

# Erich Honecker Reviews His Successes (April 17–21, 1986)

## Abstract

---

In this report to the XI. (and final) SED Party Congress, Honecker recounts the success of economic and social policies, despite the fact that they had failed to address the growing economic problems in East Germany. In conclusion, Honecker calls upon the population to continue working towards the development of a socialist society.

## Source

---

### **Report of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany at the XI. Party Congress of the SED. Reported by Comrade Erich Honecker, April 17–21, 1986**

[...]

III. Our Main Battlefield Is the Unity of Economic and Social Policy

Dear Comrades!

Since the X. Party Congress our republic has successfully continued its development as a politically stable and economically productive socialist state. The plan for 1981 to 1985 was completed with good results. All areas of social life, the productive forces and the production conditions, science, education and culture, social relations among the people, and the defense of the country have been further improved.

Our economic strategy enabled us to increase productivity on the basis of intensified production and to guarantee the needed long-term economic growth. The increase in work productivity accelerated. In time, our party focused on the most modern scientific and technological developments. A high international benchmark increasingly became the standard for our own work. Science and production became more closely intertwined. The application of scientific-technological findings alone saved a yearly average of 500 million work hours, which corresponds to a work volume of 300,000 workers.

From 1981 to 1985, the GDR generated a national income of 1.087 trillion marks, with increasing annual growth rates. Last year, it took only six months to generate the same national income as in all of 1970. The total national income for the fifteen years since the 8th Party Congress was 2.7 trillion marks, which is 1.7 times the total in the twenty-two years from 1949 to 1970. Over 90 percent of national income growth was due to increased work productivity. Our industrial production is becoming more and more efficient, as indicated by the fact that net production in the last five years increased much faster than the production of goods. We can proudly declare that there are very few countries in the world that have achieved such solid and dynamic economic development over an extended time period and have constantly converted it into social progress.

[...]

In keeping with the spirit of socialism, we are using the substantially increased performance of our national economy to safeguard and further raise the material and cultural standard of living of the people. In fifteen years, 2.4 million new, modernized apartments were built, which made it possible to improve the living conditions of 7.2 million citizens. Two-thirds of all completed, newly-built housing was allocated to workers; one in four new apartments went to young married couples. Since 1971 we have

---

spent 260 billion marks on our housing program, which was ten percent of the national income generated during this time period.

Parallel to the housing construction project, more than 137,000 spaces in daycare facilities were created, 46,000 more than in the previous five years. It has been guaranteed that all children in the respective age groups can attend daycare if the parents so desire. Regarding day nurseries: there was an increase of 66,300 spaces. Whereas in 1970 only 29 out of every 100 children up to three years old received a space, in 1985 the figure was 73 percent. With this, the GDR can boast a high level of care in this area. Since 1971, 46,772 classrooms were built as well as 2,041 school gymnasiums.

The actual income of citizens doubled over the last fifteen years. The net earnings of the population increased 178 percent. For ten years already, more than 7 million workers have received wages based on production and other achievement-oriented measures. We have continually expanded care for children, working mothers, and young families.

The spectrum of social development is broad. Only a few measures shall be mentioned, such as the introduction of the forty-hour work week for all workers in a three-shift system and for mothers with two children. Today, one in five workers enjoys the forty-hour work week. The 500,000 double-shift workers have a 42-hour work week. All workers have received at least three weeks and three days of vacation at their full wages since the last vacation increase. Since 1970 there have been five pension increases for work veterans. Space for roughly 60,000 new residents has been built in retirement and nursing homes.

[...]

VI. The SED is the Party of the Working Class and of All the People [*Volk*]

[...]

Dear Comrades!

Forty years ago, on April 21, 1946, the historic handshake of Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl at the Joint Party Congress of the KPD [Communist Party of Germany] and the SPD [Social Democratic Party of Germany] to form the SED [Socialist Unity Party of Germany] sealed the end of the unfortunate division of the working class and the creation of their unity. This event had great historical significance. Out of it emerged the strength that was able to lead our people on the road to a new life, with the antifascist democratic upheaval and the socialist revolution to build up socialism.

Four decades that brought immense change to the social reality of our country testify to the fact that the SED has fulfilled its responsibility. The greatness and beauty of the work shared by the party and the people is inspiring to those who stood at the barricades of the revolutionary struggle in the first quarter of this century; to those who risked their lives to resist the Nazi brown barbarism; to those who joined the ranks of the builders of a new future; and to those who were born into socialism and are growing up in it.

Corresponding to what our XI. Party Congress will decide, we will continue to shape the socialist society we have developed, thereby creating fundamental prerequisites for the gradual transition to communism, as it is laid down in our party's program. We are doing everything so that our people, and the world, can live in peace. Firmly allied with the community of socialist fraternal countries and the revolutionary world movement, we are fulfilling our internationalist responsibility.

Everything for the good of the people, everything for the happiness of the working people!

Long live our socialist German Democratic Republic!  
Long live proletarian internationalism!

---

Long live our Socialist Unity Party of Germany!

Source: Bericht des Zentralkomitees der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands an den XI. Parteitag der SED (17.–21. April 1986). Berichterstatter: Genosse Erich Honecker, reprinted in Günter Benser, ed., *Dokumente zur Geschichte der SED*, vol. 3: 1971–1986. Berlin, 1986, pp. 416–17, 420–21, 495–96.

Translation: Allison Brown

Recommended Citation: Erich Honecker Reviews His Successes (April 17–21, 1986), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/two-germanies-1961-1989/ghdi:document-913>> [July 11, 2025].