

From a *Tribüne* Article on Work Quota Increases (June 16, 1953)

Abstract

On May 28, 1953, the GDR Council of Ministers ordered at least a 10% increase in work quotas to overcome the economic crisis and meet the targets of the first Five Year-Plan. The state-ordered fixing of work quotas had already led to massive conflicts in the past, since increased work quotas invariably resulted in wage cuts – that is, unless higher yields could be met through increased labor productivity and efficiency rather than longer working hours. On June 16, 1953, the *Tribüne*, the official organ of the Free German Trade Union Federation [*Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* or FDGB] came out in strong support of the Council of Ministers' decision. The endorsement made it clear to workers that the labor union was not representing their interests, but rather those of the SED. It stoked the conflict and provided the impetus for the first large-scale construction workers' protest march in East Berlin.

Source

The resolution passed by the Council of Ministers to increase work quotas states above all that the improved organization of work, worker training, the use of new work methods, improved technical conditions, the elimination of down time, and greater worker discipline in factories will provide the basis for increasing work quotas and enhancing productivity in accordance with key enterprise data.

Management and union leaders in many enterprises have acted conscientiously on this resolution. However, *many enterprises have not implemented or have violated the resolution passed by the Council of Ministers*. For instance, to the detriment of successful efforts to increase productivity by means of increased work quotas, a dangerous, reactionary “theory” has emerged that an increase in work quotas leads to lower wages. The unions have firmly rejected this view, which grossly abuses the authority of the resolutions passed by the party of the Working Class, the Council of Ministers, and the executive committee of the national board of the Confederation of Free German Trade Unions – and which deeply and scandalously violates the interests of all working people.

Work quotas are not being raised to lower wages, but to produce a larger number of goods at lower cost and in better ways, as a result of more efficient work that involves the same expenditure of effort. The hostile “theory” of reduced wages must be eliminated. The more thoroughly and quickly this is done, the more actively and consciously workers will embrace the cause of a 10% increase in output quotas.

Source: “Zu einigen schädlichen Erscheinungen bei der Erhöhung der Arbeitsnormen”, in *Tribüne* (June 16, 1953); reprinted in Ernst Deuerlein, ed., *DDR*. Munich, 1966, p. 133.

Recommended Citation: From a Tribune Article on Work Quota Increases (June 16, 1953), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/occupation-and-the-emergence-of-two-states-1945-1961/ghdi:document-3003>> [May 01, 2024].