

From the Resolution of the 13th Meeting of the Central Committee of the SED (May 14, 1953)

Abstract

The 13th meeting of the Central Committee of the SED took place on May 13–14, 1953. A report on its decisions appeared in the *Tägliche Rundschau* on May 17. In the excerpt reprinted below, the Central Committee criticized the criteria used in setting work quotas in the GDR, arguing that quotas were too often based on arbitrary decisions rather than solid technical grounds. It called for improvements in the regulation of quotas and a simultaneous increase of at least 10% by the end of May. The Council of Ministers approved the increase on May 28, 1953. This decision triggered the mass strikes and protests that shook East Germany a few weeks later on June 17.

Source

The completely unsatisfactory regulation of work quotas in our socialist enterprises in all sectors of the economy shows that insufficient attention has been paid to addressing this issue, which is so crucial to our economic development. The percentage of work quotas based on technical grounds is unsatisfactorily low, and the existing “experiential-statistical” quotas stand in opposition to the technology that has developed, the experiences and output levels of the workers themselves, work-flow organization, and the increased skill of workers. These quotas have become a serious impediment to our economic and social development in the German Democratic Republic.

The leaders of both the enterprises and the organs of the economy devote insufficient attention to the formulation and introduction of work quotas based on technical grounds and let these important matters take their own course. This gives rise to quotas that conflict with the objectives of raising the standard of living of the population. Quota fulfillments of 150 to 200 percent are achieved without corresponding levels of productivity.

The establishment of work quotas on a false basis is facilitated by a regulation included in the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Labor on the formulation and introduction of work quotas based on technical grounds. According to this regulation, a reduction in current earnings is not permitted when new work quotas are introduced. This regulation has proven to be a mistake and an obstacle in the whole move to formulate and introduce work quotas based on technical grounds, and it must be corrected.

The Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany believes that the ministers, state secretaries, and factory leaders should initiate all necessary measures to eliminate the poor state of affairs with regard to work quotas and pursue the goal of bringing work quotas to a normal level and ensuring an increase in work quotas in areas critical to production by an average of at least 10% by June 1, 1953. Work quotas are to be promptly reviewed with the goal of increasing them, and these higher quotas, after thorough and conscientious instructional efforts by party organizations within enterprises and comrades in union organizations, are to be implemented by the factory director.

Source: From the Resolution of the 13th Meeting of the Central Committee of the SED (May 14, 1953), *Tägliche Rundschau* (May 17, 1953); reprinted in Ernst Deuerlein, ed., *DDR*. Munich, 1966, pp. 131–32.

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