

May 5, 1953

Vladimir Semyonov, 'Memorandum on the German Question'

Citation:

"Vladimir Semyonov, 'Memorandum on the German Question'", May 5, 1953, Wilson Center Digital Archive, AVPRF, fond 082, opis 41, portfel 19, papka 271, listy 31-38; translated for CWIHP by Daniel Rozas.
<https://wilson-center.drivingcreative.com/document/121059>

Summary:

Memorandum on Soviet policy regarding German unification including meetings with the United States, England, and France on an All-German Conference and need for future discussion. Also addressed is Soviet relations with East Germany in the forms of military assistance and economic aid for reparations.

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Top secret.

copy #11

84s/3eos

5/V.53.

MEMORANDUM

ON THE GERMAN QUESTION.

I.

The crux of the German question during the post-war period is the question of national reunification of Germany. The Soviet Government, guided by the Potsdam Treaty, has consistently spoken out in favor of German unification on democratic and peace-loving principles and for a conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany with the subsequent withdrawal of all occupational forces. This policy of the Soviet Government has helped to bring together democratic and patriotic forces in Germany and strengthen Soviet Union's influence among the German people.

Following the formation of the German Democratic Republic in October 1949, the following significant actions have been taken on the question of German unity and the peace treaty:

a) In October 1950, on the initiative of the Soviet Government, the conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the eight powers in Prague put forth a proposal on the establishment of an All-German Constituent Council, on an equitable basis and composed of representatives from East and West Germany. The Constituent Council would have to prepare the establishment of a Provisional democratic and peaceful all-German sovereign government and present appropriate proposals for mutual ratification by the governments of the four powers, as well as participate in consultations on the drafting of a peace treaty with Germany.

This proposal of the Soviet Government was met with a broad response in many countries. In order to strengthen it, a broad social-political campaign was launched in Germany, with the aim of reaching an agreement between the Germans of East and West Germany on the question of the creation of such a Constituent Council, and then, since September 1951, also on the question of convening an All-German Conference of representatives of East and West Germany. The All-German Conference would have to discuss two questions: the question of carrying out free all-German elections with the aim of creating a united, democratic and peaceful Germany and the question of expediting the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany. The movement was unfurled under the popular German slogan, "Germans at one table," and demonstrated a serious influence on the inhabitants of West Germany. The Soviet Government openly supported the proposal for convening the All-German Conference. The USA, England and France, as well as the Adenauer government opposed the convention of such a conference.

b) On 10 March 1952, the Soviet Government came out with a proposal for expediting the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany, putting forth a draft of the Principles of the peace treaty. This draft provided for the reestablishment of a single and independent German government under the assurance of its democratic and peaceful nature, in accordance with the resolutions of the Potsdam conference. The draft provided also for the withdrawal from Germany of all armed forces of the occupying powers no later than one year following the day when the peace treaty comes into force and for allowing Germany to maintain national armed forces necessary for the country's defense. This move by the Soviet Government had an even greater influence on the German population.

In connection with these proposals by the Soviet Government, in March-September 1952 there was an exchange of diplomatic notes on the German question between the Soviet Government and the governments of the USA, England and France (a collection of these notes is attached). During this, the governments of the three powers declined to discuss the question of the peace treaty with Germany, stating that the drafting of a peace treaty can only take place with the participation of an all-German government which must be selected by carrying out free all-German

elections. The three powers tied the proposal for carrying out these elections to a whole number of preconditions, first and foremost to the creation of an international UN commission with the aim of evaluating the presence of conditions in Germany for carrying out free elections and presenting the governments of the four powers with recommendations concerning the creation of conditions in one or another area of Germany that, in the opinion of the commission, are necessary for assuring free elections in that area. Moreover, in the speeches of official representatives of the USA and England, it was emphasized that they agree to German reunification, but only under the condition that the united Germany is established under a system similar to that of the Bonn republic and that the united Germany is included in the so-called "European Defense Community."

Declining to discuss the proposals of the Soviet Government on the German question, the governments of the USA, England and France accelerated the signing of the deleterious Bonn and Paris "agreements" with the Adenauer government, which were ratified by the Bundestag in March of this year. According to these "agreements," the three powers retain the right to decide on the question of the national reunification of Germany, under the condition that the united Germany participate in the so-called "European Defense Community" and, through this, in the Atlantic bloc. The Bonn and Paris "agreements" provide for the extension of the occupation of West Germany for 50 years, granting the military authorities of the three powers the right to interfere in the internal affairs of West Germany, establish martial law, and take upon itself full governing authority. One of the main elements in the provisions of the Bonn and Paris "agreements" is the creation of West German armed forces as a part of the so-called "European army."

In its note of 23 August 1952, the Soviet Government proposed to convene in the nearest future a conference of the four powers with the following agenda:

- 1) the preparation of a peace treaty with Germany.
- 2) the formation of an All-German government.
- 3) the carrying out of free all-German elections and the establishment of a commission to evaluate the presence of conditions in Germany for carrying out such elections, and this commission's composition, functions and authorities.

The Soviet Government proposed to discuss at this conference of the four powers also the question of the timetable for the withdrawal of occupational forces from Germany.

In their reply notes of 23 September 1952, the governments of the three powers reaffirmed their previous position, proposing to limit the quadripartite negotiations with the discussion of the question of the composition, functions and authorities of the "impartial international commission" for investigating Germany "with the aim of creating the conditions necessary for carrying out free all-German elections." Only after carrying out such an investigation and receiving the appropriate report from the commission, the governments of the three powers agreed on quadripartite discussion of the measures for carrying out all-German elections and establishing an all-German government. Finally, only after carrying out elections and the formation of the government, the three powers proposed to discuss the question of the peace treaty.

Since the reply notes from the governments of the three powers did not contain anything new in comparison with their previous notes, it was decided not send a new Soviet Government note to the three powers for now.

II.

Our mutual relations with the Germans of East Germany since 1945 can be divided into two phases: a) the phase of military administration (SVAG [Soviet Military Administration in Germany]) - from May 1945 to the establishment of the GDR in October 1949; b) the phase of control by Soviet military organs under German government organs (SKK [Soviet Control Commission]) - from October 1949 to the present. In recent times, the work of the SKK in Germany has consisted mainly in providing the CC SEPG with assistance and consultation on practical questions of government, economic and cultural development. The democratic forces that have strengthened and grown in the GDR are themselves managing with the administration of the country. The presence of Soviet troops on the GDR territory is a

sufficient guarantee for the stability of the people's democratic order in the GDR.

The continuing maintenance of Soviet control over the government organs of the GDR is accompanied by a number of serious drawbacks, in particular:

- a) It emphasizes the unequal relationship between the USSR and the GDR, even though 8 years have gone by since the end of the war, a people's democratic order has been established in the GDR, and friendly relations have been established between the Soviet Union and the GDR.
- b) The democratic forces in the GDR may view the continuation of Soviet control as an expression of certain political mistrust toward them from the direction of the Soviet Government.
- c) The German leadership does not feel itself to be in full responsibility for the country with the presence of the SKK, which slows the development of administrative cadres in the GDR.

The rescission of control by Soviet military authorities over the government organs of the GDR would demonstrate to the entire German people that the Soviet Government is consistently and decisively pursuing the path toward according the German people independence and sovereign rights. This, in turn, would emphasize even more the principle differences between our policy toward Germany and the policy of the three powers, which have tied West Germany with the deleterious Bonn and Paris "agreements."

III.

In recent years, the Soviet Government has adopted a number of decisions for giving serious economic assistance to the GDR. However, the burdens of the GDR in fulfilling their financial-economic obligations stemming from the consequences of the war (reparations, occupational expenses, etc.) are still extremely significant.

Below follows an account of these financial-economic obligations of the GDR and the payments made by it to cover these obligations.

- a) Reparations. From August 1945 to 1950 inclusively, material valuables were supplied as reparation payments in the sum of 3,658 mln. dollars.

In 1950, the remaining reparation obligations were reduced by the Soviet Government by half, that is to 3,171 mln. dollars, with the timetable of payment stretched over 15 years.

In all, during the period 1945-1952 inclusively, 4,080.8 mln. dollars had been paid out in reparations.

In 1953, the GDR reparation payments to the Soviet Union and Poland were set at the sum of 211.4 mln. dollars, which takes out approximately 1.8 bln. German marks from the GDR budget.

From 1 January 1954 to 31 December 1965, 2,536.8 mln. dollars remain to be paid, that is, 211.4 mln. dollars per year.

- b) GDR payments for occupational expenses.

From 1945 to 1949 inclusively, the GDR payments for occupational expenses totaled 26,085 mln. marks, while since 1950 these payments totaled 1,950 mln. marks per year.

In all, from 1945 to 1952 inclusively, the GDR paid out 31,935 mln. marks for occupational expenses.

For 1953, it is projected that 1,950 mln. marks will be diverted from the GDR budget for payment of Soviet occupational expenses.

- c) Foreign occupational expenses.

In addition to the aforementioned expenses paid in German marks for the maintenance of Soviet occupational forces in Germany, the Soviet Union sets aside payments in rubles from its own budget for the maintenance of these forces (the so-called foreign occupational expenses).

From 1945 to 1952, inclusively, these expenses totaled 25,128.8 mln. rubles.

R does not currently make payments for these expenses. It is supposed that the question of these sums will be settled by the conclusion of a peace treaty.

d) GDR payments for the sale of 66 Soviet enterprises.

In accordance with the Agreement between the Governments of the USSR and the GDR of 3 June 1952, the GDR is obligated to compensate the Soviet Union for the value of the 66 Soviet enterprises in Germany sold to the GDR for the sum of 1,550.4 mln. marks, with compensation payments made to the Soviet Union over three years in equal portions of shipment of goods and cash payments in marks.

The payments for 1952 were calculated for the total of 389 mln. marks.

In 1953, following the 50% reduction of the remaining sum, the proposed payment totals 150 mln. marks.

The remaining payments in the sum of 430.7 mln. marks are to be paid in installments by 1956 inclusively: in 1954 and 1955 - 150 mln. marks per year, and in 1956 - 130.7 mln. marks.

e) Income from the Soviet enterprises in Germany.

The income from the activity of the Soviet enterprises in Germany for 1953 has been confirmed at 640 mln. marks. According to the decision of the USSR Council of Ministers from 10 April 1953, the shipment of goods from the GDR to the Soviet Union as a portion of this sum has been reduced to 200 mln. marks. The remaining sums are to be paid in German marks in order to cover our expenses within the GDR.

[signature]

V. Semyonov

5 May 1953