

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.<sup>2</sup> 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.”<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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.<sup>5</sup> 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.”<sup>6</sup>

1953 also looms large as a defining moment in Soviet-

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 a East-West deal on Germany and help West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer win a sweeping victory at the federal elections later that fall.<sup>7</sup> The uprising also jolted the U.S. administration, first into believing that the dawn







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.”<sup>40</sup>

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.”<sup>41</sup> 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.”<sup>42</sup>

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.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup>

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.<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup> 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!"<sup>47</sup>

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."<sup>48</sup>

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)<sup>49</sup> and the Albanian leader Enver Hoxha later that month.

statement.”<sup>57</sup>

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.”<sup>58</sup>

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





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."<sup>78</sup> 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."<sup>79</sup>

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,<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>82</sup> 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's process in early July from the Russian

<sup>31</sup> Printed below.

<sup>32</sup> 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.

<sup>33</sup> See “Delo Beria,” 2 (1991), 144.

<sup>34</sup> 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.

<sup>35</sup> Resis, *Molotov Remembers*, 335. See also Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity*, 180.

<sup>36</sup> James Richter, *Reexamining Soviet Policy towards Germany During the Beria Interregnum. CWIHP Working Paper No.3* (Washington, DC, 1992), 15-16

<sup>37</sup> 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)).

<sup>38</sup> Vladislav Zubok/Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA 1996), 159-162.

<sup>39</sup> Printed below.

<sup>40</sup> 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*.

<sup>41</sup> 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 Sudopltov's memoirs see Wettig, “Zum Stand der Forschung über Berijas Deutschland-Politik im Frühjahr 1953,” 196-197; and Vladislav Zubok, “Atomic Espionemg3,” 196-197; an84Id oo40 mco167 TD4sr







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.<sup>11</sup> 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 GEC<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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."<sup>14</sup> 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).<sup>15</sup> 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. Ulbricht<sup>16</sup> gave the order that open meetings were to be held in all institutions of higher learning and 12-grade schools of the League of FGU<sup>17</sup> 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:<sup>18</sup>

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 neces-

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,"<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup>

5. In the interests of strengthening counter-propaganda, to organize through the KPD<sup>21</sup> 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),

**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.<sup>22</sup>

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

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. Grotewohl<sup>25</sup> on Meetings  
between East German and Soviet Leaders in Moscow,  
2-4 June 1953**

Malenkov	Semenov
Beriia <sup>26</sup>	Grechko
Molotov <sup>27</sup>	Kaganovich <sup>28</sup>
Khrushchev <sup>29</sup>	Ulbricht
Bulganin <sup>30</sup>	Oelßner <sup>31</sup>
Mikoian <sup>32</sup>	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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**Transcript<sup>33</sup> 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 Rakosi<sup>34</sup> 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







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.<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup>

[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 GOVOROV<sup>44</sup> is also in Berlin.

The reports of the further events are to follow.  
SEMENOV GRECHKO [...] <sup>45</sup>

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

**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 <sup>46</sup>

[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.<sup>47</sup>

[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 Sokolovskii<sup>48</sup> 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.<sup>49</sup>

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



Firstly, the disorders began simultaneously in Berlin and the following big cities: Magdeburg, Brandenburg,

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. [...] <sup>52</sup>

[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. <sup>53</sup>

[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. <sup>54</sup>]

“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-





*[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.]<sup>56</sup>*

“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



[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.<sup>62</sup>]

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. Fadeikin<sup>63</sup> 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 takNERAL

against the 10% rise in output quotas that the government



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

**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

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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. Fedotov<sup>69</sup> and I. Fadeikin<sup>70</sup>**

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 Matern<sup>71</sup> 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 Rau<sup>72</sup> 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, Leuschner<sup>73</sup> 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 Selbmann<sup>74</sup> 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, Ziller<sup>75</sup>, 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,<sup>76</sup> Ackermann,<sup>77</sup> Strassenberger,<sup>78</sup> 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

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,<sup>79</sup> 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

For this reason, the leaders of the district organizations were obliged to deal only with members of the secretariat—Axen<sup>80</sup> and Schön,<sup>81</sup>—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 conference<sup>82</sup> 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,<sup>83</sup> 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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## **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/O<sup>88</sup> "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.

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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,

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*



<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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).

<sup>3</sup> USSR State Directorate for Soviet Property Abroad.

<sup>4</sup> 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).

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> Pavel F. Iudin (1899-1968), Soviet philosopher and diplomat, deputy USSR High Commissioner since 1953. He later became ambassador to China.

<sup>7</sup> Probably Ivan Il'ichev, head of the USSR mission in the GDR. See Semjonow, *Von Stalin bis Gorbatschow*, 297. Se 1953., head of 7



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.

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

<sup>29</sup> 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.

<sup>30</sup> 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.

<sup>31</sup> 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*.

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

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

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

<sup>35</sup> 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).

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

<sup>37</sup> 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).

<sup>38</sup> Hungarian, in this context, meant non-Jewish.

<sup>39</sup> Admiral Miklos Horthy, regent of Hungary 1911-1945.

<sup>40</sup> 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.

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

<sup>42</sup> 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.

<sup>43</sup> 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

- <sup>65</sup> Sent to Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Voroshilov, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Kaganovich, Mikoian.
- <sup>66</sup> For the transcript of the Soviet-Hungarian leadership meetings, see this Bulletin and the Electronic Bulletin ([www.cwihp.si.edu](http://www.cwihp.si.edu)).
- <sup>67</sup> 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.
- <sup>68</sup> Stamped: "Secretariat of com. Vyshinskii, MID USSR, 4 July 1953; Declassified." The document contains many illegible handwritten marginalia.
- <sup>69</sup> See note 67.
- <sup>70</sup> Type-script, original, autograph. Contains notes.
- <sup>71</sup> Hermann Matern (1893-1971), since 1950 member of the SED CC Politburo and Vice President of the GDR legislature, the *Volkskammer*.
- <sup>72</sup> 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.
- <sup>73</sup> 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.
- <sup>74</sup> 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.
- <sup>75</sup> 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.
- <sup>76</sup> 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.
- <sup>77</sup> 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.
- <sup>78</sup> Paul Strassenberger (1910-1956) was the deputy chairman of the State Planing Commission from 1950-1953.
- <sup>79</sup> Kurt Gregor (1907-1990), had been GDR Minister for Foreign and Inner-German Trade since 1952.
- <sup>80</sup> Hermann Axen (1916-1992) had been a member of the SED Central Committee since 1950 and served in its secretariat from 1950 to 1953.
- <sup>81</sup> 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.
- <sup>82</sup> At the Second Party Conference of the SED in July 1952, Ulbricht had announced the policy of the "forced construction of socialism."
- <sup>83</sup> 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).

<sup>84</sup> 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.

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

<sup>86</sup> 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.

<sup>87</sup> Ministry of Domestic and Foreign Trade.

<sup>88</sup> Soviet-owned "stock company."

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