

May 15, 1953

Memorandum from the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs to Vladimir Semyonov, 'On the Question of Preventing the Defection of Inhabitants from the GDR to West Germany'

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Summary:

The large-scale migration of GDR's population to West Germany is becoming a major issue in Germany. The SCC in Germany, the SED, and GDR government discuss and outline measures for preventing this defection in the future.

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On the Question of Preventing the Defection of Inhabitants
from the GDR to West Germany

The illegal movement of people from the GDR to Western zones of Germany has become massive. During just 10 months in 1952 (from 1 January to 1 November) 110,333 people from the GDR moved to West Germany and to West Berlin. In addition, 24,732 people relocated to West Germany and West Berlin with the official permission of the GDR authorities. Of the 100,677 people who moved to the Western zones and on whom there is data on social status and age, workers make up 26,194 people (more than 25%), youth between 15 and 25 years old--49,138 people (about 50 %), peasants--2,378 people, and office workers--15,597 people.

Among those who illegally moved from the GDR to West Germany, there is a large number of specialists. Thus, for example, during the 3rd quarter of 1952, 604 specialists fled from the GDR to Western zones, including 144 engineers, 13 science workers, 52 teachers, and other specialists.

Clearly, the defection of inhabitants from the GDR to West Germany is to a certain extent related to the policy of constructing socialist foundations in the republic. On the first order, those running West are capitalists and all sorts of criminal elements, as well as a certain portion of the population, particularly youth and intelligentsia, which has fallen under the influence of hostile propaganda.

The SCC in Germany, the SED and GDR government organs are paying much attention to the question of preventing the defection of GDR inhabitants to West Germany. The measures of the GDR government and the SED, directed toward improving the material situation and strengthening and increasing political work among the population, were implemented with this question in mind as well. In particular, on 28 June 1952, the GDR government adopted a resolution providing for significant wage increases for workers and the intelligentsia. According to this resolution, wages for workers were raised from 3% to 97%, and for the intelligentsia--from 18% to 220%. On 9 April of this year the GDR government again adopted the decision to implement a number of measures aimed at further improving the workers' standard of living. These measures include, among others, resolutions for improving food at factory cafeterias, the repeal of coupon rationing for almost all textile goods and footwear, the establishment of a new procedure for distributing food ration coupons in the democratic sector of Berlin, the repeal of the rationing system for science and technical workers, and an increase in the variety of bread on the market. In 1952, the GDR government adopted a resolution to increase payments for agricultural products sold by peasants to the state in fulfillment of required deliveries as well as for voluntary sale. On 7 January of this year the SED CC adopted a special decision on measures to prevent the defection of GDR inhabitants to West Germany. The SED CC directives, distributed to SED party organizations, aim to increase explanatory work among the population and expose hostile propaganda.

The implementation of these and other SED measures, however, did not curb the defections of GDR inhabitants to Western zones.

In order to prevent further departures of GDR inhabitants to West Germany and West

Berlin, it would be expedient to carry out the following measures:

1. Focus attention in the agricultural sector on administrative and organizational steps to strengthen agricultural-industrial cooperatives that already exist. It is necessary for existing agricultural-industrial cooperatives everywhere to be turned into model establishments. In connection with this, one should temporarily refrain from establishing new cooperatives and not pursue quantitative growth in these cooperatives.
2. Adopt the necessary measures to increase the output of manufactured consumer goods to meet the needs of the GDR population, broaden the variety and raise the quality of these goods, as well as further improve the supply of food to the population.
3. Plan for increased construction of individual homes for science workers and other segments of the intelligentsia, both by the government and by promoting individual construction through the provision of special loans to the intelligentsia on favorable terms, and secure houses and land plots owned by specialists.
4. The practice of mass arrests and repression of large groups of those brought to account should be abandoned. In addition, under no circumstances should the law be broken. In rural areas it is necessary to reduce instances of confiscation of the entire property of peasants for overdue or incomplete fulfillment of required agricultural deliveries to the state, instead replacing this form of punishment with the imposition of a fine.
5. Examine the possibility of carrying out an amnesty for those convicted of minor criminal and economic-administrative offenses.
6. Turn serious attention to increasing on-location mass-political explanatory work, especially among the youth, making the entire population aware of the SED and the GDR government policies on questions of the economic and political development of the republic. At the same time, work must be stepped up in exposing hostile propaganda aimed at undermining the construction of socialist foundations in the GDR and sowing panic among the German people. The exposure of hostile propaganda must be closely tied to mass education on the continuously deteriorating situation of workers in West Germany and West Berlin, as well as in capitalist countries.
7. Bearing in mind that the reactionary activities of the church in the GDR have notably increased in recent times, and given the fact that the church has a strong influence on inhabitants of the republic, administrative and repressive measures should be used less in the struggle against the hostile activity of the church. Instead the focus should be on the organization of all-around anti-religious and scientific-material propaganda, thus exposing the reactionary activities of church workers.

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