

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Malenkov | Semenov |
| Beriia ²⁶ | Grechko |
| Molotov ²⁷ | Kaganovich ²⁸ |
| Khrushchev ²⁹ | Ulbricht |
| Bulganin ³⁰ | Oelßner ³¹ |
| Mikoian ³² | Gr[otewohl] |

Concerned about GDR
Document on Measures for Improvement
Read by Oelßner
continuation at 10:00 on 3 June

6/3/53 Continuation
the same composition

Malenkov: the point of departure for everything has to be the change of the conditions in the GDR.

Beriia: We all have been at fault; no accusations

Molotov: So many mistakes, therefore correcting it in a way that all of G[ermany] will see it.

Khrushchev: L.P.G. greatest [degree of] voluntarism

Beriia: Correct fast and vigorously - that document you can take back again

Kaganovich: The flight from the republic is bad. Our document is reversal, yours is reform.

Mikoian: Without revision of the five-year plan (heavy industry), the reversal is impossible

Why iron and steel industry since one can buy pig iron[?]

Malenkov: [Do] not to worry about prestige; if we do not correct [the situation] now, a catastrophe will happen..

Candid corrections.

Delayed - lost much time.

One has to act quickly.

Calm work style.

Ulbricht: no panic within the L.P.G.

1) lowering of the requisition quotas

2) improve equipment of MTS

food: we want to help

Mistake to do everything yourself since you can't [...]

[Source: Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO-BArch), DY 30 J IV 2/2/286. Provided by Hope Harrison (Lafayette College). Transcribed and translated by Christian Ostermann (CWIHP).]

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Transcript³³ of the Conversations between the Soviet Leadership and a Hungarian United Worker's Party Delegation in Moscow on 13 June 1953

Kremlin, 13 June 1953.

Com. Malenkov: They had a discussion recently with Comrade Rakosi³⁴ about the Hungarian situation. After that conversation, it seemed necessary to discuss certain questions in a wider range. He recommends as the procedure for discussion that the Hungarian comrades unfold their views primarily regarding three questions that relate to fields where not everything is in order in Hungary:

1. certain questions of economic development
2. the selection of cadres
3. certain questions of the state administration (abuses of power).

After discussing these questions, the ways to correct the mistakes must be discussed.

Com. Malenkov: We view Hungary's situation with a critical attitude. We would like the comrades to be critical as well, and to tell us their opinions about the problems. Our impression is that the Hungarian comrades underestimate the problems. Without a thorough debate of the questions, it is impossible to find proper solutions. The facts that we are familiar with indicate that the situation in the field of agriculture is not good. The quality of animal husbandry is not improving; on the contrary, it is declining. Regarding the [agricultural] collectives, the situation

is not too good there either. As far as we know, 8-10,000 families left the collectives last year. They say the harvest was bad. That cannot explain everything. There were excessive orders during the collection of the [agricultural] levy. It was not proper to collect the entire sunflower and rice harvest. Many peasants are sentenced by the courts, because they do not fulfill their obligations to the State. There are problems in the area of trade as well. They provide few commodities for the population.

Persecutions were initiated against 250,000 people in the second half of 1952. It is true that 75% of the persecutions were stopped; yet, the number is still rather high. In 1952, they brought sentences in about 540,000 cases of transgressions within 9 months. All these provoked dissatisfaction among the population.

To return to the [question of] collectives, there is evidence according to which the income of the collectives' employees is less than that of individually working farmers. It is also a mistake that they appropriate [only] a small sum for investments in the field of agriculture. Regarding the cadres. It is appropriate that many [of them] study. But if the leaders are always studying, they are not working. They virtually turn the leaders into students.

Com. Beria: He agrees with what comrade Molotov said. When comrade Rakosi was here last time, it was brought up that certain questions should be discussed with more comrades. Not that they do not trust comrade Rakosi or that comrade Rakosi does not represent Hungary, but just so that they would get to know more comrades.

Comrade Rakosi himself suggested this on several occasions.

It can not be said that there is no improvement in Hungary. The positions of the people's democracy are continuously becoming stronger. The point is that the situation should become even better. The international and internal conditions will not always be this favorable. This is exactly why now the internal situation must be strengthened. We must be stronger than we are now.

Let us look at agriculture from this point of view. The collective sector in Hungary could work much more effectively if the Central Leadership and the Government paid more attention to agriculture. In that case, there would not be 750,000 ha. fallow land. The situation wouldn't be such that the peasants leave agriculture and move into industry. The situation wouldn't be such that the peasants are significant debtors to the State. This debt constitutes 400 million forints according to our information. The situation wouldn't be such that the peasants do not know how much levy they would have to surrender to the State the following year. Comrade Imre Nagy³⁵ was excluded from the PB [Political Bureau] because he recommended that the collective movement should be developed more slowly. This was not correct. The Comrades who lead the KV [Central Leadership] and the Ministerial Council do not know the countryside well, and they do not want to get to know the countryside.

The large number of major investments contribute to the bad situation in the villages. The Hungarian industry is not small. If the Hungarian industry was rectified and broadened a bit, it would be possible to develop metallurgy and certain other industrial branches more slowly. This would allow them to pay more attention to light industry, to the industry that serves the citizens.

Regarding legality and law enforcement, comrade Malenkov is right. Comrade Rakosi once again misunderstands us in this question. The issue is not that comrade Rakosi mentioned 30-40,000 arrested, and their number is somewhat higher.

Could it be acceptable that in Hungary—a country with 9,500,000 inhabitants—persecutions were initiated against 1,500,000 people? Administrative regulations were applied against 1,500,000 people within two and a half years. These numbers show that the interior and judiciary organs and the AVH³⁶ work very badly, and the Ministry of the Interior and the AVH must merge precisely because of this. A respectful comrade must be placed in the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior; someone who will be able to change the situation that developed there. Several leaders replaced each other at the AVH and the M. of Interior; it is not even possible to know exactly what the situation is now. And Hungary will be the object of the attention of many capitalist countries, of the USA, and of England for a long time. There is a big and well-qualified Hungarian delegation in the West that keeps in touch with the leading foreign imperialist circles. It is to be expected that certain capitalist countries will try to curry their favor; others will send diversionists to Hungary. They have one goal: to overthrow the existing authorities and to restore the power of the capitalists. There are many elements in Hungary who could be exploited by the enemy. And there are many who are dissatisfied with the policies of the Party. Why does he treat this question so extensively? Because it has great significance in the relations of the peoples' democracies, but also in the Soviet Union.

There is another way to improve the situation. The personal intervention of the President of the Ministerial Council or of the Party's First Secretary in the questions of the Ministry of the Interior. Comrade Rakosi does that. This intervention is not always appropriate. Even comrade Stalin made a mistake in this question. He directly gave instructions for the questioning of those arrested, etc. Comrade Rakosi would be even more likely to make mistakes.

It is not right that comrade Rakosi gives directions regarding who must be arrested; he says who should be beaten. A person who is beaten will give the kind of confession that the interrogating agents want, will admit that s/he is an English or American spy or whatever we [Hungarians] want. But it will never be possible to know the truth this way. This way, innocent people might be sentenced. There is law, and everyone has to respect it. How investigations should be conducted, who should be arrested, and how they should be interrogated must be left

to the police organs.

Thus, there are two ways to improve the situation. One of the methods: a responsible person is placed at the top of the Ministry of the Interior who becomes the supervisor of the area and corrects the mistakes. The other method: comrade Rakosi directly directs the work of the Interior and AVH organs. This latter method is not correct. Comrade Rakosi tells who is to be arrested, etc. This is how we reach the point that comrade Rakosi is never wrong; all the other comrades are wrong. This situation leads to a point where comrade Rakosi will not be respected, but feared. [He] is the Party's [First] Secretary, the Ministerial Council's President, and the director of the AVH in one person.

Com. Malenkov: Here we are correcting the mistakes that we made in this area.

Com. Beria: The issue of Peter's³⁷ arrest. Bielkin, a person arrested by the Soviet State-security, confessed that he spied together with Gabor Peter. Later he withdrew his confession.

Comrade Rakosi said that Peter could not be released because he had other sins.

Two people were beaten at the AVH until they died. This [was] a serious mistake. Comrade Rakosi is an important person. It is not right that he does everything. It was not even right for comrade Stalin to be everyone in one person. One person is only one person. When comrade Rakosi says the people would not understand if he were released from his position as First Secretary, he overestimates himself. Those comrades who are here and the other comrades at home are not accidental [sic] people either. It would be better if the President of the Ministerial Council were Hungarian.³⁸ Comrade Stalin told comrade Rakosi several times that the Hungarians should be promoted more. They say that they (Jews in Hungary) served Horthy.³⁹ If they are honest people and now they serve us, they must be supported. Today the Red Army is still in Hungary, but it will not be there forever. Therefore, we must prepare and become stronger so that nobody can do any harm to us.

If comrade Nagy becomes the President of the Ministerial Council, comrade Rakosi should remain at the head of the Party as a comrade rich in experience who is faithful to the cause of the Party. Comrade Nagy would be satisfactory as the President of the Ministerial Council (faithful to the Party, Hungarian, knows the agricultural sector).

Comrade Rakosi in his telegram misinterpreted the suggestion that comrade Gerö should be the Minister of the Interior.

Comrade Molotov: The comrades had a chance to become convinced that even though we are talking about Hungary, the issue is not only Hungary, but all the peoples' democracies.

The criticism is severe, but the comrades have to get used to severe criticism. He [Molotov] agrees with com. Malenkov's and com. Beria's speeches. He also agrees

with what has been said about comrade Rakosi. The tendency for bossiness that plagued comrade Rakosi as well originated in the Soviet Union. This mistake must be corrected as soon as possible.

Is the MDP's⁴⁰ political line correct? In my opinion, it is not correct. There have been many mistakes made in the economic field that must urgently be corrected. The speed of industrialization is exaggerated; it is beyond our capabilities. There is a disease in almost all peoples' democracies that leads them to want to establish autarky. This is a children's disease. They do not take into account the Soviet Union's existence. What happened in Hungary? The number of people working in industry grew by 500,000 people within 3 years. This is dangerous and detrimental for Hungary.

They want to invest 19 billion [forints?] this year.

There is a virtual wave of oppression against the population. They initiated persecution against 1,500,000 people in a population with 4.5 million adults in three and a half years. There were 1,500,000 violations during this time. They punish for everything, and punish insignificant acts for selfish reasons. The constitution was established in 1949 according to which a Bureau of State Affairs should be set up. It still has not been set up. This state of affairs is intolerable.

They resort to all kinds of manipulations to ensure a forced industrial development. For instance, there was [only] 57% wool in a particular fabric. They left the name and price of the material, but they took the wool out of it. They significantly worsened the quality of milk. Everything resembles counterfeit. They have lost contact with the population; they do not express the interest of the population in many questions. Is this why we chased the bourgeoisie away, so that afterwards the situation would be like this? Comrade Rakosi's bossiness played a role in this. He knows everything, sees everything and is capable of doing anything.

We talk with our Comrades in a totally frank and honest way. The necessary conclusions must be drawn.

Com. Bulganin: We had not discussed anything in advance; we have no such habits. There are many facts that I only heard for the first time from comrade Beria's presentation. All that was said by the comrades permits me to observe that a catastrophe will occur if we do not improve the situation. The whole situation might be entirely different if the Red Army were not there. It is a fact that the elements of power abuse exist; the population's quality of life has declined. This is not the road to socialism, but the road to a catastrophe.

The question of the army. It is intolerable and not permissible that the army is constantly being purged. Of course, there should be no dubious elements in the army. But it is not possible to keep purging the army for 8 years. Continuously purging the army and keeping it in a feverish state means disarming the army morally and counterpoising it with themselves [with the Party]. In 1952 and in the first quarter of 1953, 460 officers and generals were

discharged for political reasons. The army was not established in 1952. Why was it necessary to discharge this many people for political reasons? If Comrade Rakosi and the KV looked at these 460 people, it would become clear that some of them are our friends, our people. Thus they turned honest people into traitors. There were 370 desertions in 1952. There were 177,000 disciplinary punishments in the army in one year and 3 months. There was almost one punishment for each person.

There are many signals coming in that comrade Farkas⁴¹ likes glamour too much and strives to present himself as a great commander. Rather thorough steps must be taken urgently to improve the situation.

Com. Mikoian: Comrade Malenkov and comrade Beria brought up these questions as openly as they would have [just] between themselves. This is a sign of great trust and friendship.

I have known comrade Rakosi for a long time. The comrades analyzed comrade Rakosi's mistakes correctly. Comrade Rakosi has become very full of himself. There is a certain kind of adventurism in the question of economic planning. For instance, the forced development of their own metallurgy. Hungary does not have its own iron ore, nor its own coke. All this must be imported from abroad. Nobody has calculated yet how much one ton of raw iron and steel costs Hungary. They are building ironworks in Hungary for which nobody has promised the iron ore. In 1952, they had a shortage of 700,000 tons of coke. They [Russians] helped, based on the instruction from comrade Stalin, so that the ironworks would not stop. The coke is not secured for next year either. There are great excesses in the field of major investments. The construction of the metro [subway] could have waited 5-6 years. The amount of money invested in heavy industry has quadrupled since 1950. They are implementing [agricultural] collectivization without the appropriate economic basis, and, as a consequence, the collectives had a lower productivity rate than the individual producers.

This is a serious mistake.

The party newspaper reported [cases of] sentences in which [a] peasant was imprisoned and fined for 3,000 forints because he fed 1.5 q sugar canes [to his animals]. The peasantry can not respect a system like this.

They ask for a quarter million rubles of equipment for the army when Hungary has problems with food supply. Hungary has a debt of 360 million rubles to the people's democracies.

They draw up strenuous plans that they can not fulfill. The goods available to the populace in Hungary are of bad quality and expensive. There are no goods of good quality, because they export those to try somehow to achieve balanced trade. The situation is not improving but getting worse. Everything is growing in Hungary, but the amount of goods provided for the population is decreasing. (Examples for decreasing quantity: textiles, soap, etc.)

Hungary has all the potential to bloom. It was generally developing well until 1951, until success blinded

the leaders and they started to make audacious plans.

The mistakes must be corrected instantly.

Com. Khrushchev: He agrees with the criticism that the comrades developed. Comrade Beria's passionate criticism was aimed at helping to correct the mistakes. Certain comrades think that the Russian comrades did not form an entirely correct opinion when they criticized comrade Rakosi. Comrade Rakosi is primarily responsible for the mistakes. Comrade Rakosi observed that coal production grew by 25%, and in spite of this there were no protests in certain schools or hospitals. Even though Comrade Rakosi commented on this in the form of self-criticism, he is still responsible for it. It is possible that comrade Rakosi practiced self-criticism because he saw that things were going badly and this way he could avoid criticism.

Hungary used to be famous for her well-developed agriculture and for being a rich country. Now, even the middle peasantry is in uncertainty because of the extremely rapid pace of collectivization. The peasantry needs sires [stud stock], power for the ploughs, etc. If the peasantry sees that sooner or later they will have to join the collectives, they will not develop their farms. This is how individual farming declines. We should not even be surprised if all of a sudden they started to do away with the vineyards.

My impression is that there is no real collective leadership, [that] a true collective leadership has not developed. Comrade Nagy criticized the leadership; therefore, they excluded him from the Politburo. What kind of respect for [critical] opinions is this? Deeply effective consequences must be drawn from the criticism toward Comrade Rakosi. Is it not possible to produce a collective leadership made up of Hungarians? It is impossible that a population of 9.5 million can not produce people that are suitable leaders. This situation in which one has not finished studying yet, the other one just started, must be changed; thus, there are no leaders with sufficient values.

Comrade Rakosi can not work collectively. There are capable people; they must be promoted and the relationship [of the party] with the Hungarian people must be improved.

They are building the metro in Budapest. In the USSR they only started to build it in 1932. Moscow is the capital of a country with 200 million people. The Hungarian comrades are mistaken to start with the assumption that since it exists in Moscow; therefore, it must be quickly built in Budapest as well.

Com. Malenkov: Certain question must have surprised the comrades. They would need to stay for another 2-3 days to develop and discuss the main regulations. We should meet once again. We could meet on Tuesday afternoon.

The [Hungarian] comrades who spoke said themselves that things were not going very well in Hungary. It is not an issue of minor details, but the correction of the political

line has become necessary, because there are problems with fundamental questions, and it also has to do with the question of leadership. Last time, when comrade Rakosi was here, we talked with him in more immediate circles. Comrade Rakosi could not name anyone among the Hungarians as his primary deputy. This was an unpleasant surprise for us. Whenever someone's name came up, comrade Rakosi always immediately had some kind of objection, thus finally he could not name any Hungarian as his primary deputy. In connection with this came the idea that the comrades should be invited and we should discuss certain questions together. No matter what kind of candidate's name came up, there were always immediate objections. This was what worried us, and made it necessary to talk with more comrades, this way. Comrade Rakosi's telegram also had this kind of effect. And then we saw that we needed to help the comrades and we would have to talk about this question openly. It is not a coincidence that the question of bossiness came up. It is one thing to paint things very beautifully in the movies, but reality is another thing.

Why do we bring these questions up so harshly? We, as Communists, are all responsible for the state of things in Hungary. The Soviet Union is also responsible for what kind of rule exists in Hungary. If they say that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union advised certain incorrect things, we admit to that, and we correct the mistakes, too. We admit to the extreme military demands, but the comrades executed these demands even beyond what was expected. Why should an army be maintained with such a size that it bankrupts the state[?] The point is, we have to develop regulations together that are suitable to correct the mistakes, and these regulations must be put into writing. It must be determined how power can be allocated to the right places and distributed properly. We have to come to the conclusion that the Ministerial Council's President should be Hungarian. Comrade Rakosi will find his own important position as the [First] Secretary of the Party. A respectful person must be recommended as the Minister of the Interior; comrade Gerö should take over the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior. The Politburo must take its own place; the Secretariat and the Ministerial Council should also take their own places. It is an impossible state of affairs that persons in the Ministerial Council keep silent regarding the question of [agricultural] levy in kind [only] because it had been previously decided on by the Secretariat.

Recommendations must be made as to who should be placed where. There should be no favor for anyone with regards to who should be placed in what field. It is our sacred responsibility to place everyone in the proper position. Whoever is placed in a responsible position must be respected and full rights must be insured for him. There is no reason for people in responsible positions to work as employees next to the master. Nothing good could come of it, besides all the harm. That is a civic habit. These questions must be considered thoroughly, and the

recommendations must be prepared. We will meet on Tuesday, and then we will discuss the recommendations. Com. Rakosi: Regarding hubris, that's an illness that one can not detect, just like one can not smell one's own odor. If the comrades say this is the case, I accept it. (Beria: Comrade, what do you think?)

It must be said that I never wanted to be the President of the Ministerial Council. (Comrade Molotov: But you wanted a President for the Ministerial Council that would have had no say in decisions.)

Comrade Beria: We like you and respect you, that's why we criticize you. You had told comrade Stalin even before being elected as the President of the Ministerial Council that the power was already in your hands. Comrade Stalin reported this.

Com. Rakosi: The comrades said that we needed a big army and military industry.

Com. Malenkov: We wanted you to develop the army. We [will] correct this mistake. There are 600,000 people in the army. (Comrade Rakosi: Including the reserves. So you carried the Soviet Union's wishes to the extreme.

Com. Beria: The development of the army was discussed with comrade Stalin. Comrade Stalin gave incorrect instructions.

Com. Rakosi: We tried to execute the instructions. My heart was aching about the fact that we had to maintain such a big army.

Com. Malenkov: When you asked us to decrease our demands to build barracks, we withdrew our requests immediately.

Com. Rakosi: Twenty-six percent of the farm land is in the hands of collectives. We achieved this in 5 years. The peasantry knows that collectivization will happen sooner or later.

Com. Beria.: The policy toward the middle peasantry must be changed.

Com. Malenkov: One or two things can be explained, but not everything. The issue of comrade Rakosi's telegram. Comrade Rakosi started to expand in the telegram on something other than what they had talked about and agreed on. The issue is that there should not be three Jews in the leadership.⁴² However, comrade Rakosi in the telegram made it sound like we had given such an advice, and answered that he did not really understand it, but he accepted it.

Com. Beria: If the great Stalin made mistakes, comrade Rakosi can admit that he made mistakes too. It must not be prescribed who should be beaten by the AVH. Everyone will be afraid. Comrade Hidasi is afraid, too; that's what his speech reflects. Provocation can reach everything [sic!], if the methods are like these. People must not be beaten.

The Ministerial Council must make the decisions about important questions regarding production. The Party's Central Leadership must be preoccupied with education and the question of cadres.

Why is it necessary to invest one billion forints in

crude oil production? Romania has got enough oil. In Hungary, the aluminum industry should be developed more.

Com. Gerö: The criticism is justified and correct not just in general, but also regarding the question of bossiness. The leadership is not collective, and we did not raise Hungarian cadres. He often wanted to raise the question but never got to it. The situation really got to the point that whenever comrade Rakosi gave a speech, the newspapers really exulted it, and the KV's staff made sure that it would appear before the people as some extraordinary achievement. Such bossiness undoubtedly exists, and I am primarily responsible for it, second to comrade Rakosi. I did not have the courage to bring up the question. By expressing our mistakes this openly, the comrades helped us tremendously. It is a shame that we could not do this ourselves. It must be admitted that such bossiness happened in my case too, but I discontinued it during the last few years. The enemy tries to take advantage of these things. Bossiness is also practiced by comrade Farkas. In fact, there is bossiness even at the lower levels, at the smaller organs. The county and village secretary, the president of the collective, everyone is a leader in their realm. This kind of bossiness exists, and it must be uprooted thoroughly. In our case, bossiness is intertwined with civic phenomena; he [Gerö] also agrees with the comrades on that. We just had parliamentary elections. After the elections, a picture was published in the *Szabad Nep*, depicting Comrade Rakosi voting together with his wife. Comrade Rakosi did not arrange for this himself, but he did not protest it either.

Regarding mistakes in the economy. We noticed in a number of questions that there were mistakes, but we did not bring up these questions so explicitly. For instance, the issue of the metro. It is actually fortunate that they did not listen to the military advisers who recommended that the metro should be built such that tanks and military trains could commute on the metro line. There was great excess in the case of the metro.

Com. Malenkov: It seems like we all agree on recommending comrade Imre Nagy. He explicitly asked for comrade Rakosi's and comrade Dobi's opinions. Comrade Rakosi and comrade Dobi agreed with the proposal, too.⁴³

[Source: Hungarian Central Archives, Budapest, 276. f. 102/65. oe. e. -Typed revision. - Published by Gyorgy T. Varga in *Multunk*, 2-3(1992), pp. 234-269. Translated by Monika Borbely (Woodrow Wilson Center/Princeton University).]

Report from V. Semenov and A. Grechko (Berlin-Karlshorst) to V. Molotov and N. Bulganin, 17 June 1953, 7:26 a.m. (Moscow time)

OPERATIONS DIVISION,
MAIN OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION,
GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY

Top Secret (Declassified)

To Comrade V.M. MOLOTOV
To Comrade N.A. BULGANIN

We are reporting on the situation in Berlin towards the close of 16 June.

As reported before, there had been a demonstration by construction workers on strike in the downtown of the Soviet Sector of Berlin during the first half of 16 June, protesting against the raising of the output quotas in the Berlin construction industry. Some people from West Berlin took part in the rally. The majority of construction workers started breaking up after it was announced that SED CC had cancelled the rise in output quotas. The participation of the persons sent from West Berlin kept increasing in the subsequent gatherings.

The situation in the city worsened towards the evening of 16 June. While the activists of the SED were meeting in Friedrichsstadtpalast, big crowds started arriving from West [Berlin] into East Berlin, moving towards the above-mentioned building. At the same time, a band of up to 2,000 people, mainly West Berliners, were throwing stones at the I.V. Stalin monument at Stalinallee at 9.30 p.m. and moved towards Friedrichsstadtpalast, ransacking a shop on the way. Four hundred German (Eastern German) policemen dispersed this band. At the same time, large groups of West Berliners were attempting to promote chaos, blocking streets, holding up tram traffic, turning over cars, breaking shop windows. About 500 bandits tried to burst into the gas plant and block its operations. Some groups gathered at the Berlin City Railway Office, as well as near the SED CC building. Some hooligans tried breaking into the residential flats of SED activists at Berzarin Platz. All those groups were dispersed by German police. 25 people were arrested, according to incomplete information.

The organizers of the riots announced that there would be a meeting at Strausberger Platz in central Berlin at 6.00 a.m. on 17 June. At the same time, there was strong agitation for a general strike in East Berlin. The workers at "Fortschritt One" and "Fortschritt Two" clothing factories, as well as the night shift of 120 people at one of the Berlin plants, went on strike in the evening of 16 June.

The issue of *Der Abend* published in Western Berlin on the evening of 16 June [which] called for a general strike in East Berlin on 17 June. It is clear from the reports of West German press and radio that the above-mentioned hostile actions have been organized from West Berlin as a response to the recently declared measures on normaliza-

tion of the political situation in the GDR. From reports, it is also clear that this is a matter of a rather major planned provocation.

We talked with the GDR leaders ULBRICHT, GROTEWOHL, and ZAISSER. They all believed that the riots of 16 June were just the beginning of actions which have been organized from West Berlin. The friends [East German leadership] are considering the probability of even larger disorders on the morning of 17 June. They made the decision to introduce police patrols to the streets where riots took place as well as to strengthen the protection of the most important objects in the city by the German People's Police. ZAISSER, Minister of State Security and Politburo member, has been put in charge of maintaining order in the city. Units of the barracked police totaling 1,100 men are being called from Oranienburg and Potsdam to reinforce the Berlin metropolitan police forces. Measures have been taken to rally the party and youth activists to carry out explanatory work among inhabitants and to assist the authorities with maintaining order in the city.

At the request of the German friends, we are beginning troop patrols of 450 men [total] in cars in areas where disorders have occurred and also near the important installations in East Berlin.

We have agreed with the "friends" that the German People's Police will maintain order in the city and that Soviet troops will take active part in keeping order only in exceptional circumstances of extreme need. Colonel-General Comrade GRECHKO has taken the overall responsibility over Soviet troops in Berlin. Marshal GOVOROV⁴⁴ is also in Berlin.

The reports of the further events are to follow.
SEMENOV GRECHKO [...] ⁴⁵

[Source: Archives of the Russian General Staff (AGSh), Moscow, f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 1-3. Provided and translated by Viktor Gobarev.]

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Report from V. Semenov and A. Grechko in Berlin to V. Molotov and N. A. Bulganin, 17 June 1953, 11:15 a.m.

THE OPERATIONS DIVISION,
THE MAIN OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION
THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY

Top Secret (Declassified)
Copy #5
To Comrade V.M. MOLOTOV
To Comrade N.A. BULGANIN

Today, the morning of 17 June, some plants are on strike in East Berlin, including the large plants of the Soviet Joint-Stock Company and the people's enterprises. In addition, the workers of the construction companies have not come to work. The striking workers went to

Strausberger Platz, which was arranged by the organizers of the disorders to be the place of the meeting.

By 8 a.m., some 30 enterprises, with a workforce of up to 25,000 people, were on strike. There are about 15,000 to 20,000 people in the streets. The speeches of the demonstrators are running under the same slogans as were put forward yesterday. The demand to decrease the prices by 20% in retail shops is strongly emphasized.

With the measures undertaken [so far], the German police have failed to disperse the demonstrators. Soviet military patrols run throughout the city. Two companies of armored personnel carriers are patrolling near the building that houses the SED CC and the government.

We note an American vehicle with two uniformed American officers in it, calling on the demonstrators to go to West Berlin.

The organization of a solidarity demonstration has been announced in West Berlin. There is a possibility that those demonstrators will attempt to cross from West Berlin to East Berlin which may increase the disorders

SEMENOV GRECHKO

11:15. a.m., 17 June 1953 ⁴⁶

[Source: AGSh, f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 6-7. Provided and translated by Viktor Gobarev.]

.....
Report from A. Grechko and Tarasov in Berlin to N. A. Bulganin, 17 June 1953, 6:30 p.m.

OPERATIONS DIVISION,
MAIN OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION,
GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY

Top Secret (Declassified)
Copy #6

To Comrade BULGANIN, N.A.

The situation in Berlin is improving. The principal government buildings, such as the one occupied by the Council of the Ministers, by the Central Committee of the Socialist United Party of Germany, and the police headquarters, are safe and guarded by our forces. The major districts of the Soviet sector of Berlin are under the control of our forces.

According to preliminary data, forty-six active instigators were arrested. The situation at the buildings occupied by the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and the government is peaceful.

All the roads on the way to these buildings are blocked by our troops, tanks, artillery. The tanks and armored personnel carriers finish dispersing the demonstrators. Some demonstrators are leaving the columns and hiding themselves along the streets. Some three thousand

demonstrators are gathering at Friedrichsstraße in the American Sector of Berlin. Demonstrators have cried out anti-government slogans, demanded the immediate resignation of the present Government of the German Democratic Republic, and asked to decrease prices by 40%, to protect those on strike, to liquidate the [East] German armed forces and the People's Police, to regain the territories of Germany that were given to Poland, as well as other anti-Soviet slogans.

Martial law was introduced in the Soviet Sector of Berlin at 1:00 p.m. on 17 June, local time.

The 2nd Mechanized [Soviet] Army, consisting of the 1st and the 14th mechanized divisions and the 12th tank division, was brought into Berlin to restore complete order in the city by 9:00 p.m. on 17 June.

The units of the above divisions will be reaching the outskirts of the city.

The members of the GDR Government have been evacuated from the dangerous areas and are in comrade Semenov's residence.

With the intention to restore public order and terminate the anti-government demonstrations which have occurred, martial law has been declared in Magdeburg, Leipzig, Dresden, Halle, Görlitz, and Brandenburg.

Today, at 2:00 p.m., local time, a declaration was issued by the Government of the German Democratic Republic to the German people which explained the nature of the events that have taken place and called for unity and opposition to the fascist and reactionary elements.

GRECHKO TARASOV

Received on telephone by Lieutenant-Colonel N. PAVLOVSKY
17 June 1953, 6.30 p.m.⁴⁷

[Source: AGSh, f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 8-9. Provided and translated by Viktor Gobarev.]

**Report from A. Grechko and Tarasov
to N. A. Bulganin,
17 June 1953, 9:30 p.m.**

OPERATIONS DIVISION,
MAIN OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION,
GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY

Top Secret (Declassified)
Copy #6

To Comrade BULGANIN, N.A.

I am reporting the situation in the city of Berlin and on the territory of the German Democratic Republic as of 5:30 p.m., on 17 June (local time).

1. The forces of the [Soviet] Group [of Forces in Germany] continue to restore order in Berlin and other cities and towns of the German Democratic Republic. There are still some demonstrations and street disorders in

Berlin and some cities and towns of the German Democratic Republic.

The demonstrators demand the resignation of the government of the German Democratic Republic, a decrease in the output quotas, a decrease of consumer goods and food prices, the elimination of the sectoral borders, and the restoration of the united Germany within the pre-war borders.

There have been some pogroms of public buildings, commercial shops, as well as some attempts to capture public and government establishments.

2. Besides Berlin, demonstrations and disorders have also taken place in some other cities and towns of the German Democratic Republic. The following numbers of people took part in the demonstrations: up to 15,000 in Magdeburg, up to 1,500 in Brandenburg, up to 1,000 in Oranienburg and Werder, up to 1,000 in Jena, 1,000 in Gera, up to 1,000 in Sömmerda, up to 10,000 in Dresden, up to 2,000 in Leipzig, 20,000 in Görlitz.

The following mechanized and tank units of the Group [of the Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany] have been dispatched for the restoration of order: some units of the 19th mechanized division in Magdeburg, a mechanized infantry regiment of the 11th tank division in Dresden, a mechanized regiment and a motorbike battalion of the 8th mechanized division in Leipzig. Order was restored in Jena, Gera, and Sömmerda by 6:00 p.m.

3. There are still some disorders in some parts of the Soviet sector of Berlin. According to incomplete information, more than 30 plants and other enterprises have been on strike in the Soviet sector of Berlin.

The 1st and the 14th mechanized divisions are operating in Berlin. The 12th tank division has approached the northeastern suburbs of Berlin.

According to incomplete information, 94 instigators and provocateurs were arrested by 5:00 p.m.

4. According to [our] data, by 9:00 p.m., Moscow time, 50 people were killed or wounded in Magdeburg during the restoration of order. Three Germans were killed and 17 wounded in Leipzig. There have been no losses on our side.

5. Comrade Sokolovskii⁴⁸ arrived in Berlin at 8:43 p.m., Moscow time.

GRECHKO TARASOV

"Correct". General of the Army SHTEMENKO
17 June 1953, 9:30 p.m.⁴⁹

[Source: AGSh, f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 10-11. Provided and translated by Viktor Gobarev.]

**Report from A. Grechko and Tarasov in Berlin
to N. A. Bulganin,
17 June 1953, 11:00 p.m.**

OPERATIONS DIVISION,
MAIN OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION,
GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY
Top Secret (Declassified)

To Comrade BULGANIN, N.A.

I am reporting on the situation in the GDR and Berlin as of 11:00 p.m., 17 June 1953 (Moscow time).

1. The Soviet forces, namely the 1st mechanized infantry division, the 14th mechanized infantry division, and the 12th tank division (altogether 600 tanks), have for the most part restored order in the Soviet sector of Berlin. The provocative plan of the reactionary and fascist-like elements has been wrecked.

There have been only minor groups around the Alexanderplatz and Stalinallee downtown area in the evening, which are being dispersed and arrested by our forces.

It may be considered that a special organization based in West Berlin has directed the strikes in East Berlin.

Analyzing the situation, I have also come to the conclusion that the provocation was prepared in advance, organized, and directed from Western sectors of Berlin. The simultaneous actions in the majority of the big cities of the GDR, the same demands of the rebels everywhere as well as the same anti-state and anti-Soviet slogans, serve as proof for this conclusion.

As the result of measures undertaken in the Western sectors of Berlin, there have been large gatherings of German residents at the borders between the Soviet sector and the British and American ones.

The border with the Western sectors of Berlin was closed by our troops.

Power-stations, gas plants, water-supply, and railway have worked smoothly.

About 300 organizers and provocateurs were arrested in Berlin by 8:00 p.m.

2. Order was restored in the majority of the cities of GDR. Normal life and activity of state institutions were restored toward the end of the day. Order was restored by measures undertaken in Magdeburg. 50 Germans were killed and wounded, and over 100 instigators and provocateurs have been arrested during the restoration of order.

3. With the purpose of preventing further possible riots, the forces of the Group [of Soviet Forces in Germany] are being moved from field camps into the following big and important populated points:

The 3rd Army - the 19th mechanized division into Magdeburg; the 136th artillery-technical, tank & self-propelled gun regiment into Burg; the 13th mechanized division into Parchim, Ludwigslust, Pirleberg; the 207th infantry division into Gardelegen, Stendal.

The 8th Guards Army - the 20th Guards mechanized division into Weimar, Jena, Zeitz; the 21st Guards mechanized division into Halle, Merseburg; the 57th Guards infantry division into Naumburg, Weißenfels and its one infantry regiment into Eisenach.

The 1st Guards Army - the 11th tank division into Dresden (the main forces) and Meißen, Königsbruck (the minor forces); the 8th Guards mechanized division into Leipzig (the main forces) and Borna, Grimma (the minor forces); the 9th tank division into Piesa, Oschatz, Zeithavn.

The 3rd Guards Mechanized Army - the 6th Guards tank division into Dessau, Wittenberg; the 9th mechanized division into Lübben, Cottbus, Spremberg.

The 4th Guards Mechanized Army - the 6th Guards mechanized division into Bernau, Eberswalde, Bad Freienwalde; the 7th Guards mechanized division into Fürstenwalde, Frankfurt an der Oder.

The motorbike battalion and the howitzer battalion of the 10th tank division into Brandenburg; the 25th tank division (a tank regiment and a mechanized infantry regiment) into Oranienburg.

4. According to preliminary information, the losses of the strikers in the whole territory of the GDR have been[:] 84 people killed and wounded, 700 men arrested. Our exact losses are being determined.

5. Martial law was declared in the British sector of Berlin. Soldiers are not allowed to leave the barracks. The patrols at the border with the Soviet sector have been reinforced. Troops in the American and French sectors of Berlin are in barracks.

GRECHKO TARASOV
"Correctly": COLONEL-GENERAL MALININ
17 June 1953⁵⁰

[Source: AGSh, f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 12-14. Provided and translated by Viktor Gobarev.]

**Report from V. Sokolovskii and L. Govorov in Berlin
to N. A. Bulganin,
17-18 June 1953**

OPERATIONS DIVISION,
MAIN OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION,
GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY
Top Secret (Declassified)
Copy #6

To Comrade BULGANIN, N.A.

1. The events that have taken place in Berlin and the other large cities of the Soviet Zone of Germany today, 17 June, seem to be a major planned uprising covering the whole territory of the German Democratic Republic and aimed at making a coup d'état and simultaneously replacing the government in the German Democratic Republic. It is confirmed by the following:

Firstly, the disorders began simultaneously in Berlin and the following big cities: Magdeburg, Brandenburg, Leipzig, Jena, Gera, Halle, Bitterfeld, Dresden, Cottbus, Riesa, Görlitz, etc.

Secondly, the same tactics of actions were used everywhere, i.e. stoppages at plants, factories, public transport facilities and institutions; there were attempts to capture the same kind of objects, such as the district committees of the SED, the branches of the state security forces, and prisons.

Thirdly, all the disorders have taken place under the same slogans:

- a. To pay salaries in accordance with the previous output quotas.
- b. To decrease immediately the food prices.
- c. To oust the current government by means of free and secret elections.
- d. To release political prisoners and eliminate the state security bodies.

2. Despite the fact that this uprising had been prepared beforehand and took place under the leadership of the West, it was totally unexpected for the German democratic government as well as for our [Soviet control] structures [organy].

3. It should be noted that the People's Police have been active, but poorly armed.

4. The timely implementation of measures to restore order by our troops has been complicated by the fact that all the troops happened to be located far from the big cities, i.e. in the field camps, as well as by the fact that the Staff of the Group [of the Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany] and the Office of the [Soviet] High Commissioner [in Germany] did not take seriously the events starting on 16 June.

These factors have unavoidably led to delays in liquidating of the disorders.

SOKOLOVSKII GOVOROV

17 June 1953

Reported by "VCh-phone" at 2.05 a.m., on 18 June 1953 by General Gryzlov.⁵¹

[Source: AGSh, f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 4-5. Provided and translated by Viktor Gobarev.]

**Report from A. Grechko and Tarasov to N. A. Bulganin,
18 June 1953, 11 a.m.**

THE OPERATIONS DIVISION,
THE MAIN OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION
THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY

Top Secret (Declassified)

Copy #6

To Comrade BULGANIN, N.A.

I am reporting the situation on the territory of the German Democratic Republic and in the city of Berlin by 8.00 a.m. on 18 June 1953, Moscow time.

1. There have been no disorders observed on the territory of the German Democratic Republic and in the city of Berlin during the night of June 18. Some groups of Germans started gathering in Görlitz, where they were dispersed by the [Soviet] troops. There is information that the rebels might try to turn the funeral of a German killed there into an anti-government rally in Veida, which is 12 km to the south of Gera. A tank-training battalion of the 20th Guards mechanized division has been sent to Veida.
2. The units of the Group of the Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany during the night of June 18 have moved from their field camps to the [assigned] areas in accordance with the decision made on June 17. They also have continued to perform their duties along the zonal borders, as well as patrol in the cities and towns of the German Democratic Republic.

By 6.00 a.m. on June 18, the forces have been concentrated in the following areas.

The 3rd Army: the 19th Guards mechanized division in Magdeburg; the 18th mechanized division in Parchim, Ludwigslust, Pirleberg; the 136th artillery-technical and tank & self-propelled gun regiment in the field camp Born [at Burg]; the 207th infantry division in Gardelegen and Stendal.

The 8th Guards Army: the 20th Guards mechanized division in Weimar, Jena, Zeitz; the 21st Guards mechanized division in Halle and Merseburg; the 57th Guards infantry division in Naumburg, Weißenfels, and Eisenach; the 39th Guards infantry division in Ordruff, Plauen, and Saalfeld.

The 1st Guards Mechanized Army: the 11th Guards tank division, except the 44th tank regiment and the 45th tank regiment and a tank-training battalion, in Dresden; the 44th tank regiment and a tank-training battalion in Königsbruck; the 45th tank regiment in Meißen; the 9th tank division in Piesa, Oschatz, Zeithavn; the 19th mechanized regiment and the 1st tank regiment of the 8th Guards mechanized division in Glatzhau and Schönau, and the 20th mechanized regiment and the 21st mechanized regiment of the 8th Guards mechanized division in the vicinity of Meißen.

The 2nd Guards Mechanized Army: the 12th Guards

tank division in the north-east area of Berlin; the 1st Guards mechanized division in the west and south-west areas of the city; the 14th Guards mechanized division in the central and south-east areas of the city; the 9th Guards tank division in Neustrelitz; the 31st anti-aircraft artillery division in Schönwalde; the 172th separate light artillery brigade in camp Schepek.

The 3rd Guards Mechanized Army: the 9th mechanized division in Lubben, Cottbus, and Spremberg; the 6th Guards tank division in Oschnitz, Wittenberg, Alteslager, Dessau; the 7th Guards tank division, except the 23rd mechanized infantry regiment, in the field camp Magdeburg; its 23rd mechanized infantry regiment and the 41st tank-training battalion in Roslau.

The 4th Guards Mechanized Army: the 10th tank division in Kolbitz, Brandenburg, and Krampnitz; the 6th Guards mechanized division in Eberswalde and Bad Freienwalde; the 25th tank division, except the 20th mechanized infantry regiment and the 111th tank regiment, in the field camp Templin; its 20th mechanized infantry regiment and the 111th tank regiment in Oranienburg, Kremen, Felten, and Birkenwerder; the 7th Guards mechanized division in Fürstenwalde and Frankfurt a.d. Oder.

3. Altogether, 209 people were killed and wounded, and 3,351 people were detained on the territory of the German Democratic Republic. Of these, 90 people were wounded and 2,414 were detained in Berlin.

There have been no losses to the units of the Group [of the Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany].

GRECHKO TARASOV

Correct. General of the Army SHTEMENKO
18 June 1953, 11:00 a.m. [...] ⁵²

[Source: AGSh, f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 15-16. Provided and translated by Viktor Gobarev.]

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**Report from A. Grechko and Tarasov in Berlin
to N. A. Bulganin,
18 June 1953, 2:30 p.m.**

OPERATIONS DIVISION,
MAIN OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION,
GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY

Top Secret (Declassified)
To Comrade BULGANIN, N.A.

I am reporting the situation in the GDR and Berlin as of 18 June 1953, 1.00 p.m. (Moscow time).

1. Berlin is calm.

2. There have been some attempts to organize riots and demonstrations in Swinoujscie, Starkau, Bernau, Oranienburg (up to one third of the workers there are on strike), Nordhausen, Görlitz, Warnemünde, Halle, Eisleben, Ettelstadt, Fürstenwalde (up to 400 people),

Zeitz, Apolda and Ettelstadt.

All attempts at riots and demonstrations have been curbed by the units of the Group.

3. According to military intelligence information, the US 7th Army and the 12th Air Force Army were put on alert in the US zone at 5.30 a.m. on June 18. The Main Headquarters of the NATO Armed Forces in Louveciennes (20 km to the west of Paris) were also put on alert.

The alert state for the 7th Army was cancelled and its units were ordered to return to the places of their permanent location at 8.30 a.m.

No movement of troops was observed in the British and French sectors of Berlin.

The French military police has dispersed West Berlin residents gathering at the sectoral border. No gatherings of demonstrators were observed in the British sector of Berlin.

4. The units of the Group have been concentrated in the assigned locations. Besides maintaining order in the area of its location, every garrison has the task to make a reconnaissance up to 50 km around the location and, in case riots occur in any place, deploy sufficient forces there.

GRECHKO TARASOV

“Correctly”: GENERAL OF THE ARMY SHTEMENKO
18 June 1953, 2:30 p.m. ⁵³

[Source: AGSh, f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 19-20. Provided and translated by Viktor Gobarev]

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[The following is an excerpt from a secret telephonogram by V. Semenov and V. Sokolovskii in Berlin to V. M. Molotov, dated 18 June 1953, describing the situation in East Germany on the morning of June 18. ⁵⁴]

“We are reporting about the situation in Berlin and the GDR at 2 p.m. (Berlin time) on June 18.

Today efforts to restore order in Berlin began actively to include German organizations and SED party organizations, which are devoting their main attention to the development of political work at enterprises. Some of the municipal enterprises worked at reduced capacity in the morning, as a result of continued ferment among workers, who in part, when they arrived at the enterprises, gathered into groups and began discussions. The appearance of organized groups of provocateurs at some enterprises was established, in connection with which small numbers of Soviet troops were sent to separate enterprises, acting in concert with the German police. In some cases, it was possible to expose and arrest the ring-leaders of the strikes at enterprises. Thus, at the chemical factory in Grunau (Köpenik region), an engineer who had been urging workers to strike was arrested. At a high-frequency apparatus factory in Köpenik, workers began work after the arrest of two strike organizers. At a cable factory in Köpenik, the workers themselves detained five provoca-

teurs and strike ring-leaders and handed them over to the police.

Toward midday, the situation in Berlin's enterprises improved, although individual enterprises continue partial strikes. Capacity at electric power stations grew from 30% in the [early] morning hours to 70% by 11:00 a.m.

At 9:30 a.m. at the Brandenburg gates, employees of the people's police of the GDR were fired upon from the direction of West Berlin. The people's police made several shots in return, as a result of which one West Berlin policeman was killed.

Representatives of the intelligentsia took almost no part in the strikes and disturbances. Many well-known representatives of the intelligentsia spoke publicly stating their trust in the government and condemning the West Berlin provocateurs. Classes in schools and in institutions of higher learning [and] rehearsals in the theaters of Berlin continued in a normal fashion yesterday and today. At selected enterprises, engineers and technicians obstructed the cessation of work by strikers and convinced workers not to participate in the disorders.

West Berlin radio broadcast the speech by the Bürgermeister of the Kreuzberg district (American sector), [Willy] Kreßmann, who called upon the residents of East Berlin not to approach the border between East and West Berlin, since the Soviet Army had received orders to use their weapons. "We do not want to bear responsibility for your death," Kreßmann said.

In today's issue of *Neues Deutschland*, a letter from the Stalinallee construction brigade was published, calling on workers to start work again and to end the disturbances. The letter contained the following impermissible phrase: "Today the enterprises belong to us and it depends on us to force our leading colleagues to do what we need. The last two days at Stalinallee is evidence that we have not yet achieved that at all enterprises." We drew Ulbricht's attention to the impermissibility of such publications.

In the GDR, the situation continues to improve. Only isolated cases of disturbances are taking place. At some points, efforts to start demonstrations have been made. Workers at the Stralsund shipyard (900 persons) went on strike. In Halle, strikes are continuing at some factories. The strikers conveyed the following demands to the Soviet commandant through his representatives: Cancel martial law and withdraw troops from Halle, change the government, lower prices, and so on.

In Berlin, Magdeburg, Jena [and] Görlitz, the military commanders announced that death sentences had been carried out against the organizers of the disturbances (seven persons in all)."

[Source: AVP RF, f. 82, op. 41, por. 93, p. 280, ll. 13-15.
Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie (CWIHP).]

**Report from A. Grechko and Tarasov in Berlin
to N. A. Bulganin,
18 June 1953, midnight**

OPERATIONS DIVISION,
MAIN OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION,
GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY

Top Secret (Declassified)

Copy
#6

To Comrade BULGANIN, N.A.

1. I am reporting on the situation on the territory of the German Democratic Republic and in the city of Berlin by 10:00 p.m. (Moscow time), on 18 June 1953.

1. Berlin is calm. The city's life is going on as usual.

2. There are still some strikes and rallies within some plants in the German Democratic Republic, namely in the following cities and towns: Görlitz, Dresden, Eilenburg, Riesa, Borna, Magdeburg, Halberstadt, Stafffurt, Wernigerode, Rüdersdorf, Groß Dölln, Gera, Halle. Some groups of Germans, altogether of up to 1,500 people, in Dresden at 6:40 p.m. made an attempt to organize a demonstration and go to the prison. Those groups of Germans were dispersed by the actions of a tank company and a battalion of machine-gunners of the Soviet forces.

The group of bandits in Halberstadt set a shop of the "Economic Association" on fire. A group of 450 people in Drewitz attempted to rob shops. Order in Halberstadt and Drewitz has been restored by the actions of the [Soviet] troops. The workers of some of the plants in Leipzig have started working.

It is calm in other regions of the German Democratic Republic.

3. The units of the Group [of the Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany] have continued to perform their duties along the sectoral borders in the city of Berlin and to patrol in the other cities and towns of the German Democratic Republic.

There is no change in the disposition of the units of the Group.

4. According to incomplete information, 544 people were arrested and detained, 2 provocateurs were killed, 27 rioters were wounded on 18 June. A policeman of the GDR and 9 activists were wounded.

GRECHKO TARASOV

"Correct." General of the Army SHTEMENKO
18 June 1953, 12.00 p.m. [midnight]⁵⁵

[Source: AGSh, f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 26-27. Provided and translated by Viktor Gobarev.]

[The following is an excerpt from a telephonogram sent by V. Semenov and V. Sokolovskii in Berlin to V. Molotov and N. Bulganin on 19 June 1953 (received in Moscow at 1:20 a.m.) reporting on the situation in East Germany on the evening of 18 June 1953.]

“We are reporting on the situation in Berlin and the GDR on 18 June 1953 at 9:00 p.m. (Berlin time).

In the course of the day on 18 June the liquidation of the remains of the nodes of strikes and disturbances continued in Berlin and the GDR. In the streets of Berlin, full order was restored. There were no efforts to organize demonstrations or public addresses in the streets. The larger portion of the workers who were striking yesterday returned to work. Short partial strikes affected a small number of Berlin enterprises. On average, about 50-70% of workers worked in the enterprises. This is also explained by the fact that workers living in West Berlin could not come to work because of the halting of movement across the sector border.

The organs of the MfS of the GDR and our forces continued to expose the ring-leaders of yesterday’s strikes. The necessary arrests were made. The state and party organs of the GDR are taking measures to restore the normal organization of work at all enterprises in East Berlin. The supply of food and indispensable goods to the populace is being achieved without interruption.

In the majority of the Republic’s regions, order has been restored. Short strikes took place in individual enterprises in the Rostock, Erfurt, Leipzig, Halle, and Dresden districts. The overwhelming majority of the workers who were on strike yesterday returned to work. An enemy demonstration of about one thousand people, who headed for the jail and the railway, was organized in the evening in Dresden. Troops opened fire at the demonstration and it was dispersed. Among the demonstrators, one person was killed and others were wounded. In the other districts of the Republic, it was quiet today. In a number of places, workers were observed catching the provocateurs and handing them over to the police in keeping with the GDR Government’s appeal.”

[Source: AVP RF, f. 82, op. 41, por. 93, p. 280, ll. 27-28. Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie.]

*[The following excerpt is from a telephonogram sent by V. Semenov and V. Sokolovskii in Berlin to V. Molotov and N.A. Bulganin on 19 June 1953.]*⁵⁶

“We inform you about the situation in Berlin and in the GDR at 11 o’clock in the morning of 19 June.

In Berlin and in the GDR, the overwhelming majority of striking workers returned to normal labor. Only the small remnants of strikes in some comparatively minor points throughout the Republic were left.

So, in the morning, 1200 workers in the “Pelse”

factory, Erfurt district, struck. The strike lasted for about one hour. There was a short partial strike at the factory “Lova” (city of Gotha). In Erfurt workers in the “RFT” factory (800 persons) struck during the morning, putting forward the demands - announce the names of those who were shot in Berlin;—we do not want war.

The organizers of the disturbances, seeing the failure of public speeches [*vystuplenii*] in Berlin and the large cities, are scattering their agents in small cities and villages where our troops are not stationed, trying to incite strikes and disturbances there. In particular, the fact has been established that enemy provocateurs have been sent from Potsdam to small cities, and also that enemy activists have been scattered from enterprises in large cities, where strikes have ended, to factories located in small villages and cities, where the German police is weak and our troops are not present. We are taking counter-measures, above all by mobilizing and sending activists of the SED and organizers from the districts and large centers to these localities.

In the district of Magdeburg strikes have started in the population centers of Stafffurt (about 1500 workers), Wernigerode (1500-2000 persons), [and] Burg (300-400 persons).

In the district of Halle, strikes are continuing in the Mansfeld copper-smelting complex, at the factory “Ifa” (up to 1000 persons), the boiler factory (1500-2000), and strikes have begun at some enterprises and mines in the regions of Sangerhausen, Eisleben.

In Berlin at almost every factory, normal order has been restored. Only at isolated enterprises are cases of partial strikes taking place.

In Berlin and in the Republic no efforts are being made to conduct demonstrations. Everywhere, normal life is quickly being restored.

During the night of June 18 and 19, the Soviet sector of Berlin was fired upon with cardboard shells filled with leaflets. At the border between the American and Soviet sectors, motor vehicles with loud-speakers appeared which called upon Germans not to irritate Russian soldiers and not to allow clashes with them.

Testimony by persons arrested by the organs of the MVD [Ministry of Internal Affairs] gives evidence of the very active organizing role of the American military in the disturbances in Berlin. Those who have been arrested testify that American officers personally gathered in large numbers West Berlin residents whom they had selected and gave them instructions to organize disturbances, arson of buildings, and other things, in East Berlin. At the same time the Americans promised to distribute weapons, bottles with flammable liquid for arson, etc., at Potsdamer Platz (the border between the American and English sectors and the Soviet sector of Berlin). As a reward, the American officers promised money, and for people who showed the greatest activism—a three-month holiday at resorts, and so on. American military personnel personally gave instructions from motor vehicles with loud-speakers

to the participants in the disorders at the House of the Government of the GDR on the border with the Soviet sector. In the provinces of the GDR there is also evidence of the dispatch there of American agents from West Berlin and West Germany. Further work on this issue is being done. We will inform [you] further of the details.

This morning we received a letter from three commandants of the Western sectors of Berlin addressed to the representative of the SCC⁵⁷ in Berlin, Dengin, in which they declare their protest against the measures taken by Soviet troops to restore order in the Soviet sector of Berlin, the halting of travel [*soobshchenie*] between the sectors, and categorically deny the assertion that "a certain Willi Götting,⁵⁸ killed after a spurious trial, was an agent-provocateur working for the intelligence service of a foreign government." The commandants demand "in the interests of the whole of Berlin, the quick removal of the severe limitations that have been placed on the populace and the restoration of free movement inside Berlin."

At 11:30 in the morning, American officers handed us the Deputy Prime-Minister of the GDR, the Chairman of the Central Administration of the Christian-Democratic Union, Otto Nuschke.⁵⁹ The representatives of the German authorities in the Central Administration of the CDU were present at the hand-over.

We will inform you about future events."

[Source: AVP RF, f. 82, op. 41, por. 93, p.280, ll. 22-24. Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie.]

[The following is an excerpt of a telephonogram by V. Semenov and V. Sokolovskii in Berlin to V. Molotov and N. A. Bulganin, sent on 19 June 1953 at 5:35 p.m., describing the alleged capture of infiltrating parachutists.]⁶⁰

"In the region of Sangerhausen (45 kilometers west of Halle) on the night of 17 June 1953, a group of 6 parachutists was dropped.

On 19 June 1953, one of the parachutists was captured; at the preliminary interrogation he indicated that together with him, another five parachutists were dropped, as were weapons (5 carbines and a large quantity of grenades). Upon reaching the ground, they hid the weapons in a forest in the region of Sangerhausen. The captured parachutist also indicated that they were given a radio transmitter with which they were supposed to report on the uprisings. The basic task of the dropped parachutists was to participate broadly in the uprising and to incite the populace to rebellion.

The inquiry is continuing."⁶¹

[Source: AVP RF, f.82, op. 41, por. 93, p. 280, l. 31. Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie (CWIHP)]

[The following excerpt is from a secret telephonogram sent by V. Semenov and V. Sokolovskii to V. Molotov and N. Bulganin on 19 June 1953 at 7:50 p.m., describing the situation in East German as of late afternoon that day.]

"We are reporting on the situation in Berlin and the GDR at 5 p.m. (Berlin time), on June 19.

In Berlin all enterprises are working at normal capacity. The number of workers who have reported to work is at 90-98 percent. Those who have not come to work are, by and large, workers who live in West Berlin. At the construction sites on Stalinallee, about 60% of workers reported to work.

In the morning there were isolated efforts by provocateurs to disorganize work at some enterprises and to call a strike. The provocateurs were arrested.

Life in East Berlin is proceeding normally.

The overwhelming majority of enterprises in the Republic are working without interruption. A number of enterprises, at which partial strikes were begun in the morning, have fully resumed work. [Public] transport is working punctually and without interruption. Order at all 29 Soviet joint-stock company (SAO) factories has been restored. At individual SAO enterprises, workers are requesting that they be allowed to work off on Sunday the time that was lost on June 17-18. In the Republic, only isolated enterprises are left at which comparatively small groups of workers are striking. During the day, a strike of about two thousand workers began at several enterprises in the city of Halberstadt. In the city of Freiberg (Chemnitz district), there was an effort by 500 persons to organize a demonstration, which was broken up by troops and German police. Today, with the occurrence of partial strikes, as a rule, political demands were not put forward, aside from demands for the release of arrested persons, the removal of armed guards at factories, and, more rarely, a change in the military situation.

At a series of enterprises, meetings and gatherings led by SED organizations were held.

The situation in the countryside, as before, is quiet. However, during these days a certain reduction has been noted in the supplies of agricultural produce given by peasants to the state. The peasants universally regard the events in Berlin with disapproval, expressing their fear that they can lead to war.

The West German Bundestag adopted a resolution on increasing the numbers of West German border police from 10 to 20 thousand men, which is linked to the events in the GDR."

[Source: AVP RF, f. 82, op. 41, por. 93, p. 28, ll. 25-26. Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie (CWIHP).]

[The following excerpt is from a secret telephonogram sent by V. Semenov and V. Sokolovskii in Berlin to V. Molotov and N.A. Bulganin, 19 June 1953, midnight, reporting on the situation in East Germany as of 9:00 p.m. that day.⁶²]

We report on the situation in Berlin and the GDR at 9 p.m. (Berlin time),
19 June.

In East Berlin, all is quiet.

In the course of the day, isolated efforts by enemy elements to incite [*sprovotsirovat'*] talk against the arrests of the ring-leaders of the disturbances of June 17-18 and the execution of Götting were noted. At two factories, GDR flags were put at half-mast as a sign of mourning for the provocateurs who had been killed. At other enterprises, workers demanded the release of members of strike committees who had been arrested.

Organizations of the SED began to conduct meetings of workers at enterprises in East Berlin at which resolutions are being passed in support of the GDR government.

The residents of East Berlin, who were on West Berlin territory at the time of the disturbances, are returning home. In order to let these people through, we have opened three temporary checkpoints on the sector border.

The commandants of the Western sectors of Berlin issued a decree to the effect that any demonstrations in West Berlin can only take place after receiving permission from the commandants. The need for this decree is based on the situation which has arisen and on the preservation of security and order.

The situation in the GDR generally is quiet. Certain enemy speeches have the character of a protest against the punishment of the ring-leaders of the disturbances. Efforts were made to organize 15-minute demonstrations of silence as a sign of mourning for the provocateurs who have been killed. At the factory "Simag" in the city of Finsterwalde, thirty-five provocateurs conducted such a demonstration, although the majority of workers did not support it.

In a series of districts, meetings of regional SED activists have been conducted. At several activist sessions, demands for criminal indictments of members of the SED who took part in the disturbances were put forward.

In some villages, cases were noted in which leaflets had been distributed urging peasants not to supply produce to the government.

The mood of the populace has somewhat improved. Political demands put forward by workers, by and large, under the influence of enemy elements, have been put on the back burner. In Potsdam, workers say: "We do not want to strike, although many of our demands are just. We are waiting for these demands to be recognized."

We will inform [you] about future [developments]."

[Source: AVP, RF, f. 82, op. 41, por. 93, p. 280, ll.29-30. Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie.]

**Report, I. Fadeikin⁶³ to V. D. Sokolovskii,
19 June 1953**

OPERATIONS DIVISION,
MAIN OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION,
GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY

Top Secret (Declassified)

To Marshal of

Soviet Union Comrade SOKOLOVSKII, V.D.

I am reporting that the situation in the country (Germany) is improving. The workers' strikes are over in the overwhelming majority of the GDR cities as of 5:00 p.m., June 18.

A minor number of enterprises have been on strike (LAS, the plant in Leipzig, the tool plant in Schmelna). Part-time strikes occurred in a number of other enterprises where personnel in the night shifts from 30% to 60% were to the close of June 18.

The meetings at the plants were stopped by the evening of June 18. Street demonstrations in the GDR cities and towns were not permitted during June 18.

The provocateurs and instigators had been actively withdrawn and arrested in Eastern Berlin and the Districts of GDR for June 18 and the night of June 19. The workers themselves have started participating in the exposing of the provocateurs and taking them into custody.

For instance, some workers arrested SIMON, an engineer, who had visited plant shops calling for a strike, in Köpenick (Berlin). Two provocateurs calling for a strike were detained by some workers at the High-Frequency Instruments Plant in Treptow.

The German People's Police revealed the gathering of provocateurs in MITROPA, the restaurant, and arrested 40 instigators, confiscating weapons from three of them on the evening of June 18. Twenty provocateurs were arrested at Alexanderplatz.

There have been some reports that workers at some plants (Railway-Carriage Repair Works in Weimar, et cetera), indicating that the strikes had been provoked by hostile elements, met and passed resolutions condemning themselves for their actions on 17 June 1953, and undertook to make up the lost working time next Sunday.

Many workers understood they had been misled by provocateurs and cursed the fascist thugs from Western Berlin.

The German People's Police arrested two persons in front of Cho, the restaurant, in the evening of June 18, who proved to be residents of West Berlin. The police action was welcomed by passers-by.

Relations between Soviet troops and Berlin residents have been improving on June 18. Our soldiers have been very disciplined during all of the events. It was possible to witness peaceful conversations between Soviet soldiers and German residents in the streets of Berlin by the evening of June 18.

As brought to light by now, the strikes were a protest

against the 10% rise in output quotas that the government had declared at some GDR industry enterprises on May 29-30. They continued on June 6-7. The construction workers on Stalinallee in Berlin started saying that they did not agree with the new output quotas and would declare a strike if needed.

The central leadership of the Free German Trade Union [League] and the SED CC knew about such feelings and opinions among working class people on June 15.

However, timely preventive measures were not undertaken.

During the investigation it became evident that many West Berlin residents and members of West Berlin subversive organizations, [such as the] so-called "Fighting Group Against Inhumanity,"⁶⁴ were among arrested provocateurs and instigators.

For instance, BEREND, Helmut, a German, an active participant in the uprising, was arrested in Dessau. He indicated during interrogation that a large group of instigators including himself had arrived in Dessau from the American Sector of Berlin during the night of June 17 and that they had been sent by the West Berlin Center of "Fighting Group [against Inhumanity]."

This is a typical example revealing that West Berlin authorities had been well-informed in advance about the actions in East Berlin on June 17. They had sent beforehand some West Berlin radio-commentators to democratic Berlin, where they were doing live radio-commentary in the places where clashes between East Berliners and the People's Police occurred on the morning on 17 June. RIAS, the West Berlin radio station, was continuously broadcasting that recorded commentary.

Some members of the GDR Government and SED CC had been displaying cowardice and bewilderment during the events. This is the most typical evidence of such behavior. WEINBERGER, the Minister of Transport and Farm Mechanical Engineering, and HENKST, the member of the SED CC, arrived in Rostock on the evening of 17 June. Negotiating with the strike committee of Varnav, the shipyard, on the morning of 18 June, they cowardly made many unrealistic promises to the strikers.

WEINBERGER signed a protocol in which he promised to raise salaries, to establish a new vacations system, to compensate workers for travel from residential areas to the enterprises, to pay for their staying apart from their families, etc. When the strike committee in their counter-suggestions was demanding the resignation of the GDR Government, releasing the convicts and canceling the state of emergency, WEINBERGER and HENKST did not reject those points while they were read in their presence on the radio to the workers at the plant. Speaking about their promises just after that, they said no word about the "provocative demands" of the strikers.

Moreover, WEINBERGER and HENKST made a decision regarding the release of two strike organizers arrested by police.

It is clear from secret service and official information

that some SED members took an active part in the delays and strikes. The interrogations of the arrested SED members have revealed that many of them were dissatisfied with the worsening living standard among the working people and justified their conclusions by referring to the SED Politburo's published admission of its mistakes.

The evidence of considerable dissatisfaction among the Party members has been the fact that about 100 people have quit their SED membership in the Cottbus district in the last two days.

The numerous secret service official and investigatory evidence has revealed that organizers and leaders of many strike committees at the GDR enterprises were executives of German trade-unions.

For example, among the four organizers of the strike at the public enterprise Wohnungsbau (Berlin), on June 17 who were arrested by the MfS GDR, the main part was played by the chairman of the local trade-union committee and the candidate-member of SED, a certain MIIFS.

KOLSTER, the chairman of the plant's trade union committee, led the strike at the Electric Equipment Plant of the Soviet Joint-Stock Company in Treptow, Berlin (arrested).

VETSEL, the chairman of the plant's trade union organization, was in charge of the strike at the Optical Apparatus Plant in Rathenow, Potsdam District. It was he as well who headed the demonstration and called on the workers of other plants to join the strikers (VETSEL was arrested).

KULTUS, the leader of the Construction Workers Trade-Union in the Frankfurt [a. d. Oder] district, called on the workers to take to the streets and declared, "We are going to show our power and strive to get our demands fulfilled."

According to information by 5.00 a.m. on 19 June 1953, 2,930 organizers, leaders and participants of the strikes, provocateurs and instigators as well as persons who took part in armed attacks on the German People's Police units, prisons, courts, party and state institutions in Berlin, Brandenburg, Magdeburg, Leipzig, Halle, Görlitz, Jena and other GDR cities, were arrested.

Among the GDR MfS, People's Police, officers and democratically-inclined [East] German citizens, 7 were killed and 151 wounded.

According to information by 5.00 a.m. 19 June 1953, 21 rebels were killed in the armed clashes, and 85 were wounded.

Apart from 6 rebels caught and shot instantly by Soviet troops during the armed clashes, military tribunals sentenced 6 of the most active organizers and participants in the armed actions to be shot, including: 1 in Berlin, 2 in Magdeburg, 2 in Görlitz, and 1 in Jena.

The Military Council of the Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany confirmed the sentences which were carried out the same day, and it was announced by radio to the German population.

Among those executed, there was DARCH, Alfred, born in 1910, a non-Party man and resident of Magdeburg, who, armed (with a reconnaissance rifle) and jointly with other rebels, had burst into the House of Justice in Magdeburg, took part in its devastation and had fired from there at the arriving units of the German People's Police and Soviet troops.

There was STRAUCH, Gerbert, owner of a private firm, also executed in Magdeburg, who had taken an active part in devastating the prison and releasing state criminals.

GÖTTLING, Willi, the resident of West Berlin, born in 1918, was executed in Berlin. He confessed under interrogation that he had been recruited by American intelligence on 16 June while he was repeatedly visiting the West Berlin Labor Exchange and had received the order from the latter to drive to the Democratic Sector of Berlin and take an active part in the planned riots there. Joining with other rebels during the clashes with German People's Police units in the center of Berlin, GÖTTLING attacked a propaganda-vehicle of the German People's Police, which was calling for an end to the strike with a radio loud-speaker, threw the driver and the announcer out of the vehicle and brutally assaulted them. He called on the crowd to attack police and Soviet troops.

REPRESENTATIVE OF MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OF USSR IN GERMANY
Colonel FADEIKIN
19 June 1953

[Source: AGSh, f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 217-222. Provided and translated by Viktor Gobarev]

**Report from A. Grechko and Tarasov
to N. A. Bulganin,
20 June 1953, 11:40 a.m.**

OPERATIONS DIVISION,
MAIN OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION
GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY
Top Secret (Declassified)

To Comrade N.A. BULGANIN

I am reporting on the situation in the GDR and Berlin at 10.00 a.m.(Moscow time), 20 June 1953

1. No riots were observed in Berlin and the GDR last night.

2. Enterprises in Berlin have resumed their routine operations since the morning of 20 June. There is still a pocket of strike movement in Magdeburg, where some enterprises have not resumed their operations yet. For instance, the workers of Electric Motor Plant in Wernigerode have entered the grounds of the plant but have not resumed their work. Moreover, the night and morning shifts at some plants and factories have not resumed their work in the following towns: Staßfurt (a plant), Halberstadt (furniture factory) and Ilsenburg

(veneer and furniture factories, Rail-Wheels Plant).

3. Exposure of provocateurs and instigators of street riots and strikes is continuing.

Overall, 8,029 provocateurs, rebels, suspicious persons, [and] offenders of the Soviet military authorities' orders were arrested and detained in the GDR; 33 rebels were killed, and 132 wounded. After sentencing by court martial, 6 active provocateurs were shot.

Seventeen supporters of the democratic power, government and party officers, were killed, and 166 wounded.

4. The state and disposition of the units of the Group are unchanged. There have been no losses.

GRECHKO TARASOV
Correctly." GENERAL OF THE ARMY SHTEMENKO
20 June 1953, 11.40 a.m. 65

[Source: AGSh, f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 34-35. Provided and translated by Viktor Gobarev.]

[The following excerpt is from a telephonogram sent by V. Semenov and V. Sokolovskii in Berlin to V. Molotov and N. A. Bulganin, on 20 June 1953 at 5:50 p.m., describing the situation in the GDR that day.]

"We report on the situation in Berlin in the GDR at 12 o'clock, Berlin time, June 20.

The situation in the GDR and in East Berlin is generally peaceful. The partial strikes which took place at night in the cities of Staßfurt, Halberstadt and in the Stralsund shipyard have ceased. In the morning, provocative elements managed to conduct short meetings and strikes at the railway car repair factory in the city of Halberstadt, in the Helsford shipyard (Rostock district), at the medicine factory in the city of Wernigerode (Magdeburg district). In addition, demands for the liberation of the arrested ring-leaders of the disturbances have surfaced. The strikes which began yesterday at several small enterprises in the city of Ilsenburg in the region of Magdeburg (about 2,500 workers in all) are continuing.

From the villages we are informed that among many workers who took part in the strikes of June 17-18, a sobering-up is taking place. These workers are stating regrets about the disturbances which arose and are distancing themselves from the provocateurs. But at the same time they often state that the discontent of the workers should not be mixed with the actions of provocateurs, as, allegedly, the government of the GDR is doing.

A leading article written by us and published in today's *Neues Deutschland* provides the necessary orientation on this issue.

According to the SED agitators, a majority of the Berlin workers with whom they spoke have a negative opinion of the actions of the provocateurs, but some of

them are still pleased that the demonstration occurred. A readiness to work off the time lost because of the strikes is universally voiced.

The workers who did not take part in the strikes sharply condemn the strikers and demand severe punishment for the provocateurs. In many enterprises the workers adopt resolutions which express trust in the government of the GDR and state the necessity of raising vigilance.

Mass purchases of produce by the population, as was evident on June 16-17, is not observed. In a number of cities a certain increase in withdrawals from savings banks can be noted. The payment of money from accounts is taking place without restrictions.

A series of cases has been noted in which provocateurs agitate among the workers to the effect that the decision of the Politburo of the SED CC, which was published in connection with the new political course in the GDR, is directed at defending the interests of the private sector [and] the kulaks and not those of the workers. They say that the SED has been reborn, having taken the path of supporting the bourgeoisie. In the districts of Neubrandenburg and Suhl, the withdrawal of several hundred peasants from [agricultural] collective [production] cooperatives has been noted.

In the district of Steglitz, in the American sector of Berlin the regional committee of the SED has been broken up. The first secretary of the regional committee, Pirsch, and regional committee employee Firman were arrested and taken away in an undisclosed direction.

West Berlin newspapers speak of the arrival in West Berlin of the American High Commissioner, Conant, and the deputies of the English and French High Commissioners. The exchange rate of the Eastern mark has remained stable throughout all of these days and has stood at 1:5.40.

On June 20, the Berlin military commandants permitted theatre and movie operations until 9 p.m."

[Source: AVP RF, f. 082, op. 41, por. 93, p. 280, ll. 37-39.

Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie.]

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**Report from Lieutenant-General F. Fedenko
to Lieutenant-General N.O. Pavlovskii,
27 June 1953**

OPERATIONS DIVISION,
MAIN OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION,
GENERAL STAFF OF THE SOVIET ARMY

Top Secret
(Declassified)

To LIEUTENANT-GENERAL
Comrade PAVLOVSKII, N.O.

I am reporting the generalized data regarding the demonstrations and strikes in the German Democratic Republic.

The strikes and demonstrations in the GDR from 17 to 19 June 1953 had been prepared beforehand by the so-called Center of Strike Movement located in West Berlin and bore an organized and openly anti-government character. This is confirmed by the fact that the riots were simultaneously taking place in 95 cities and towns.

The major centers of strikes and demonstrations were Berlin, Magdeburg, Leipzig, Halle, and Erfurt.

In all, there were the following number of strikers in the GDR:

on 17 June - 132,169, including 81,000 in Berlin;
on 18 June - 218,700, including 20,000 in Berlin;
on 19 June - 46,884, (there were no strikers in Berlin).

In all, there was the following number of demonstrators:

on 17 June - 269,460, including 66,000 in Berlin;
There were minor demonstrations in some localities.

There were no demonstrations in Berlin.

The organizers of riots and strikes intended to seize power and abolish the democratic regime in GDR.

The demonstrators, headed and instigated by provocateurs, broke into premises occupied by the SED and units of the Ministry of State Security of GDR as well as state-owned shops, released convicts from the prisons, attempted to capture some administrative buildings and important municipal facilities such as banks, post offices, telegraph offices, [and] power stations. There were some beatings and dispersals of the units of people's police and workers who went on with their work and did not want to take part in the strikes.

The attitude of [the East] German people towards the events of 17-19 June 1953 has varied. The most progressive part of German population has been outraged by the actions of the West Berlin provocateurs. Some Germans have been indifferent to the events. Others have welcomed them. A significant strata of society are satisfied with the most recent decisions of the GDR government aimed at improving the living standard of German people.

The bourgeois parties have responded very coldly to the events. The reactionary elements of the Christian Democratic Union have demanded that the current government, as the one that made some mistakes, resign and let the Christian-Democratic Union become the governing party.

The occupation (US, British, French) forces in West Berlin have been on higher alert since 17 June 1953, guarding military facilities, government and administrative buildings as well as the borders with the Soviet sector of Berlin. The Commandant of the British sector of Berlin declared martial law on 17 June 1953.

No fresh military units were observed arriving in West Berlin from 17 to 24 June 1953.

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL F. FEDENKO
27 June 1953

[Source: AGSh, f. 16, op. 3139, d. 155, ll. 31-33. Provided and translated by Viktor Gobarev.]

Letter, L. Beriia to G. Malenkov, 1 July 1953

To the CC CPSU
Comrade Malenkov

Dear Georgii!

During all these four days and nights that were hard for me, I gave considerable thought to everything, concerning the activity on my side during the last months after the plenum of the CC CPSU, concerning [our] work as well as you personally - and some comrades of the CC Presidium and I subjected my actions to severest criticism, disapproved of myself strongly. Particularly grave and inexcusable is my behavior towards you, where I am a guilty party one hundred percent. Along with other comrades, I also strongly and energetically got down to work with the sole idea to do everything possible and not to let all of us flop without comrade Stalin and to maintain the new leadership of the CC and the government by action. According to the existing instructions of the CC and the government, building up the leadership of the MVD and its local organs, the MVD proposed to the CC and the government on your advice and on some issues on the advice of com. Khrushchev N.S. a number of worthwhile political and practical initiatives, such as: on the rehabilitation of the doctors, rehabilitation of the arrested of the so-called Mingrel Nationalist Center in Georgia and the return of the falsely-exiled from Georgia. On [sic] the Amnesty, on liquidation of the passport regime, on correction of the deviation of the party line in nationality policy and in the repressive measures in Lithuanian SSR, Western Ukraine [sic] and western Belorussia [sic], but the criticism is completely justified, the criticism by com. Khrushchev N.S. and the criticism by the other comrades at [the session of] the CC Presidium; with my last participation, to my erroneous wish to send along with the decisions of the CC also the information memoranda of the MVD. Of course, one reduced to a certain degree the significance of these very resolutions of the CC and, that an inadmissible situation emerged, that the MVD, as if it corrects Central Committees of Commun. [sic] parties of Ukraine, Lithuania and Belorussia, while the role of the MVD was limited to implementation of the resolutions of the CC CPSU and the government. I would frankly admit that my insisting on the dispatch of the memoranda was stupidity and political short-sightedness, particularly since you advised me not to do it. My behavior at the session of the Presidium of the CC, and the Presidium of the Council of Ministers, very often incorrect and inadmissible [behavior] that introduced nervousness and excessive harshness, I would say, as I have thought well about it and realized, [this behavior] went so far as to [constitute] inadmissible rudeness and insolence on my part toward comrade Khrushchev N.S. and Bulganin N.A. during the discussion on the German question [sic], of course, here I am guilty without question and have to be denounced thoroughly. At the same time, along with all of you, I tried

to introduce initiatives at the Presidium [sic] aimed at the correct solution of issues, such as the Korean, the German, the responses to Eisenhower and Churchill, the Turkish, the Iranian, etc.

My behavior during the reception of the Hungarian comrades [was] untactful, nothing could justify it.⁶⁶ The proposals about Nagy Imre should not have been introduced by me, but you should have done it, but at that moment I sprang up idiotically, and besides, along with correct remarks I made some loose remarks and was overly familiar, for which, of course, I should be given a good rap [*vzgrēt*]. But I must say in all sincerity that I thoroughly prepared myself and made all my assistants prepare themselves for the sessions of the CC and the government, so that within the limits of my strength and abilities [I tried] to assist in [finding a] correct solution of the issues under discussion. If and when I introduced initiatives, I revised them several times, together with the comrades collaborating with me, so as not to make a mistake and not to let the CC and the government down. In the Council of Ministers I left and had no time to introduce a report and draft resolution on reorganizing the award procedures [*nagrādnikh del*], for I busily worked on that during about two months. As you know, we mulled over [*vynashivaly*] this question for a long time even while comrade Stalin was [still] alive. Concerning the comrades I work with, I always sought to be a man of principles, of party norms, demanding, so that the orders given to them were fulfilled, as it was required in the interests of our party and our government. I have never had any other kinds of relations with the above-mentioned comrades. You can take, for instance, the leading officials in the MVD. Coms. [Sergei] Kruglov, [Amaiak Zakhārivich] Kobulov, [Ivan A.] Serov, Maslennikov, [Piotr] Fedotov,⁶⁷ Stakhanov, [Yevgeny] Pitovranov, [Vitalii V.] Korotkov, Sazykin, Gorlinsky, [Sergei A.] Goglidze, Ryasnoy, [Pavel] Sudoplatov, Savchenko, Raykhman, Obruchnikov, Meshik, Zyryanov and many others, nothing else they had from me other than my demands, how to better organize the struggle with the enemies of the Soviet state, within the country as well as outside. When comrade Stalin passed away, I named you, without thinking, as did other comrades, to be the chairman of the government and that I always considered and consider to be the only right choice. Subsequently I became even more convinced that it is you who will successfully lead together with the ruling collective of the CC and the government. Therefore, my tragedy is that as I have already said earlier, during more than ten years we have been true Bolshevik friends, worked with all our soul under various complicated conditions and were together in [one] mind and nobody disrupted our friendship, so valuable and necessary for me and now exclusively on my own fault, [sic] I lost everything that held us together.

Lavrentii Beriia

1 July 1953

[Source: AP RF, f. 3, op. 24, d. 463, l. 163-174. Published in *Istochnik*, 4 (1994), 4-8. Translated by Vladislav M. Zubok (National Security Archive).]

[The following excerpt is from a 4 July 1953 telephonogram from Soviet High Commission officials Miroshnichenko and Lun'kov to High Commissioner V. Semenov.]⁶⁸

“In connection with the events of June 17, the movement of all types of transport and pedestrians across the sector border between East and West Berlin, as well as between the GDR and East Berlin through West Berlin, was halted.

At present in East and West Berlin, the metro, the city railroad and the tramway run separately, which causes dissatisfaction on the part of the GDR and East Berlin population. Up to June 17, 83 thousand workers and white-collar workers, who live on GDR territory adjacent to the western sector of Berlin but work in East Berlin, used the city railway. Now they use a bus, steam train or some other form of transport to get to their place of work, making several stops on the way. Such trips, which previously took 30-40 minutes, now require up to 2 or 3 hours one-way.

Workers and white-collar workers and other strata of the population express serious discontent with these circumstances, and turn to the government of the GDR with the request that it change the existing transport system. In connection with this we consider it expedient to carry out the following measures on the morning of July 6:

1. In the morning and evening hours, to organize electric train traffic from the GDR to East Berlin and back without stops in the western sectors of the city.

2. In order to improve the travel of the populace living in western sectors and working in the eastern sector of Berlin, and vice versa, to open five check-points on the sector boundary in addition to the existing three points.

3. For the residents who live in communities in the GDR located close to the western sectors of Berlin but work in West Berlin, to organize electric train traffic from the GDR to certain stations of West Berlin.

[Our] friends (com. Ulbricht) fully agree with the measures we are proposing and request that they be informed about the decision taken on these proposals today, in order for them to be able to announce the decision on the radio and to calm the population.

In relation to the decision by the SED Politburo to request the High Commissioner of the USSR in Germany to open the sector border, Ulbricht stated that this issue could be examined after the implementation of the aforementioned measures.

We ask for your instructions.”

[Source: AVP RF, f. 82, op. 41, por. 93, p.280, ll.61-62. Trans-

lated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie.]

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**O. Grotewohl's Handwritten Notes on the
SED CC Politburo Meeting
8 July 1953**

Politburo 7/8/53

Grotewohl: reports on 2 commission sessions of the reorganization commission

Herrnstadt: refuses to take office of first secretary

Honecker: one cannot blame Ulbricht alone. It would damage the Party if U[lbricht] would resign as Gen[eral] Sec[retary] and as First Secretary. Proposal for supplementing Wandel-Winzer.

Zaisser: my suggestion [is] Herrnstadt since he was more in tune with the people than we [were]. Proposal is not an ideal solution. My argument is: W.U. is no more responsible for the wrong course (2nd Party Conference) than we all are. His fault is the rigid administering—wrong education of the cadres etc. That has spoiled the Party, the New Course cannot be implemented with this attitude. He therefore has to be kept at a distance from the party apparatus. [To leave] the apparatus in the hands of W.U. would be catastrophic for the New Course.

Ulbricht: The proposal by Herrnstadt + Zaisser for the elimination of the secretariat is dangerous. The proposal by Zaisser to name Herrnstadt as First Sec[retary] is the logical consequence.

Zaisser: protests against [this]. U. had agreed on the elimination of the Secretariat.

Herrnstadt: likewise

Rau: U.'s work methods inhibit the Party. Does U. have the will to change this? The past weeks have not shown this. If somebody other than Walter takes over the party organization and becomes first secretary, this would be better.

Ackermann: one also has to change the cabinet. Gr[otewohl] has to be obligated to express in [illegible] that no decisions had yet been made.

The Party has to recover but not with W.U.

Ebert: for secretaries. It would be a gain for the Party if Com. W.U. would state himself that somebody else had to be first secretary.

E. Schmidt: I was completely frightened, welcome the free and serious presentation by Zaisser. You [Ulbricht] cannot remain any longer at the top of the party.

Matern: U. must be first secretary.

Oelßner: H[errnstadt]'s and Zaisser's appearance signifies the existence of factions. U. has considered all of us stupid. W. has not learned his lessons. One has to work as a collective. There is no need for a first secretary. Instead collective decision-[making].

Jendretzky: W. has learned nothing.

Mückenberger: there was no central leadership for the districts. Everybody is overworked.

Gr[otewohl]: I can not make a final statement in Moscow

W.U.: To acknowledge the criticism was correct. My behavior [regarding the ostentatious celebration of my] birthday [was] mistaken. I will take the stand in the C[entral] C[ommittee]. I am not of the opinion that I have to be first secr[etary]. This takes confidence which has to be renewed again.

U: Proposals by H[errnstadt] and Zai[sser] i[n] [the] committee were an experiment. I will make a statement before the CC.

[Source: SAPMO-BArch IV 2/2/363. Provided and translated by Christian Ostermann (CWIHP & National Security Archive).]

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Note from S. Kruglov to Malenkov with an accompanying Communication from the Executives of the MIA USSR P. Fedotov⁶⁹ and I. Fadeikin⁷⁰

No. 166/k

9 July 1953
Top secret

I present you with a communication from the head of the First Chief Directorate of the MIA USSR, Com. Fedotov, and the Representative of the MIA USSR in Germany, Com. Fadeikin, about some facts characterizing the situation in the Politburo of the CC SED.

**Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR
S. Kruglov**

MIA USSR

In the last few days, the GDR Minister of Trade and Supply, Com. Wach, [and] the members of the Politburo of the SED CC, Coms. Oelßner and Matern⁷¹ in conversations with the executives of the apparatus of the MIA of the USSR in Germany, informed them on their own initiative of several noteworthy facts about the situation in the Politburo of the SED CC after the June events in the GDR.

1. In a 30 June conversation with the head of the apparatus division, representative com. Popov, com. Wach shared his impressions about the meeting of the Politburo of the SED CC of 9 June 1953, at which the report of the deputy prime-minister Rau⁷² on the redistribution of capital investment was presented.

Rau proposed to save 1,300 million marks of capital investment in heavy industry and to direct them toward the financing of light and other branches of industry which supply the needs of the populace, but he stated at the same time that he personally disagreed with cutting expenditures on capital investment in heavy industry.

Speaking at the meeting of the Politburo, Ulbricht said:

"I do not agree with the planned sum of 1,300 million

marks. We cannot free up such resources. Rau's plan disorganizes the national economy, and our economy is already disorganized as it is. I have been to a series of enterprises and have established that the workers are worried not so much by rises in the output norms as by the disorganization of the economy, [and] the lack of a normal food supply. Industrial enterprises cannot work normally if they are supplied with raw materials and materials to [only] 40% of their needs. Rau's project must be re-examined, in particular on the issues of external trade."

In his address, the chairman of the State Planning Commission, Leuschner⁷³ also noted that Rau's plan was unrealistic. This plan, he pointed out, relied on the resources that were supposed to be freed up as a result of limiting expenditures on heavy industry, but all of these resources had already been used to meet other needs and there were practically no funds available. Leuschner also pointed out that Rau, in introducing his proposals, did not agree on them with the members of the commission created to locate resources for financing the measures projected in the government decree of 25 June.

At the meeting, the Minister of Ore-Mining Industry Selbmann⁷⁴ stated:

"I believe that we must not curtail expenditures on heavy industry. It is incomprehensible to me why it is necessary to close down the construction of enterprises temporarily if 50% of the work is not yet completed. If resources are refused to me, I will have to reduce the output of steel, and that will be reflected in light industry: the output of machines will be reduced, mines will stop working, workers will have to be laid off, not to mention that stopping work in some mines will lead to their flooding with water."

The Minister for Machine Construction, Ziller⁷⁵, sharply objected to the withdrawal of 100 million marks previously designated for capital investment in energy production. "I ask," he said, "who is supposed to, and at the cost of what resources, carry out the Republic's program of energy-supply? You yourselves have said a lot about the necessity of carrying out this program. Such a plan as that proposed by Rau cannot be carried out. If it is taken as a basis [for action], then I cannot deliver the necessary machines for light industry and am not in a condition to fulfill the plan on the supply of electrical equipment."

Oelßner, Elli Schmidt,⁷⁶ Ackermann,⁷⁷ Strassenberger,⁷⁸ and others also spoke in opposition to Rau's plan.

The Minister of State Security Zaisser noted on the subject: "From listening to the statements by our comrades, one gets the impression that capital investment in heavy industry not only must not be cut, but, quite the opposite, must be further increased. But where can the resources be taken from? Rau gave no answer on this issue."

Ulbricht spoke a second time, saying: "In my opinion, we should turn to the Soviet government with the request

that they lower the reparation payments.”

In support of Ulbricht, the Director of the State Administration for Material Supply, Binz, said: “I believe that we will be able to get out of this catastrophic situation and improve our position only if the Soviet Union renders us the same help that the USA is giving Western Germany through the Marshall Plan.” No one reacted to this statement by Binz.

During the break the Minister for External Trade of the GDR, Gregor,⁷⁹ characterized the situation at the Politburo meeting, saying: “This is not a Politburo, but a madhouse.”

2. Politburo member, Com. Oelßner, with whom a conversation took place on the first of July of this year, believes that the Politburo committed a mistake when it announced the Politburo’s and Government’s New Course program in a very brief form without announcing the reasons for the party’s policy change beforehand. In his opinion, it would have been better to put the New Course into operation step by step, accompanying this with broad propagandistic-explanatory work.

Com. Oelßner further criticized the party leadership for not heeding the signals of discontent among the populace earlier and for not understanding that this discontent could have serious consequences.

In the opinion of com. Oelßner, the measures which are currently being carried out by the party and the government to improve the living standard of the populace have not yet yielded the expected results. The workers, in his words, continue to take a wait-and-see position, not yet trusting the party.

In the words of com. Oelßner, they can take such a wait-and-see position for a month or a month and a half. If in that time the party does not eliminate the mistakes which have occurred, then the situation could worsen again.

In the opinion of com. Oelßner, the admission of mistakes by the leading officials of the party and government had an unhealthy effect. Speaking before workers, they try to admit to as many errors as possible and, to an extent, such expressions of atonement provoke mistrust on the part of the workers. At the same time, they themselves still have actually not recognized the full depth of the erroneous actions by leaders of the party organs in the past. In com. Oelßner’s opinion, com. Ulbricht most of all has not understood the erroneousness of his conduct. He has not understood that as a matter of fact he lost touch with the masses and that his methods of dictatorial leadership were one of the serious reasons that errors were committed. In his practical activity, Ulbricht had not changed and continued to work as before; of note was only the fact that he had become more passive. Ulbricht was still inclined to create an atmosphere of pomp around his person.

Thus, for example, through his wife, Lotte Kuhn, who is a member of the committee organizing the celebrations for his 60th birthday, Ulbricht demanded that a celebration

be held in the most majestic circumstances. At the same time, when com. Pieck, during a conversation with Ulbricht in Moscow, drew his attention to the undesirability of such excessive ceremonies, Ulbricht replied that he knew nothing about the plans being made for the celebration, and that if something was being planned, it was without his participation.

At the conclusion of the conversation, com. Oelßner stated his opinion that at present there was no complete unity of views in the Politburo.

Thus, he recounted that when he recently went into Grotewohl’s office where Zaisser and Herrstadt were sitting, those present were embarrassed and quickly ended their conversation. Previously, com. Oelßner noted, nothing of the sort had been apparent.

3. Politburo member com. Matern, with whom a conversation took place on 2 July of this year, stated his opinion that the party at present did not have a really militant leadership and, related to this, that its work was disorganized. The Politburo meetings which took place in June were—on the whole—of an elemental and unorganized character. The Politburo made almost no practical decisions. In a series of meetings less than half of the members and candidates of the politburo were present.

The executive party members, including the members of the Politburo, did not have a concrete idea of how to proceed at the 15th Plenum of the SED CC, which is planned in the near future. Up to this point, the fundamental documents had not been assigned.

The secretaries of the SED CC, after the arrival of com. Ulbricht in Moscow at the beginning of June, were not really doing any work; meetings of the secretariat were not being held. Com. Ulbricht had not explained the reason for the halting of work.

Touching on the work of the secretariat, com. Matern stated that, in his opinion, this work was incorrectly organized. The secretariat has been turned from a political organ into Ulbricht’s personal office. The members of the secretariat did not take any personal responsibility for their separate spheres of work, but only prepared materials at the direction of Ulbricht and “nodded their heads in agreement with all the proposals of the secretary-general.”

Com. Matern believe that the secretariat should become the basic executive organ of the party and should carry out all of its practical work. In connection with this, the secretariat should be reduced to be composed of approximately 5 persons who were also members of the Politburo and bear responsibility for precisely defined spheres of work.

Com. Matern pointed out the poor leadership on the part of the SED CC of the district, regional, and local party organizations. The chairmen of the district parties’ governing boards did not receive concrete principled instructions from the SED CC. Lately they did not even have the chance to communicate with com. Ulbricht by telephone, since, on his orders, the telephone operators did not connect them with him.

For this reason, the leaders of the district organizations were obliged to deal only with members of the secretariat—Axen⁸⁰ and Schön,⁸¹—who, however, could not give them concrete instructions and usually limited themselves to statements about the fact that they did not know anything and that the leaders of the organizations had to make decisions as they saw fit. At the same time, com. Matern noted, the party organizations, given existing practice, were not versed in independent work.

In the opinion of com. Matern, the party workers had lost the ability to look at life with their own eyes, to take stock of circumstances independently, [and] were afraid to take decisions at their own risk, even if this was urgently called for. During the June events, for instance, not one of the leaders of the local party organizations held a meeting, explaining this by an absence of instructions.

All of this, com. Matern observed, was the result of the defective leadership methods on the part of Ulbricht, whose motto was “No one can do anything without me.”

At the upcoming plenum of the SED CC, com. Matern is determined to speak out, particularly with a criticism of these leadership methods on the part of Ulbricht.

Touching on the disorganization in party work, com. Matern cited the following example: Ulbricht, Grotewohl and Oelßner, who were in Moscow at the beginning of June of 1953, sent a telegram to the SED CC with the order to take all literature touching on the work of the second party conference⁸² out of libraries and commercial circulation. On the basis of this telegram, the Central Committee sent a directive to the local party organizations which initiated a mass confiscation of the specified literature. The matter went so far that in the central library of Leipzig all of the works of Ulbricht which referred to CC directives were removed.

In the opinion of com. Matern, the party is at present disunited, once more sectarian tendencies were emerging. Com. Matern divides all of the members of the party into three groups:

1. communists with a longstanding record of service who understand the New Course of the party and support it;
2. young party members who entered the party after 1945, many of whom do not understand the New Course of the party, consider it a step back from the construction of the foundations of socialism and for that reason do not agree with it;
3. former social-democrats, who consider that if the former social democratic party still existed, the events of 17 June would never have happened. Com. Matern noted that he knew of a whole series of cases where former social democrats demanded the party leadership to return their membership cards to the social democratic party. In the opinion of com. Matern, Buchwitz,⁸³ one of the veterans of the Social Democratic Party, is the leader of this third group.

Com. Matern believes that so far the mood of the population has not changed decisively. One of the reasons

for this, in his opinion, is the continuation of the policy of embroidering the truth by the party. The CC delegates who travel to the factories promise the workers everything they demand. Moreover, every [official] making a report considers it his duty to surpass the promises of his predecessor. As there is still no practical fulfillment of promises, the workers have again stopped believing in them.

In conclusion, com. Matern noted that correcting the errors that have been made and strengthening the party will in large part depend on what position com. Ulbricht will take at the 15th plenum of the SED CC, on whether he will admit his mistakes and find the courage for self-criticism. Ulbricht's current passive behavior, in the words of com. Matern, does not inspire optimism in this respect.

Leader of the First Chief Directorate of the MIA of the Union of SSR Fedotov

Representative of the MIA USSR in Germany
Fadeikin

5 July 1953

[Source: *AP RF*, f. 3, op. 64, d. 925, ll. 156-165. Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie (CWIHP).]

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[The following excerpt is from a secret 9 July 1953 memorandum from MID German affairs specialist Georgii Pushkin⁸⁴ to first deputy foreign minister Andrei Vyshinskii,⁸⁵ indicating the measures taken in response to Sokolovskii's, Semenov's and Iudin's proposals regarding the situation in the GDR.⁸⁶]

Proposals of coms. Sokolovskii, Semenov and Iudin

1. Firmly and consistently to implement a new political course projected in the Resolution of the Soviet Government of [2] June 1953 on improving the health of the political state of the GDR.

2. To take urgent measures to improve radically the supply of food to the GDR populace through the provision of appropriate aid to the GDR by the Soviet Union and countries of people's democracy. Moreover, it should be taken into account that the aid measures taken up to this point, including the additional supplies sent by a resolution of the Soviet Government on June 24, ensure only the distribution of food through rationing and minimal sales in "KO" stores in the third quarter of this year.

3. In order to create a stable economic situation in the Republic and to raise the standard of living of the GDR's populace to that of West Germany's populace, to examine the issue of halting the delivery of goods to the Soviet Union and Poland and of counting the export of goods to the USSR as revenue for the Soviet enterprises in the GDR from the first half of 1953 with the aim of applying these goods toward the development of the GDR's external trade and the satisfaction of the internal needs of the Republic.

To preserve reparations in marks on the scale necessary to assure the normal function of A/O "Wismut."

4. To examine the issue of sharply reducing the occupation expenses which are being levied on the GDR to maintain the Soviet occupation troops in Germany.

5. To hand over all Soviet industrial, commercial, and transport enterprises remaining on GDR territory as GDR property at favorable terms, as well as the Black Sea-Baltic Bank and Insurance Society, using the payment received for these enterprises mainly to meet the future expenses incurred by the Soviet Union through the A/O⁸⁸ "Wismut."

6. To establish for the purposes of financial settlements between the USSR and GDR an exchange rate of the GDR mark to the ruble that relates to the true ratio of purchasing power between the mark and the ruble.

7. To consider the serious improvement of the everyday material situation at public and private enterprises of the GDR, as well as the development of broad political work among workers directed at strengthening the ties between the party and the working class, to be the primary task of the SED CC and the GDR government.

Measures undertaken

This proposal does not necessitate the adoption of new measures and is a general statement of intent.

The MVVT⁸⁷ of the USSR is preparing concrete proposals on this issue.

The MVVT is preparing proposals on the Soviet Union's renunciation of reparations

Proposals have been presented to com. A. Ia. Vyshinskii's subcommittee. At present, the MVVT is preparing additional proposals in connection with the planned renunciation of reparations.

The MVVT of the USSR is preparing proposals.

Proposals have been presented to com. A. Ia. Vyshinskii's subcommittee.

The proposal has been withdrawn by coms. Sokolovskii, Semenov and Iudin, insofar as this wish has already been reflected in resolutions of the GDR government and of the SED CC.

8. In light of the fact that lately the SED CC has adopted an incorrect method in leading the state and the economy, replacing the state and economic organs; to undertake a strict separation of functions between the government of the GDR, on the one hand, and the SED CC on the other, bringing only the major principal issues of building the state and developing the economy to the SED CC for examination. To concentrate the attention of the SED CC on developing political work in the masses of the population and on placing the SED's internal party work on the basis of the broad development of internal party democracy, criticism, and self-criticism from the bottom to the top [of the party].

In keeping with this, to consider it necessary to:

a/ carry out the reorganization of the GDR government with the aim of strengthening and simultaneously reducing the state apparatus at the center and the localities, having united a series of fragmented ministries and departments into larger ministries and departments.

b/ liquidate the GDR Ministry of State Security, merging it with the staff of the GDR Ministry of Internal Affairs.

c/ free com. Ulbricht of the responsibilities of Deputy Prime Minister of the GDR with the aim that he concentrate his attention on the work of the SED CC.

d/ elevate the role of the People's Chamber as an actively functioning republican parliament which discusses and adopts laws for the republic, approves commissions [and] discusses questions and demands raised by deputies of the People's Chamber of the GDR.

Prohibit the adoption of any decrees having the character of laws, except by the People's Chamber of the GDR.

e/ convene an extraordinary session of the GDR People's Chamber for an evaluation of the GDR government's work and of the mistakes it has committed, to be followed by changes in the government's personnel, the dismissal of incompetent and unpopular ministers and the promotion of people who are more popular in the country into ministerial posts by drawing more heavily on the representatives of other parties.

9. To limit the functions of the Secretariat of the SED CC to: issues of monitoring the implementation of the CC's Politburo decisions, organizational issues, the selection, placement, and training of cadres, and also issues of party-political work amongst the masses.

To carry out a change in the personnel of the Secretariat of the SED CC with the aim of moving a series of new employees, including intelligentsia members, into the Secretariat. To reduce the number of members of the Secretariat from 11 persons to five. To eliminate the presently existing post of General Secretary of the SED CC, introducing the posts of secretaries of the CC.

10. To consider it crucial to hold, in the course of the coming 3-4 months, the upcoming Fourth Congress of the SED, at which the issues of the party's tasks in connection with the implementation of the New Course would be discussed. To carry out a serious

The proposal will be discussed in connection with the visit by the leadership of the SED CC to Moscow.

Proposal canceled as untimely in com. A.Ia. Vyshinskii's subcommittee with the agreement of coms. Sokolovskii, Semenov and Iudin.

Proposal similarly canceled.

Proposal canceled.

Proposal will be implemented through operational procedure and a resolution on this is not required.

Proposal canceled

Will be discussed in connection with the visit by the leadership of the SED CC to Moscow.

Issue will be discussed in connection with the visit by the leadership of the CC SED to Moscow.

renewal of the CC personnel at the Congress, in order to replenish it with young cadres who have proved themselves in practical work with the masses, the working class, the working peasantry, and also the intelligentsia. To renew in a fundamental manner the personnel of the Politburo of the SED CC, removing from it those who do not stand at the level necessary for the leadership of the party and the state in the current circumstances.

11. To conduct [both] a special investigation into the work of trade unions and [to carry out] a decisive change in the personnel of the unions' leadership organs, as well as adopting new Charter which would fundamentally change the character of the work of trade unions in conformity with the tasks of the new course.

12. To re-examine the numbers, organization, and distribution of the People's Police of the GDR, equipping them with modern arms, including armored transport vehicles, armored cars and communications equipment, as well as creating from the current divisions of barracked police, sufficiently strong, mobile, [operationally] ready divisions of the People's Police, which are capable of preserving order and calm in the republic without the help of Soviet troops.

To consider it necessary to transform the presently existing army corps of the GDR into a troop formation for internal service in the GDR by analogy with the corresponding formation present in West Germany.

13. To give the organization of the SNM the character of a broad-based, non-party youth organization with the use of the relevant experience of the previously existing youth organizations in Germany. To carry out a change in the leadership of the Central Council of the Free German Youth (FDJ).

14. To consider it expedient to change the character and the tasks of the delegations sent to the Soviet Union from the GDR. To strengthen cultural and technical ties between the GDR and the Soviet Union.

To consider it expedient to curtail holiday and medical [*na lechenie*] travel by functionaries of the SED to the Soviet Union and other countries, and to increase holiday and medical travel to the USSR by representatives of the German intelligentsia, workers, and activists of other parties, as well as tourists.

15. In order to raise the international prestige of the GDR, as well as the authority of the government of the GDR in the eyes of the local populace, to consider an official visit by the governmental delegation of the GDR to Moscow to be necessary after the confirmation of the new government by the People's Chamber.

16. To consider the opening of the sector border of East Berlin with West Berlin after the end of the military situation in East Berlin to be inexpedient, as long as the commandants of West Berlin do not take all necessary measures to guarantee an end to the dispatch of agents and provocateurs from West Berlin to East Berlin and the GDR with the aim of carrying out subversive activities against the GDR.

In connection with this, to establish in the near future a

Proposal will be implemented through operational procedure and no resolution is required for this.

The leadership of the GDR are to present their proposals, which are now being prepared, on the issue of the police.

The proposal will be implemented through operational procedure and no resolution is required.

In the subcommittee of com. A.Ia. Vyshinskii the proposal has been canceled with the agreement of coms. Sokolovskii, Semenov and Iudin. The issue should be resolved in the course of operational procedure.

Proposal has also been withdrawn as untimely.

Proposal withdrawn insofar as a resolution on abolishing limitations on the sector border in Berlin has been adopted.

system of permanent and temporary passes for passage through the sector border between East and West Berlin. Moreover, in issuing these passes, not to create unnecessary difficulties and broadly to take account of the interests of the German populace.

17. To order the Command of the Group of Soviet occupation forces in Germany to improve the distribution of Soviet troops, taking into account the lessons of the events of June 17, and, in particular, to see to the stationing around Berlin of the necessary quantity of tank units.

The issue has been resolved by the Ministry of Defense of the USSR in the course of operational procedure.

[Source: AVP RF, f. 82, op. 41, por. 93, p. 280, d. 93, ll. 63-68. Translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moodie.]

**Memorandum, S. Kruglov to G. M. Malenkov,
15 July 1953**

Top secret

USSR
MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS
Presidium of the CC CPSU
15 July 1953.

To comrade G.M. Malenkov

No. 216/k

In the investigatory process of the MfS of the German Democratic Republic there are group files on the persons who took an active part in the preparation and realization of the provocation on June 17 of this year in Berlin and in other cities.

The investigation has established that the provocative work was carried out according to assignments given by reactionary and espionage organizations in West Germany.

The most characteristic are the following files:

1. An investigative file on 7 residents of the city of Berlin - HERTEL, 18 years of age, lubricator in a transport association, MÜLLER, 26 years old, the owner of a truck, DIBALL, 20 years old, without definite occupation, and others, who took active part in the riots (broke glass in government buildings and shops, tore down slogans and placards, and threw stones at police).

The arrested HERTEL and DIBALL admitted that they took part in the riots on the instructions of the fascist organization "League of German Youth," of which they had been members since 1952.

The arrested MÜLLER stated that he was drawn into participation in the disorders by the representatives of the anti-Soviet organization of West Berlin, "Fighting Group Against Inhumanity."

The file of the investigation is complete.

2. The investigative file on 14 residents of the city of Leipzig - GNICHTEL, 33 years old, auto electrician; MULBERG, 41 years of age, dental technician; SCHEBE,

24 years old, student of the veterinary faculty, and others.

The arrested Germans in this group admitted that they were connected with the agents of the "Group for the Struggle Against Inhumanity" in West Berlin - TALEM and SCHUBERT - and on their instructions, carried out espionage and other enemy activity on GDR territory and took active part in preparing the provocation of June 17. They received instructions at secret meetings of the "Fighting Group Against Inhumanity" in West Berlin.

The arrested SCHEBE showed that TAHL called him to a secret meeting in West Berlin at the beginning of May of this year and informed him that an uprising was being prepared and accordingly instructed him.

The arrested GNICHTEL also received an assignment from TAHL to show up active supporters of the SED and to warn them in writing that they would be eliminated. Stamps displaying a picture of one of the leaders of the GDR with a noose around his neck were supposed to appear on the envelopes.

Workers in the apparatus of the Representative of the MVD SSSR in the GDR, having consulted with the High Commissioner in Germany, Com. Semenov, are introducing a proposal to organize open trials on these cases with the goal of unmasking West German fascist organizations engaged in preparing and carrying out the provocations of June 17 of this year in Berlin and in other cities.

Presented for your examination.

MINISTER OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF THE
USSR S. KRUGLOV

[Source: AVP RF. Provided by the National Security Archive; translated by Ben Aldrich-Moodie.]

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- ¹ The West German Bundestag had ratified the Bonn and Paris agreements on the creation of a European army (European Defense Community or EDC) on 19 March 1953.
- ² On the establishment of the SCC, see Elke Scherstjanoi, *Das SKK-Statut. Zur Geschichte der Sowjetischen Kontrollkommission in Deutschland 1949 bis 1953. Eine Dokumentation* (Munich, forthcoming).
- ³ USSR State Directorate for Soviet Property Abroad.
- ⁴ The Wismut uranium mining complex in southern East Germany was established in 1947 as a Soviet stock company under exclusive Soviet control. In 1954, Wismut was transformed into a "Joint Soviet-German Stock Company," which it remained until 1990. Wismut produced about 215,559 tons of uranium between 1945 and 1990, 13% of the total global uranium production (to 1990). See Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany. A History of the Soviet Occupation Zone 1945-1949* (Cambridge, 1996), 238-250; Rainer Karlsch, "Ein Staat im Staate. Der Uranbergbau der Wismut AG in Sachsen und Thüringen," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B 49-50 (1993), 14-22; and Rainer Karlsch/Harm Schröter (eds.), "Strahlende Vergangenheit" – *Studien zur Geschichte des Uranbergbaus der Wismut* (St. Katharinen, 1996).
- ⁵ Marshal Vasilii I. Chuikov (1900-1982) had been the commander-in-chief of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany and head of the Soviet Control Commission in Germany until May 1953.
- ⁶ Pavel F. Iudin (1899-1968), Soviet philosopher and diplomat, deputy USSR High Commissioner since 1953. He later became ambassador to China.
- ⁷ Probably Ivan Il'ichev, head of the USSR mission in the GDR. See Semjonow, *Von Stalin bis Gorbatschow*, 297.
- ⁸ Georgii M. Malenkov (1902-1988), 1946-1957 member of the CPSU Politburo/Presidium, 1953-1955 Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. In 1957 excluded from the Presidium, in 1961 from the CPSU.
- ⁹ Underlined by hand.
- ¹⁰ See the CWIHP *Electronic Bulletin* (www.cwihp.si.edu).
- ¹¹ Reference is made to the "Law for the Protection of People's Property," enacted in October 1952, providing for exorbitant punishments for even minor "crimes" such as black market deals ("economic crimes") or anti-regime statements. The law led to an explosion of arrests and prison sentences.
- ¹² German Economic Commission.
- ¹³ Some of these anxieties stemmed from the large-scale deportation of German scientists and technicians to the Soviet Union by the NKVD and Soviet army units in the early years of Soviet occupation. See Naimark, *The Russians in Germany*, 220-233.
- ¹⁴ Following the establishment of the GDR, the SED sought to eliminate the influence of the churches, particularly the dominant Protestant Church, which had remained an interzonal, all-German organization and was regarded by many as the last force of resistance within East Germany. The main target of the SED's brutal "Kirchenkampf" were the church youth organizations, especially the Protestant "Junge Gemeinde" [Youth Congregation]. After Soviet intervention in early June 1953, the SED agreed to a "truce" with the churches. The SED, however, continued to fight the "Junge Gemeinde" by forcing young people to choose between the Church's "confirmation" and the so-called "youth consecration" ("Jugendweihe"), a rival secular initiation process. On the SED's church policy, see Martin George Goerner, *Die Kirche als Problem der SED* [The Church as a Problem for the SED] (Berlin, 1997), and Thomas Raabe,

SED-Staat und katholische Kirche. Politische Beziehungen 1945-1961 [SED State and Catholic Church. The Political Relationship 1945-1961] (Paderborn, 1995).

- ¹⁵ Bund Deutscher Jugend – German Youth League.
- ¹⁶ Walter Ulbricht (1893-1973), since 1950 Deputy Prime Minister, 1950-1953 SED Secretary-General, 1953-1971 First Secretary of the SED Central Committee, 1960-1973 Chairman of the GDR State Council (President).
- ¹⁷ Free German Youth, the Communist-front youth organization.
- ¹⁸ Underlined by hand.
- ¹⁹ Radio in the American Sector. — Central to Western efforts to destabilize the SED regime and maintain the spirit of resistance in the GDR, the US-controlled RIAS had become, in the words of the first U.S. High Commissioner, John J. McCloy "the spiritual and psychological center of resistance in a Communist-dominated, blacked-out area." US authorities estimated that up to 70% of East Germans tuned into the radio station. See Christian F. Ostermann, "Keeping the Pot Simmering. The United States and the East German Uprising of 1953," *German Studies Review* 19:1 (March 1996), 65. In the spring of 1953, RIAS led a vigorous propaganda campaign against the forced norm increase of 28 May. See Markus Wacket, "Wir sprechen zur Zone. Die politischen Sendungen des RIAS in der Vorgeschichte der Juni-Erhebung 1953," *Deutschland Archiv* 26 (1993), 1035-1048.
- ²⁰ It was not until late August 1953, that the SED Politburo decided to make an all-out effort in the "fight against the reactionary RIAS broadcasts." Minutes of Politburo Meeting, 26 August 1953, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO-BArch), DY 30 IV 2/2/312. See Christian F. Ostermann, "The United States, the East German Uprising of 1953 and the Limits of Rollback." *CWIHP Working Paper No. 11* (Washington, 1994).
- ²¹ Communist Party of West Germany
- ²² Created in February 1950 as the successor to the failed People's Congress Movement, the Communist-front organization "National Front of a Democratic Germany" was a Soviet/GDR instrument for all-German propaganda. Although nominally a national organization, it was only effective in the GDR where it served to facilitate the electoral "unity list." Dietrich Staritz, *Geschichte der DDR*, rev. ed. (Frankfurt, 1997), 49.
- ²³ Vladimir S. Semenov (1911-1992) was the Political Adviser to the Chief of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany 1946-1949 and, since 1949, Political Adviser to the Soviet Control Commission in Germany. In April 1953 he became head of the Third European Division in the Soviet Foreign Ministry. The next month he was named the USSR High Commissioner in Germany. He later became Deputy Foreign Minister and USSR Ambassador to West Germany. See his memoirs *Von Stalin bis Gorbatschow. Ein halbes Jahrhundert in diplomatischer Mission 1939-1991* (Berlin, 1995).
- ²⁴ Andrei A. Grechko (1903-1976), 1953-1957 Commander-in-chief of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany.
- ²⁵ Otto Grotewohl (1894-1964), 1945-1946 Chairman of the Central Committee of the Social Democratic Party in the Soviet Zone; since October 1949 GDR prime minister. On Grotewohl's role see Markus Jodl, *Amboß oder Hammer? Eine politische Biographie* (Berlin, 1997).
- ²⁶ Lavrentii P. Beriia (1899-1953), 1938-1946 People's Commissar for Internal Affairs, 1946 Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, head of the KGB, was arrested on 26 June 1953 and executed in December 1953.
- ²⁷ Viacheslav M. Molotov (1890-1986) had been a member of

the CPSU Politburo/Presidium from 1926 until 1952 and again from March 1953 to June 1957, the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars 1931-1941. In 1939-1941 and 1953-1956 he headed the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs resp. the Soviet Foreign Ministry.

²⁸ Lazar M. Kaganovich (1893-1990), 1930-1957 member of the CPSU Politburo/Presidium.

²⁹ Nikita S. Khrushchev (1894-1971), 1939-1964 member of the CPSU Politburo/Presidium, 1953-1964 First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, 1958-1964 Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.

³⁰ Nikolai A. Bulganin (1895-1975), 1948-1958 member of the CPSU Politburo/Presidium, 1953 Minister of Defense, 1955-1958 Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers.

³¹ Fred Oelßner (1903-1977), since 1950 member of the SED Politburo, Central Committee Secretary for Propaganda and editor-in-chief of the SED party magazine *Einheit*.

³² Anastas I. Mikoian (1895-1978), 1935-1964 member of the CPSU Politburo/Presidium.

³³ This is not a verbatim transcript since it first gives the Soviet statements which are followed by those of the Hungarian officials.

³⁴ Matyas Rakosi (1892-1971), Prime Minister 1952-1953 and 1955-1956, the central figure in Hungary's Stalinist dictatorship.

³⁵ Imre Nagy (1896-1958), Hungarian Prime Minister 1953-1955 and October – November 1956; condemned in a secret trial and executed on 16 June 1958. For recent biographies see Andras B. Hegedus et al. (eds), 1956. *Kezikönyve. Megtorlas es Emlekezes* (Budapest, 1996), 108-109; Janos Rainer, *Imre Nagy* (Budapest, 1996).

³⁶ *Allamvedelmi Hatóság*, the Office of State Security, had been established in 1946.

³⁷ Gabor Peter (1906-1993), head of the Political Police 1945-1954, was arrested in 1953 for "trespasses against socialist legality" and sentenced to life in prison (from which he was freed in 1960).

³⁸ Hungarian, in this context, meant non-Jewish.

³⁹ Admiral Miklos Horthy, regent of Hungary 1911-1945.

⁴⁰ Magyar Dolgozok Partja – the Hungarian Workers' Party, formed in 1948 as a result of the forced merger of the Social Democratic Party and the Hungarian Communist Party.

⁴¹ Mihaly Farkas (1904-1965), since 1945 secretary of the MKP and MDP Central Committee; later Minister of Defense under Rakosi.

⁴² All four top Hungarian Communists — Rakosi, Gerö, Farkas and Jozsef Revai — were of Jewish background, a factor which seriously complicated popular attitudes towards communism in the face of widespread anti-semitism.

⁴³ For a transcript of the Hungarian leaders' speeches on 13 June and the transcript of the 16 June 1953 Soviet-Hungarian leadership meeting, see the CWIHP Electronic Bulletin (www.cwihip.si.edu).

⁴⁴ Marshal Leonid Aleksandrovich Govorov was the Chief Inspector of the Soviet Ministry of Defense. See David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev and George Bailey, *Battleground Berlin* (New Haven, CT, 1997), 168.

⁴⁵ Reported by "VCh-phone" at 7.26 a.m., 17 June 1953, Moscow time. The reporter was Comrade Kovalev (Assistant to Comrade Semenov). The receiver was Chief of Main Operations Department of General Staff Lieutenant-General PAVLOVSKY. Copies were sent to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Kaganovich and Mikoian.

⁴⁶ The reporter was Colonel General GRECHKO. The receiver was Lieutenant General PAVLOVSKY, Chief of the Main Operations Administration of the General Staff of the Soviet Army. Sent to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Mikoian

⁴⁷ Sent to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Mikoian.

⁴⁸ Marshal Vassili D. Sokolovskii (1897-1968), an old Germany expert who had been deputy commander-in-chief of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany in 1945/46 and commander-in-chief and head of the Soviet Military Administration of Germany, headed the Soviet General Staff from 1952-1960.

⁴⁹ Sent to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Mikoian.

⁵⁰ Sent to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Mikoian.

⁵¹ Sent to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Mikoian.

⁵² Sent to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Mikoian.

⁵³ Sent to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Kaganovich, Mikoian.

⁵⁴ Stamped "MID USSR, 18 VI 53; Declassified"

⁵⁵ Sent to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Kaganovich, Mikoian.

⁵⁶ Stamped: "MID USSR, 19 June 1953; MID USSR 7 July 53; Declassified"

⁵⁷ Soviet Control Commission.

⁵⁸ 37-year old West Berliner Willi Göttling who had been crossing the Soviet sector in Berlin to pass from one part of the Western sectors to another, was arrested by Soviet troops and became the first person to be executed. See Manfred Hagen, *DDR Juni '53. Die erste Volkserhebung im Stalinismus* (Stuttgart, 1992), 91.

⁵⁹ Otto Nuschke (1883-1957), since 1948 Chairman of the Soviet Zone CDU, was GDR Deputy Prime Minister from 1949 to 1957.

⁶⁰ Stamped: "MID USSR, 23 June 1953; Declassified"

⁶¹ On 20 June, Semenov reported to Moscow that "the further interrogation of the parachutist allegedly dropped in the region of Sangerhausen gives ground for assuming that his initial testimony as to the drop of a group of parachutists is a provocative-mendacious statement. I ask you not to use this material until the end of the investigation." AVP RF, f. 082, op. 41, por. 93, p. 280, l. 41.

⁶² Stamped: "MID USSR, 23 June 1953 and 20 June 1953; Declassified."

⁶³ Colonel Ivan A. Fadeikin. According to Pavel and Anatoli Sudoplatov, with Gerold L. and Leona P. Schecter, *Special Tasks, The Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness — A Soviet Spymaster* (New York, 1994), 365, Fadeikin was the deputy KGB resident in Berlin. According to David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev and George Bailey, *Battleground Berlin* (New Haven, CT, 1997), 177, Fadeikin was Acting MVD Berlin chief at the time.

⁶⁴ The Fighting Group Against Inhumanity ("Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit") was established in 1948 by publicist Rainer Hildebrandt as a humanitarian organization for East Zone refugees and victims of SED terror. In the early 1950s, the West Berlin-based KgU developed into an anti-communist resistance organization, devoted to providing and collecting information in East Germany and carrying out sabotage operations throughout the GDR.

65 Sent to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Kaganovich, Mikoian.

66 For the transcript of the Soviet-Hungarian leadership meetings, see this Bulletin and the Electronic Bulletin (www.cwihp.si.edu).

67 Piotr Fedotov was a senior foreign intelligence official. See David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev and George Bailey, *Battleground Berlin* (New Haven, CT, 1997), 177.

68 Stamped: "Secretariat of com. Vyshinskii, MID USSR, 4 July 1953; Declassified." The document contains many illegible handwritten marginalia.

69 See note 67.

70 Type-script, original, autograph. Contains notes.

71 Hermann Matern (1893-1971), since 1950 member of the SED CC Politburo and Vice President of the GDR legislature, the *Volkskammer*.

72 Heinrich Rau (1899-1961), since 1949 candidate, since 1950 member of the SED Politburo, had been heading the State Planing Commission since 1950. In 1953, he became Minister for Machine Construction and in 1955 moved on to become Minister for Foreign and Inner-German Trade. Throughout this period, he also occupied the office of Deputy Prime Minister.

73 Corrected from original. Bruno Leuschner (1910-1965) had been a member of the SED Central Committee since 1950 and, as Rau's successor, chaired the State Planing Commission from 1952-1961.

74 Fritz Selbmann (1899-1975) had been Minister for Industry in 1949/50, Minister for Heavy Industry in 1950/51 and since 1951 Minister for Iron and Steel Industry. From 1953 on he again headed the Ministry for Heavy Industry.

75 Gerhart Ziller (1912-1957) had been GDR Minister for Machine Construction since 1950. From 1953 to 1954, he headed the GDR Ministry for Heavy Machine Construction.

76 Elli Schmidt (1908-1980), since 1949 chairman of the German Women's League, was a candidate of the SED Politburo from 1950 to June 1953, when she was removed from all her positions. In January 1954, she was forced to resign her membership in the SED. She was rehabilitated in July 1956.

77 Anton Ackermann (1905-1973), author of the controversial April 1946 article "Is There a Peculiar German Way to Socialism?," had been a candidate of the Politburo since 1949 and was in 1953 Director of the Institute for Marxism-Leninism. Due to his support of Herrstadt and Zaisser he lost these positions in June 1953 and was eventually expelled from the Central Committee in 1954. He committed suicide in 1973.

78 Paul Strassenberger (1910-1956) was the deputy chairman of the State Planing Commission from 1950-1953.

79 Kurt Gregor (1907-1990), had been GDR Minister for Foreign and Inner-German Trade since 1952.

80 Hermann Axen (1916-1992) had been a member of the SED Central Committee since 1950 and served in its secretariat from 1950 to 1953.

81 Otto Schön (1905-1968), a close associate of Ulbricht, was a member of the SED Central Committee from 1950 until 1968 and a member of the secretariat from 1950 to 1953. From 1953 to 1968 he headed the office of the SED Politburo.

82 At the Second Party Conference of the SED in July 1952, Ulbricht had announced the policy of the "forced construction of socialism."

83 Prior to the forced merger of the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party in the Soviet Zone in April 1946, Otto Buchwitz (1879-1964) had been a member of the SPD since 1898. By 1953, Buchwitz had staunch credentials as a SED party

loyalist: he had co-chaired the Central Party Control Commission in 1949-1950 and since 1949 had been a member of the *Volkskammer*. See his *50 Jahre Funktionär der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (1958). For his pre-1945 career, see Martin Schumacher/Ulrike Höroldt/Christian Ostermann (eds.), *M.d.R. Die Weimarer Reichstagsabgeordneten in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus* (Düsseldorf, 1994).

84 Georgii M. Pushkin (1909-1963) had been in the diplomatic service from 1949-1952. From 1952-1953 and 1959-1963 he was Deputy Foreign Minister.

85 Andrei J. Vyshinskii (1883-1954), 1949-1953 Soviet Foreign Minister, 1953-1954 Permanent Representative of the USSR at the U. N.

86 Stamped by the Secretariat of Com. Gromyko on 15 July 1953 and by the Secretariat of Vyshinskii on 9 July 1953. The document bears the initial of A. Gromyko. Andrei A. Gromyko (1909-1989), 1953-1957 Deputy Foreign Minister, 1957-1985 Foreign Minister.

87 Ministry of Domestic and Foreign Trade.

88 Soviet-owned "stock company."

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