

Assessment of the 12th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany on Getting Women to Take up Gainful Employment (1961)

Abstract

At the beginning of the 1960s, the political pressure on GDR women to work outside the home continued unabated. In 1961, the Democratic Women's League of Germany [*Demokratischer Frauenbund Deutschlands*], the most important women's organization in East Germany, drew up a list of measures intended to bring as many women as possible into the workforce. The measures included improved opportunities for education and training as well as childcare solutions.

Source

The Federal Executive Board of the Democratic Women's League of Germany

Berlin, March 30, 1961

The secretariat discussed the great political significance and the lessons of the 12th Plenum of the Central Committee and the tasks and conclusions that emerged from it for our work.

The chief task here is to make sure that our organization participates in getting the broadest segments of women to help accomplish the goals of our national economic plan and of our overall economic activities.

For this, all attention must be devoted to making the lives of working women easier and to making better and better use of new possibilities and reserves through local initiatives.

It is especially important for our boards and for every female functionary to constantly consult the lessons and tips on the development of political work among the masses, on working with people, and on the necessary improvement of leadership activity, and to assess them with regard to our own area of work.

The problems addressed in the discussion by the chairmen of the organization should be taken up by the relevant sections, and the implementation of the proposals should be attended to and assessed.

Above all, this concerns questions such as

1. the improvement of the work with the housewife brigades by industry and the local organs, as well as the targeted use of housewife brigades in health care establishments;
2. the establishment of housing options for children through the use of local facilities, such as construction workers' barracks.

The creation of an example of a satisfactory solution for caring for children who are slightly sick, and the development of a neighborhood assistance program on the basis of the example of the female pensioners of Finsterwalde;

3. improvement of the work of the state apparatus with the HO [*Handelsorganisation* or Trading

Organization] advisory boards;

4. creation of educational and training opportunities for housewives and helpers in homework rooms, after-school care centers, and so on by the Ministry of Public Education;

5. After the VIth Pedagogical Congress, proposals for the development of new forms of pedagogical propaganda must be worked out with the Ministry of Public Education and implemented with the organization.

6. The section "Woman and the State" should acquire an overview of the workforce situation, so that a more thorough knowledge and a better deployment, through us, is possible for the housewives.

7. For the further improvement of political work among the masses, the secretariat will receive, on July 4, 1961, an assessment of the implementation of the decree on education; the section "Political Work among the Masses" will simultaneously submit proposals on how to continue developing our educational work.

8. *Frau von heute* will analyze its work for consideration by the secretariat at the beginning of July 1961.

9. *Frau von heute* and the publication for functionaries, "*lernen und handeln*," are publishing discussions about and examples of the activities of women in times to come, concretely under the heading "We are Fulfilling the Tasks of the 12th Plenum" (working title).

Measures by the secretariat and for the apparatus in the federal executive board

1. On the basis of the 12th Plenum, and for the purpose of a thorough assessment of the initial experiences of the election taskforce within the organization, the secretariat will conduct a consultation with the district heads on April 10, 1964, in which all section leaders will participate.

2. Two seminars on the problems of the 12th Plenum will be carried out for political co-workers.

Drawing up the seminar plans is the responsibility of the "Political Work among the Masses" section.

3. In all divisions, the reports about the consultations of the chairman of the Council of State, Walter Ulbricht, must be thoroughly discussed in Forst and Eichwege, and the lessons for our own work must be assessed.

Democratic Women's League of Germany

– Federal Secretariat –

Source: SAPMO BArch, DY 30/IV 2/17/89; reprinted in Dierk Hoffmann and Michael Schwartz, eds., *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland seit 1945*. Bd. 8: 1949–1961: *Deutsche Demokratische Republik. Im Zeichen des Aufbaus des Sozialismus*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2004, no. 8/219.

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