

August 20, 1953
**Memorandum from Leonid Brezhnev to Nikita
Khrushchev**

Citation:

"Memorandum from Leonid Brezhnev to Nikita Khrushchev", August 20, 1953, Wilson Center Digital Archive, APRF (Archive of the President of the Russian Federation), f. 3, op. 64, pap. 909, ll. 101-107. Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya.
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/112606>

Summary:

General Secretary of the CPSU CC, Brezhnev, reports to Khrushchev about the New Course of the SED and the political mood of the population of the GDR. Although improvements are being made and productivity is increasing, there is still a general lack of popular support and trust in the decisions of the SED.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

August 20, 1953.

No. 57390

The member of the Military Council and Head of the Political Department of the Group of the Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany reported on the political mood of the German population in connection with the July events in the German Democratic Republic and the New Course of the SED and the government of the Republic.

The New Course of the SED, which is aimed at improving the material situation of the population and at the speediest unification of Germany as one peace-loving state, finds an ever-stronger support among the main mass of the GDR's population.

Numerous meetings of workers of industrial enterprises, sessions of the SED party activists, and activists of the Union of Free German Youth, which are held in all districts of the GDR provide a strong indicator of the mood of all the honest people. Participants of the meetings and the activists whole-heartedly approve and welcome decisions of the party and the government.

The work productivity is growing at the plants, factories, mines, railroads, people's estates, and in agricultural cooperatives. In the recent days, many people's enterprises of many districts have substantially increased their productive outputs, and the inflow of agricultural production to the state reserves has grown. In spite of the obstacles created by the West German police, the number of people returning to their native settlements is increasing. For instance, just in the period between June 19 and June 25, 1,468 people have returned to the democratic sector of Berlin, 152 to the Erfurt district, and 114 to the Rostock district.

The implementation of the planned measures by the GDR government also finds wide support among the working intelligentsia, workers of arts and sciences.

The Supreme Commander of the Group of Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany, and the military commandants' offices continue to receive letters and addresses from collectives of workers and employees, from various organizations and individual German citizens, who express their gratefulness to the Soviet government and to the Command for the timely and skillful undercutting of the fascist putsch. Just the military commandants' offices in the Soviet sector of Berlin have received over 100 letters and addresses.

However, some serious drawbacks still persist in the work of the SED.

Some party conferences and meetings of party activists are hastily prepared and held in conditions of low attendance and weak activity of the SED members. For example, only 80 members out of 400 attended the session of party organization of the Roter Record plant (Gera district), and only three people took part in the debate. In Magdeburg, only 374 primary party organizations out of 720 held party conferences, and only 7,830 people out of 21,213 party members and candidate members of the SED attended those conferences. At K. Marx Plant in Magdeburg, party conferences were canceled in five shop-level party organizations because of poor attendance by SED members.

There are cases of mistrust toward decisions of the government, and even some openly provocative anti-party statements by some rank-and-file members of the SED, which are not being countered with the necessary rebuff on the part of the leadership of the organizations and the general party masses. Thus, members of the SED Bergner and Wagner stated at a party conference of brewery plant Bad-Köstritz (Gera

district): "The new decisions will not be implemented. They were taken only in order to calm the population. The trust to the party and the government had been lost, and will never be regained."

At a party conference in Pannewig community (Spermburg region, Schwerin district), member of the SED Told stated: "Walter Ulbricht has Russian citizenship, and is, therefore, a foreigner." This provocative statement did not receive an appropriate political judgment or a rebuff on the part of the leadership of the party organization.

There are cases of public and demonstrative resignations from the party on the part of some unstable and random elements. Thus in Longa community (Magdeburg district), SED members Reklin (a teacher) and Waschman (a worker) demonstratively burned their party membership cards in front of other party members. In the Bad Salzungen region (Suhl district), the Bürgermeister of the Fersdorf community, a member of the SED, handed old party membership cards to former SED members, and suggested that they destroy their SED membership cards.

At the "Buna" plant (Halle district), all trade union members of shop E-45 refused to pay their membership dues in protest against the government, "which made serious mistakes."

At the "Fagemi" Plant (Halle district) approximately 80 people announced their withdrawal from the German-Soviet Friendship Society.

At some conferences and in individual conversations, some workers express their dissatisfaction with awarding Walter Ulbricht the title of "Hero of Labor." In the Lichtenberg region of the democratic sector of Berlin, women stated that "awarding the title of 'Hero of Labor' to Walter Ulbricht is an insult to working people," that "it is unclear how they could award such a high title to a person, who was heavily responsible for the government's mistakes."

At some workers' conferences, they raise the question of removing the trade unions from the SED control, and of turning the trade unions into "genuinely unaffiliated organizations."

At the optics plant in the town of Rathenow, and at some other enterprises, part of workers repeatedly present demands for change of government. Along with that, the workers claim that "if some technician made serious mistakes, he would be removed from his position and arrested, but nobody makes the government accountable for its mistakes."

In the village, in the conditions of increasingly hostile moods on the part of the kulak elements, and in the absence of necessary political work, there are many cases of peasants withdrawing from production cooperatives.

Recently, some regions experienced incidents of sabotage and dissemination of reactionary leaflets from Western Germany and West Berlin. Cases of terrorist acts against party and state employees, officers of the people's police and activists are also on the rise.

On July 6, in the town of Barta (Rostok district), during the night, unknown individuals committed an act of desecration of the tombs of the Soviet soldiers, tore away the stars from the monuments, and destroyed some of the tombstones.

On July 4, in the town of Johanngeorgenstadt (Chemnitz district), unknown individuals removed six portraits of leaders of the GDR government, together with J. V. Stalin's

portraits.

On July 5, in the town of Berk (Gera district) a portrait of Hitler was pasted on a wall on one of the streets during the night.

The bourgeois parties, LDP and CDU, which are members of the bloc with the SED, are insufficiently engaged in explaining the new course to the population. Moreover, some of their sections present demands for repealing "the monopoly of the SED in the leadership of the country." Numerous organizations of the National Democratic and the Peasant Democratic parties also do not participate actively in the new government's propaganda measures. Trade union organizations are engaging in the explanatory work among the youth very slowly. As a result, some parts of the population still have doubts, which are heated up by the unrestrained enemy propaganda.

The Military Council, and the Political Department of the Group are implementing measures for strengthening German-Soviet friendship.

Articles published in the Soviet press regarding the events in the GDR are being extensively studied among the troops by means of presentations, discussions, political information sessions, and during political seminars.

They began a special topic--"The failure of the foreign mercenaries' escapade in the GDR, and servicemen's tasks for increasing alertness and strengthening the German-Soviet friendship"--within the system of political seminars. For officers, within the system of commanders' education, many units had lectures--"The failure of the foreign mercenaries' escapade in the German Democratic Republic."

In mass propaganda, significant effort was also devoted to explanations of the decisions of the 15th Plenum of the SED CC, which was held on 24-26 July.

I am reporting it to you for your information.

L. Brezhnev