

Comments on the Resettler Problem: The Organization Department of the Central Secretariat of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (February 24, 1949)

Abstract

It still had not been possible to fully integrate resettlers into East German society by 1949. An internal report by the Central Secretariat of the SED was particularly critical of the fact that individuals, even within party circles, continued to harbor ideas about a possible revision of the Oder-Neiße line, and that even party functionaries undermined the fair distribution of existing housing stocks. The resettlers' ongoing perception of themselves as being different was to be counteracted with political and social measures.

Source

The Organization Department of the Central Secretariat of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, Comments on the Resettler Problem

Berlin, February 24, 1949

The reports of the Commission on the Situation of Resettlers paint a picture of this problem for the entire Eastern Zone. It is clear that, on account of the ideological and organizational deficiencies of some of our party units, resettlers have not everywhere been received into their new homeland with equal rights.

A great many members and functionaries of our party have taken a vacillating stance on the question of the Eastern border. This was part of the reason why the resettlers have avoided the struggle for their equality. This population group demonstrated insufficient participation in communal politics in our party as well, as a result of which it was mostly old residents, often in large numbers, and tradesmen, home owners, large farmers, and so on who were elected to the communal administration in the communal elections of 1946. These old residents from the middle classes prevent – mostly out of “private interests” – the implementation of Living Space Law No. 18 (Allied Control Council). They have been able to sabotage the living space law without much difficulty, since some of our party functionaries also inhabit rooms that are too spacious. Now, under a fair distribution of living space, all of these communal employees and communal representatives (also including our comrades) would have to start with themselves when it comes to saving living space. If our comrades do not lead by good example, one cannot demand this from the indifferent.

The skilled workers among the resettler population can only be deployed in the workforce in a directed fashion after the housing problem has been solved. The guiding of these skilled workers [into appropriate positions] is urgently needed in the interest of the Two-Year Plan. There are qualified smelters, roller workers, metal workers, and technicians who are [currently] doing less important work in villages or regional towns, while industry has a worker shortage.

We propose:

1. Greater clarification of our position on the Oder-Neisse line as the peace border.
2. The Implementation of Living Space Law No. 18

a) through new directives to all communal and housing offices

b) through the adoption of resolutions on concrete measures by our party units

3. Solidarity days in support of Order 209 (construction of new farmhouses) and stepped-up housing construction in all of the zone's cities. All parties, mass organizations, and the administration should participate.

4. Construction of workers' settlements by all nationally-owned enterprises

a) through construction enterprises,

b) through the deployment of activists.

5. New construction of residential houses through the initiative of the communal administration.

The task of the housing office is not only to distribute available living space, but also to promote housing construction.

6. Direction of all skilled and other workers through the labor office in cooperation with the housing office.

7. No further discussion of the "resettler problem;" instead, only a discussion of our work and social policy.

The term "resettler" must disappear as soon as possible. It must be brought to the attention of all comrades that henceforth everything will be done and said only from the social point of view.

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Behind the term resettler or refugee often lurk concealed class enemies who are seeking to win back old positions of power under this guise.

signed Schäfer

Source: SAPMO-Barch, DY 30/IV, 2/5/243; reprinted in Udo Wengst, *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland*. Bd. 2/2: 1945–1949: *Die Zeit der Besatzungszonen. Sozialpolitik zwischen Kriegsende und der Gründung zweier deutscher Staaten. Dokumente*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001, no. 250, pp. 566–67.

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