

The Politburo of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany: Further Measures in the Fight against *Republikflucht* (December 15, 1953)

Abstract

The GDR leadership struggled to stop *Republikflucht* (the flight of East Germans from the German Democratic Republic to the West), but there was little it could do about its basic underlying causes – the lack of political freedom in the GDR and the good economic prospects in the Federal Republic. In December 1953, the Politburo of the SED decided to focus on fighting what they saw as West German attempts to woo skilled workers away from East Germany.

Source

The Politburo of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany Further Measures in the Fight against *Republikflucht*

Berlin, December 15, 1953

To intensify the fight against *Republikflucht*, further measures are to be initiated on the basis of the Politburo decrees of January 6, 1953, and April 27, 1953, and on the basis of measures to implement the new course:

I. Measures to Quash the Hostile Incitement and Agitation Aimed at Triggering *Republikflucht*.

1. In the party's agitprop work, in the press, and on the radio, the incitement and agitation through which the enemy aims to trigger *Republikflucht* must be unmasked as a means of impeding the realization of the new course and of unleashing chauvinistic agitation against the Soviet Union, the people's democracies, and the German Democratic Republic.

Taking the government declaration by comrade Walter Ulbricht in the People's Chamber [*Volkskammer*] on November 25, 1953, as a starting point, it must be shown that, by organizing this illegal exodus, West German imperialism is out to thwart not only the negotiations on the regulation of inter-zonal traffic but also the peaceful resolution of the German question, as such.

It must be demonstrated that the imperialist warmongers are misusing every escapee for their aggressive plans, and, moreover, that they want to acquire skilled workers for their military production and young people for their mercenary army.

The agitprop work aims to educate members of the party and all citizens to heightened vigilance towards the enticers, the hostile rumors, and especially the RIAS propaganda.^[1]

Greater attention must be paid to the return and influx of individuals from West Germany. Here, the emphasis should not be placed on the person of the returnee, but rather on the contrast between political, economic, and cultural conditions in West Germany and the German Democratic Republic.

responsible: the district and country leadership of the party

Agitprop Dept. of the Central Committee

Press and Radio Dept. of the Central Committee

2. In the educational work of the National Front of Democratic Germany, and in the residential cooperatives [*Haus- und Hofgemeinschaften*], it is important to stoke the struggle against illegal emigration by presenting it as the warmongers' means, and to increase vigilance against the enemy's agitation.

responsible: Dept. of Leading Organs of the Party and Mass Organizations of the Central Committee

3. The district and country secretariats must address the Politburo decrees of January 6, 1953, and April 27, 1953, once more in the meetings of the secretariats.

Monthly reports about *Republikflucht* must be submitted by the heads of the district and country councils; consultations about it shall be held jointly with the functionaries of the state apparatus and the mass organizations, and relevant measures shall be determined.

Care must be taken to ensure that *Republikflucht* is thoroughly analyzed, that the causes are uncovered, and that the enemy's propaganda is offensively countered.

Above all, the enemy's work to recruit skilled workers and members of the technical intelligentsia from industrial enterprises must be quashed. The district and county secretariats shall send specifically chosen comrades to the enterprises that are organizing the fight against *Republikflucht*.

responsible: the 1st secretaries of the party's district and county leadership

II. Tasks of the State Organs

1. The Main Department of Local Organs of the State shall, in collaboration with the State Secretariat for Internal Affairs, present to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers a document with suggestions for improving the work of the district and county councils in the fight against *Republikflucht*. The Politburo decrees of January 6, 1953, and June 9, 1953, will be the basis of this.

Deadline: January 4, 1954

2. The State Secretariat for Internal Affairs shall issue a directive on the activities of the information offices and of those who work on population policy with the district councils on questions concerning *Republikflucht*. It shall be stipulated that monthly analyses of *Republikflucht* and suggestions about measures by the local state organs against *Republikflucht* must be submitted to the councils. The district must report to the State Secretariat on a monthly basis.

3. To evaluate the reports and coordinate and oversee the work of the state organs, the comrade State Secretary for Internal Affairs will conduct monthly meetings about questions concerning *Republikflucht* with representatives of the

Main Department of Local Organs of the State

the Press Office

the State Radio Committee

the HVdVP [Main Administration of the People's Police] and the State Security

the Ministry of Justice

the FDGB [Free German Trade Union Federation]

the FDJ [Free German Youth]

and, where necessary, with additional representatives of central organs.

4. Comrade Stoph is asked to institute close cooperation between the State Secretariat for Internal Affairs and the Main Administration of the German People's Police on questions concerning *Republikflucht*.

5. The reporting of the German People's Police is to be expanded in a way that makes it possible to acquire a realistic overview of *Republikflucht*.

6. Measures in the fight against *Republikflucht* must be dealt with in the training of mayors.

7. Questions pertaining to illegal emigration must be dealt with in suitable form in the training of house and street representatives.

8. Organs of the judicial system shall conduct legal proceedings against recruiters and make these proceedings known, especially to workers at the enterprises in question.

responsible: Department of State Administration of the Central Committee

9. The ministries and central organs shall probe the causes of *Republikflucht* in the enterprises and organizations subordinate to them; concrete measures to fight the enemy's work and to remove the causes shall be instituted.

responsible: the departments of the Central Committee

NOTES

[1] RIAS: *Rundfunk im amerikanischen Sektor*, or Radio in the American Sector.

Source: SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/J IV 2/2/337, Bl. 49–52, Anlage Nr. 4 zum Protokoll Nr. 83/53 der Sitzung des Zentralsekretariats der SED vom 15. Dezember 1953, Reference: Darstellungsband 8, II (Sozialpolitische Denk- und Handlungsfelder), note 45; 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. 8/119.

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