

May 2, 1953

**Memorandum from Vladimir Semyonov to
Vyacheslav Molotov Evaluating the Prospects for a
Successful Resolution of the German Question**

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Summary:

Memorandum to Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov on German reunification. The memorandum reviews the developments following the East German proposal of an "all German" conference and the Soviet proposal for a German peace treaty.

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To Comrade V.M. Molotov

Memorandum on the German Question

I.

The crux of the German question during the post-war period has been the matter of the national reunification of Germany. A struggle between the Soviet Union and the GDR on one side, and the USA, England, France and the Bonn government on the other has occurred concerning this [matter]. Since 1945, the entire post-war policy of the Soviet Government regarding the German question has been built on defending demands for German reunification on a peaceful and democratic basis, and later also on demands for a swift conclusion of a peace treaty, to be followed by the withdrawal of all occupation forces from Germany. This position of the Soviet Government has contributed to uniting the democratic and patriotic forces in Germany and strengthening the influence of the German working class parties among the people.

The most significant recent events pertaining to questions of German unity have been the struggle that unfolded from September 1951 to March 1952 for the so-called all-German conference, as well as the Soviet government's presentation on 10 March 1952 of the draft Outline for a Peace Treaty with Germany.

The People's Chamber [Volkskammer] of the GDR came out in September 1951 with a proposal, directed to the West German Bundestag, calling for an all-German conference of representatives of East and West Germany to discuss the question of carrying out free all-German elections to the National Assembly, with the aim of establishing a single, peaceful and democratic Germany, as well as in order to address the question of expediting the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany. The campaign was carried out under a popular German slogan--"Germans at one table." Supported by the Soviet Government, this campaign, for the first time since 1945, exerted a serious influence on the population of West Germany, strengthening in the German national consciousness a sense of urgency in resolving the question of the national reunification of Germany by their own means. The USA, England and France, as well as the Adenauer government, opposed convening the all-German conference. They declared that they are prepared [to agree to] all-German elections if these are held under international supervision and only after a U.N. commission verifies that the conditions in all of Germany are suitable for carrying out free elections. The three powers were calculating on dragging out the resolution of the issue of elections in this manner and, in the meantime, on completing the preparation of the Bonn and Paris "agreements," advancing the remilitarization of West Germany, and locking [West Germany] in the North Atlantic bloc. However, this position of the three powers helped to unmask the anti-German character of their policy, and this lent an objectively anti-imperialist character to the movement for convening the all-German conference.

Of even greater influence on the West German inhabitants has been the March 1952 Soviet government presentation of a proposal to speed up the conclusion of the German peace treaty. The Soviet government put forth a draft statute for a peace treaty with Germany, the central idea of which was the demand to reestablish the unity and independence of the German government with a guarantee of its democratic and peaceful nature.

There was a large positive response throughout all of Germany for the proposal included in the draft for the withdrawal of all occupation forces from Germany and permission for it to maintain its own national armed forces, necessary for the defense of the country.

The Soviet proposals in the Outline for a Peace Treaty helped strengthen our influence not only in East Germany, but also in West Germany. They were the ideological-political basis for the civil struggle that has unfolded in West Germany against the Bonn and Paris militaristic "agreements."

The three Western powers were compelled to come out openly against expediting the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany. They advanced the thesis that working out a peace treaty is possible only with the participation of an all-German government, which must be established by carrying out free all-German elections. However, the three powers surrounded the proposal to carry out such elections with a number of preconditions, most importantly--demands for international verification that the conditions in all of Germany are suitable for carrying out free elections, and for changing the social order in the GDR, where, allegedly, human rights are being violated. Moreover, the speeches of official representatives of the USA and England emphasized that they agree to the unification of Germany, but only on condition that united Germany will be similar to the Bonn republic, and [that] united Germany will be included in the so-called European Defense Community.

By avoiding a decision on the German question on a quadripartite basis in the spirit of the Potsdam treaty, the governments of the USA, England and France organized in March of this year the Bundestag ratification of the enslaving [kabalnykh] Bonn and Paris "treaties." With these treaties, the three powers have preserved their exclusive right on questions concerning the national reunification of Germany and made German unification conditional upon [the Germans'] entry into the so-called European Defense Community, and, through it, into the Atlantic bloc. The Bonn and Paris "treaties" foresee the extension of the occupation regime in West Germany for 50 years, giving the military authorities of the three powers the right to interfere in West German internal affairs, proclaim martial law, and take upon themselves full governmental authority. In addition, the Bonn and Paris "treaties" envisage a number of West German economic obligations to the three powers. One of the main provisions of the Bonn and Paris "treaties" is the establishment of West German armed forces within the so-called "European Army."

Since the negative consequences of the Bonn and Paris "treaties" for the inhabitants of West Germany so far have not appeared, the popular movement against these treaties and in defense of German unification on peaceful and democratic foundations is becoming weaker in West Germany, as evidenced by a number of reports from West Germany. Moreover, the old slogans regarding the question of German unification currently do not fully correspond to the changed circumstances, and their mobilizing role has somewhat weakened.

These conditions demand the adoption, on our part, of a number of serious further steps with regard to the German question, the aim of which must be to focus the attention of the entire German people once more on the question of the country's unification on democratic and peaceful foundations, to counter the plundering, imperialist policy of the three powers toward Germany with the democratic and peaceful policy of the Soviet Union, and to prevent the rise of chauvinistic sentiments in West Germany. Such a gesture by the Soviet government would also be of great international importance.

Specifically, the following is deemed expedient:

a) To put forth a proposal for the formation of the all-German provisional government

by the parliaments of the GDR and West Germany, with the goal of the national reunification of Germany by way of free all-German elections without foreign interference.

Such a proposal would once again raise the question--though on a slightly different footing--of the importance of an agreement between the Germans of East and West Germany, since it is impossible to establish an all-German provisional government without such an agreement.

b) In order to insure that the elections are indeed free in all of Germany, to propose the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Germany, shortly after the formation of the all-German provisional government, as well as adopt other measures to prevent the possibility of Germany being utilized for the aggressive goals of any particular power or group of powers.

Such a proposal would help better expose the demagogic character of the proposal put forth by the three powers to carry out free all-German elections. In addition, this proposal for the withdrawal of troops would undermine the position of the occupation forces of the three powers in West Germany, which have been left there for an extended period by the provisions of the Bonn "agreement." The three powers will probably come out against this Soviet proposal, which, however, answers the desires of all segments of the German population. Our position on this question will remain advantageous, since the proposal for the withdrawal of troops will be coming from us and since Soviet forces will remain in Germany only as a result of the refusal of the three powers to withdraw their forces from West Germany.

It should be noted that until now the Soviet government proposed to withdraw the occupation forces in Germany only during the year following the conclusion of the peace treaty, which under current international conditions is a very remote prospect for the Germans. The new Soviet proposal will put this question before the Germans as a real possibility even for the present time if: a) an agreement is reached between East and West Germany on the formation of the all-German provisional government and if b) the three powers agree to accept this Soviet proposal. Under these circumstances, if the three powers and the Adenauer government reject our proposal, their decision will be accompanied by significant political damage.

II.

Nevertheless, one should bear in mind that the USA, England, and France, as well as the Adenauer government, will in all likelihood reject these new Soviet proposals as well. In order that the German people do not form the impression that the Soviet Government is limiting itself on this occasion only to diplomatic posturing in defense of the national requirements of the German people, a number of measures should be taken to further strengthen friendly relations between the USSR and the GDR and increase the all-German and international prestige of the GDR.

First and foremost, it is necessary to examine the question of the expediency of the Soviet military authorities continuing to maintain control over the democratic organs and organizations of the GDR.

Since 1945, our mutual relations with the people of East Germany can be divided into two phases: a) the phase of military administration (SVAG)--from May 1945 to the formation of the GDR in October 1949; b) the phase of Soviet military organs' control over the German government organs of power--from October 1949 to the present. However, in recent times the work of the SCC in Germany has essentially consisted of giving aid and consultation to the German organs, through the SED CC, on practical

questions of state, administrative, and cultural development. The Socialist Unity Party and the democratic forces in the GDR have by now grown and strengthened [sufficiently] to govern the country independently. Necessary Soviet assistance in the future may be rendered through Soviet advisors and specialists, as is done in other countries of people's democracy. Moreover, the presence of Soviet forces on GDR territory is a sufficient guarantee of the stability of the people's democratic order in the Republic. In addition, continuing preservation of Soviet control over GDR affairs has a number of serious negative facets. Because of its form (the SCC), it highlights a sharp inequality in the relationship between the USSR and the GDR, even though eight years have already passed since the end of the war, a people's democratic order has been established in the Republic, and friendly relations have been established between the Soviet Union and the GDR. The democratic forces in the GDR may perceive the continuing existence of Soviet control over the GDR as an expression of a certain political mistrust on the part of the Soviet government. In addition, with the presence of the SCC, the leadership of the GDR does not feel full responsibility for the country, which retards the advancement of SED cadres.

The removal of Soviet military control over the GDR government organs and the liquidation of the SCC will show to the entire German people that the Soviet government consistently and determinedly pursues the path of providing the German people with sovereign rights, which will further emphasize the enslaving nature of the Bonn and Paris "agreements" that have been forced upon West Germany.

The liquidation of the SCC would also be clear, practical proof of the sincerity of the Soviet government's proposals on all-German questions.

In addition, it appears expedient to adopt a number of further measures that would lighten the economic burdens of the GDR and create more favorable conditions for socialist development in the GDR.

For the purpose of discussing the aforementioned questions with our German friends, a GDR government delegation should be invited to Moscow for an official visit.

[signature]
(V. Semyonov)
2 May 1953