

WHAT  
IS AT STAKE  
IN  
GERMANY?

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*Documents on the National Policy of the GDR*  
6/1966



What Is at Stake in Germany?

Walter Ulbricht, Chairman of the Council of State of the GDR, talking to delegates and guests of the Sixth Congress of the International Organization of Journalists on 12 October 1966 in Berlin



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*Important statements by Walter Ulbricht, Chairman of the Council of State of the GDR, on national and international problems.*

- 1. From the speech of Walter Ulbricht in the People's Chamber of the GDR on 13 October 1966*
- 2. Discussion of Walter Ulbricht with West German journalists on 12 October 1966*





- The key to the German problem is the overcoming of militarism and all plans of the West German imperialists to achieve supremacy in Europe.
- At the moment the Bonn government is obstructing relaxation of tension and understanding in Europe with its demands for changes in the frontiers, for joint control of nuclear weapons, by its emergency laws and enabling acts, by favouring former SA and SS people in the state apparatus, by its sole representation pretension, etc.
- The Germans have a perspective as a nation only—if the German states agree on their complete disarmament—down to necessary police units; if they renounce nuclear weapons and agree on a policy of neutrality; if they recognize the existing frontiers, renounce all joint control over nuclear weapons in every form and carry out disarmament; if they concentrate all their energy on creating a reputation for themselves in the world through scientific-technical and cultural achievements.
- The next objective of the GDR is to create a basis for effective, joint cooperation between the German states through a policy of relaxation of tension and the bringing about of European security.
- The question of reunification, which has developed over a long period of time, will be a matter for the two German states and it of course presupposes their rapprochement and agreement on a basis of equality.

- Normal relations with the two German states are also in the national interest of every European, African and Asian country. Whoever maintains normal relations in a one-sided manner with the West German state alone furthers tension in Europe and the perpetuation of the division of Germany.
- A German settlement is possible only through peaceful means and by accepting the reality of the existence of two German states.

From 26 September to 2 October 1966 Walter Ulbricht, Chairman of the Council of State of the GDR and First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, paid a state visit to the Federative Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. The exchange of views conducted by Walter Ulbricht and Josip Broz Tito, President of the Federative Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia and General Secretary of the League of Communists, showed the agreement of their views on the most important international questions.

The following are the most important extracts from the report which the Chairman of the Council of State of the GDR made in the supreme parliament of the German Democratic Republic after his return from Yugoslavia:

## **The Key to the German Question**

The question of the relations between the two German states played no small role in the talks in Belgrade and on Brioni. This is quite natural because these relations are of the greatest importance for the solution of the problems of European security. Already a few days ago I underlined the misconception of the declarations of a few West European politicians according to which the settlement of the German question is decisive for European security. In the final analysis it is a question of what is understood as the core of the German question. The core of the German question is and remains the overcoming of militarism and of all plans

of the West German imperialists which are aimed at the winning of supremacy in Europe, at the conquest of the world, etc. We therefore openly say that according to the experiences of two world wars the German question can only be turned to the good on the way of disarmament, the overcoming of militarism, revanchist policy and neo-nazism, on the way of the liquidation of the power of the armament monopolies.

This is the premise I have to make.

In Yugoslavia I was in a strange situation – as earlier in the United Arab Republic. I travelled to Yugoslavia as a representative of the German Democratic Republic, the German peace state. But there I felt obliged to appear not only on behalf of the citizens of the German Democratic Republic, but also of all those peace-loving Germans who are citizens of the West German Federal Republic. And I assured the peoples of Yugoslavia that the working class of the West German Federal Republic, too, along with the working farmers, broad sections of the intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie in West Germany, also strive for friendship and good cooperation with the peoples of Yugoslavia. They reject the Bonn policy of interference in the foreign policy of other states and especially do not want to have anything to do with those fascist groups, their backers and protectors who on West German soil are active against Yugoslavia and its representatives.

As chairman of the Council of State I naturally looked after the interests of the GDR. But the other German state, the West German Federal Republic, has broken off its official relations with Belgrade to blackmail it. Thus the West Germans are

not represented in Yugoslavia. But I know very well that most of the citizens of West Germany also do not love the atomic armament or revanchist policy. Not even the members of the so-called associations of fellow countrymen who have become habituated to life in West Germany wish to be resettled in other countries again. Thus I could justifiably speak in Yugoslavia for the peaceful interests not only of all citizens of the GDR, but also of the majority of the West Germans.

I would have preferred to have been able to greet an ambassador of the West German Federal Republic in Belgrade, but the sole representation pretension of the gentlemen in Bonn has led to the fact that in Yugoslavia as well as in other countries the representatives of the GDR alone speak for all Germans in east and west. It is a fact that the Bonn government, with its revanchist policy, with its demands for the alteration of frontiers, with its striving for a share in control over atomic weapons, with its sole representation pretension really represents only itself and not even a significant part of the West Germans.

In this situation it is only natural that the sole representation pretension is not even taken seriously by the majority of the NATO states allied with West Germany.

In connection with our state visit to Yugoslavia the Bonn Foreign Office issued a declaration in which it sets up the thesis that only such a state could be recognized as non-aligned by Bonn which subordinates itself to the Bonn revanchist policy and renounces the maintenance of normal relations with the German Democratic Republic or the further development of such relations.

## **What Is the Origin of the Bonn Sole Representation Pretension?**

On asking what may be the origin of such a pretension one can only conclude that here Bonn has plagiarized old files from the Ribbentrop period. I think it would be good to finally consign these files to the dustbin.

The sole representation pretension of the Bonn government puts forth ever more curious flowers. Indeed it has no longer anything to do with a reasonable policy, but the more so with the symptoms of political arteriosclerosis.

This can be seen especially well in the relation with Yugoslavia. Fascist German imperialism made efforts for years during the Second World War to subjugate the brave peoples of Yugoslavia with military force. The peoples of Yugoslavia have fought heroically against the tremendous superior forces of the aggressor. At last they stood in the front ranks of the victors.

And now there comes a Bonn government which did not learn its lesson from history. It seriously believes that it can still chain the peoples of Yugoslavia by means of extortion. But even the unreasonable demand that Yugoslavia must dance to Bonn's tunes had to meet with a determined rebuff.

The Bonn people cannot understand this because they do not understand anything of national pride, of freedom and independence. These qualities and ideas are strange to them. Otherwise they could never have been so foolish as to set the Ustahas, Chetniks and other fascist gangs maintained by their police against repres-

entatives of socialist Yugoslavia and reject official protests of the Belgrade government against the murder of its representatives with sneering remarks.

I can only advise the government of the West German Federal Republic to finally stop defiling the name of Germany abroad and create normal constitutional conditions in West Germany.

West Germany must also get accustomed to respecting the sovereignty not only of Yugoslavia but that of all other states and observe the valid rules of international law. These are in our opinion a few prerequisites for the normalization of relations with Yugoslavia, too.

The phenomena of crisis convulsing the Bonn government are finally all due to the fact that the government of the West German Federal Republic pursues a political and military-political conception which is in irreconcilable antagonism to the realities of historic developments as well as to the vital interests of the people in the two German states. There is indeed but one realistic national German policy, and that is that of the German Democratic Republic. I can therefore predict to the Bonn government already today that it will suffer defeats only and increasingly isolate itself from the peace-loving peoples and states if it does not finally change over to a policy of national reason and peace, the renunciation of revenge, to a policy of relaxation and disarmament and the guaranteeing of European security.

Real relaxation demands by all means the normalization of relations between

the two German states. Relaxation is prevented as long as the government in Bonn refuses to recognize the frontiers and take up normal relations with the GDR.

### **The Germans and the Right of Self-determination**

The government of the West German Federal Republic likes to refer and often does so to the “right of self-determination of the Germans” and to “German vital interests” in its blackmailing attempts not only towards the Yugoslavs. Allegedly these would be violated through the further development of good relations between the GDR and the Federative Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia.

Obviously the gentlemen in Bonn are no longer able to comprehend what a grotesque effect such a reference must have on the Yugoslavs, of all peoples, in view of those gentlemen’s extreme revanchist blindness. They speak in one breath and with mendacious pathos of the “right of self-determination of the Germans” and at the same time contest the right of self-determination of sovereign Yugoslavia. For this includes naturally the right of any state and people to cultivate normal diplomatic relations with other states at its own choice and discretion. The unreasonable demand to respect a sort of Bonn suzerainty in taking up or developing diplomatic relations with a state not esteemed by Bonn can only be conceived as a gross interference in internal Yugoslav affairs by a Yugoslav.

The reference of the ruling circles in Bonn, including the Hitler generals, to



an alleged "German vital interest" is equally disreputable. This sounds suspiciously like German living space, etc., like terms of fascist German imperialism still recalled by the Yugoslavs. Certainly no reasonable person in Europe can be convinced that alleged vital interests of the West Germans give the Bonn government police authority, so to speak, over the whole of Europe and beyond, including the right to interfere in the internal affairs and peaceful interstate relations of other peoples and states.

As concerns the right of self-determination of the Germans it is known that there have been two German states independent of one another for eighteen years, states whose peoples have made use of their right of self-determination in a very different manner. In the German Democratic Republic the German people have fully realized their right of self-determination on the basis of the decisions of Potsdam and the anti-Hitler coalition. The people of the German Democratic Republic are successfully building socialism and have driven out the old corrupters of Germany, the monopoly capitalists, the feudal lords and their Hitler generals. Thus, here the German people have realized their right of self-determination.

In the West German Federal Republic, however, the fulfilment of the Potsdam decisions as well as the right of self-determination of the people is still pending. There is not even a codetermination of the working people, the great majority of the people who create all values with their labour and have made milliardaires and multimillionaires out of a handful of big capitalists. We resolutely work to see that the citizens of the West German Federal Republic are finally granted the

right to carry through the fundamental decisions of Potsdam and do justice to the national interests of the West Germans, too, in a consistent policy of peace and security.

The self-determination of the West Germans includes the right to create guarantees on West German soil, too, that a war never again begins from German soil, that revanchism and militarism disappear, and that the people determine their destiny for themselves. This is the meaning of the right of self-determination of the West Germans.

### **Bonn Says "Self-determination and Reunification" and means a Crusade to the East**

The men in Bonn should cease molesting other governments with their mendacious theses. When Bonn speaks of the "right of self-determination of the Germans" it thinks only of its revanchist policy, it thinks only of depriving the people in the German Democratic Republic of their right of self-determination, extending the rule of the West German armament monopolies and feudal lords over the German Democratic Republic and starting a new ride to the east from here.

And even the attempt to achieve this would be the decline of the West Germans.

This is the situation: The Germans have a perspective as a nation only when the German states reach agreement on their complete disarmament—with the

exception of necessary police forces—when they renounce nuclear weapons and agree upon a policy of neutrality. The Germans have a perspective as a nation only when they recognize the existing frontiers, renounce the shared control over nuclear weapons in any form and carry through their disarmament, when they concentrate all their efforts on winning prestige in the world through scientific-technical and cultural achievements. There is no other way.

When Bonn speaks of reunification it always means the crusade to the east. It is inconceivable how such a planned predatory campaign can be called reunification. No reasonable person supposes that the citizens of the GDR could long to be united with builders of concentration camps, with the authors of emergency laws, with Hitler generals and Hitler's hanging judges, with the Gestapo people from the West German Office for the Protection of the Constitution or with the Springer trust for the fabrication of opinions.

First of all at least the simplest democratic prerequisites must be provided in West Germany before a fruitful cooperation of the peace state GDR with the West German Federal Republic can be developed and the way of a confederation entered upon.

That means that we must face the fact, whether we like it or not, that the two German states will exist side by side for a long time yet. This is the reason why West Germany, too, must learn to recognize the status quo and live peacefully by the side of the other German state, the German Democratic Republic, to arrive at cooperation step by step.

It is our next aim, therefore, through a policy of relaxation and the establishment of European security, to create the foundations for good coexistence, for good cooperation between the German states.

### **The Establishment of Normal Relations with Both German States is in the National Interest of Every State**

In the talks with President Tito the questions of European security played a special role. It is known that the representatives of the German Democratic Republic pointed out the connection between the necessary peaceful coexistence of the two German states and the safeguarding of European security already at the July conference of the states of the Warsaw Pact in Bucharest.

President Tito informed us on the initiative of the Federative Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia for the preparation of a conference of representatives of the parliaments of all European countries. We welcome this initiative. We are ready to take part in such a conference of the parliamentary representatives of all European states without any prior condition.

I emphasized in the talks in Belgrade and on Brioni that the raising of the status of the mutual diplomatic representations to the rank of embassies mentioned in the Joint Declaration is also of importance for European security. The establishment of embassies of the GDR in Belgrade and of Yugoslavia in Berlin corres-

ponds to our Peace Doctrine. It rests on the principle that all states should maintain normal relations with the German Democratic Republic and with the West German Federal Republic.

We think that negotiations between all states and to this end the normalization of all state relations between them is necessary to bring about European security.

The Federative Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia acted in the spirit of non-alignment when it took up normal diplomatic relations with the German Democratic Republic, the more so since there can be no doubt about its readiness to maintain quite as normal diplomatic relations with the West German Federal Republic, too. We hold the view that neutral states confirm their neutrality by establishing and maintaining normal relations with both German states. It can scarcely be a sign of neutrality when the government of a neutral country allows the other German state which pursues imperialist interests to meddle in its very own affairs, its foreign policy relations.

The government of the West German Federal Republic tries to persuade the neutral states and the states freed from imperialist colonial rule that normal relations with both German states are directed against the unity of Germany. This allegation is false. This is a political trick with which the Bonn government speculates that the truth about the division of Germany has been largely forgotten. For it was precisely the US imperialists and the ruling parties in Bonn allied with them who divided Germany.

Finally, it must also not be overlooked that 21 years after the Second World

War two German states have consolidated. Every realistic politician should proceed from this historical fact. Relaxation in the relations between the two German states and their peaceful coexistence are necessary and at the same time realistic, politically. He who maintains one-sided normal relations only with the West German state promotes the European tensions and the perpetuation of German division and contributes to the prevention of relaxation in the relations between the two German states.

One-sided diplomatic relations with the government of the West German Federal Republic are finally also a demonstrative support of the policy of expansion of the West German imperialists. This is also to the detriment of those states which engage in such a one-sided way.

The national interests of all European, African, Latin American and Asian countries demand relaxation, the ending of the US war in Vietnam and the safeguarding of European security.

Normal relations *with* the two German states are therefore also in the national interest of every European, African and Asian country, as well as normal relations *between* the two German states. A government can scarcely allege that it works for peace when it rejects normal official relations with the German peace state, the German Democratic Republic, but maintains such relations with the imperialist West German Federal Republic.

I believe that general formulations on European cooperation and the "unification of Europe" are also of little use. US President Johnson, for example,

recently expressed himself in favour of a European community. He will understand that such words have a bitter flavour for every European as long as the USA wages its war of aggression against Vietnam. Nor can the words of the US president be credible as long as representatives of the USA oppose the admission of the German Democratic Republic and the West German Federal Republic to the United Nations. One cannot propagate European understanding in words and practise European division with its tensions.

When the government of the West German Federal Republic wishes normal relations with the socialist states it from the very first puts up with the fact that in their capitals there will exist diplomatic representatives of both German states side by side. This will finally be the normal situation in most states in all continents, too.

The government of the West German Federal Republic does everything possible to prevent or at least delay the general recognition of the German Democratic Republic. Naturally this effort will not be successful in the long run. For historical facts are stronger than revanchist day dreams. The government in Bonn repeatedly demonstrates with this policy before all peoples of the world that it is the eternal disturber of the peace, that it does not want to have relaxation and security.

The government in Bonn should finally come to see that the peoples of all European states are for an effective relaxation on the basis of the status quo. This is also true of the majority of the NATO allies of the West German Federal Republic. The European peoples and their governments understand quite well

that the relaxation and normalization of the relations of all European states with the GDR—and also of the relations between the governments of the two German states—is necessary.

### **What comes next in the German Question?**

Many politicians say that European security means the German question.

This is a rather mystic formulation.

The now possible first real steps to the safeguarding of peace by means of a policy of relaxation and the peaceful coexistence of the two German states must be distinguished from the reunification developing over a prolonged period. The latter will be an affair of the two German states and presupposes their rapprochement and understanding, of course on the basis of equal rights.

Thus let us begin with the possibilities suggesting themselves. This is the recognition of the two German states on the basis of equal rights in all fields, in the fields of state relations, in cooperation in the UN, in the cooperation of social organizations, etc.

International cooperation on the basis of equal rights has already been realized in the field of sport. But a few gentlemen in West Germany do not like our state coat of arms. They get terribly excited at the fact that we have chosen the symbols of peaceful work instead of the war eagle. But that cannot be changed. However,



would it not be more reasonable to accept the fact that every state determines its state coat of arms itself and that the government of another state has nothing to say about it? We, for example, do not like the war eagle of the Bonn government, and even less the anthem "From the Maas to the Meml". This awakens bitter reminiscences of the Kaiser Reich and of the Hitler Reich and of the two world wars provoked by them.

Nevertheless we did not object to the fact that German sport teams with the coat of arms of the West German Federal Republic appear here in the GDR. We also listen politely and imperturbably to their anthem when West Germans win a sport event. We think that the government of the West German Federal Republic should also respect the Olympic idea and as soon as possible bury the quarrel unleashed by it over coats of arms, flags and anthems. This quarrel brings no benefit to the West German Federal Republic.

## **Official Negotiations Are Necessary**

The government of the German Democratic Republic has again concluded an agreement on permits for urgent family affairs with the West Berlin Senate.

This is an official agreement between official state organs. It seems ridiculous when the representative of the West Berlin Senate had to declare on the order of the government in Bonn that he cannot recognize the state and authority denotations

fixed by signatures. But he himself signed them. Everybody understands, after all, that he who does not want to recognize the state names and the frontier control by the state organs has no possibility of crossing the frontier. This is quite a clear state of affairs. Thus one should renounce such wretched behaviour. Reasonable negotiations with one another are more useful.

We are conducting a dialogue with the West German working class and the West German social democrats. By introducing this dialogue we wanted to obtain relaxation and normal relations between the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) and the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) and also relaxation between the two German states. The Bonn government replied by issuing a law in which the subordination of all Germans throughout the world—including citizens of the German Democratic Republic—to the reactionary West German jurisdiction was fixed juridically. Unfortunately the SPD leadership accepted the standpoint of the CDU government on this question, thus interrupting the continuation of the dialogue introduced by us on this level.

How can things go on now?

I think that it is no use at all to talk about technical connections, etc. We have great respect for the work of secretaries and shorthand typists. They can also talk with one another and visit each other. But even in the Bonn protocol they do not conclude state agreements. Notice should be taken of that. We think that it is necessary to conduct official negotiations. Normal and official negotiations on the normalization of mutual relations and especially on the main political ques-

tions of our time which are connected with relaxation in Germany and European security are necessary between the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and the Social Democratic Party of West Germany. These main questions cannot be dodged. And therefore official political negotiations are necessary between the leaderships of the two parties.

## **The Post-war Period in Germany Must Be Ended**

We are seeking to end the post-war period in Germany. To end the post-war period means to recognize the status quo and overcome all militarist and fascist vestiges. We are convinced that all peoples of Europe will agree to such a policy of peace and understanding, of the renunciation by the two German states of any control over nuclear weapons and an agreement between the two German states on their disarmament.

In the final analysis it is a question of the life and future of mankind, of people in the two German states and in all the other European countries. At present the Bonn government is blocking relaxation and understanding in Europe through its demand for change in frontiers, for shared disposal over nuclear weapons, through its emergency laws and enabling acts, through the favouring of the former SA and SS men in the state apparatus, through its sole representation pretension, etc. We are convinced that finally the longing for peace of the European peoples and states will

be fulfilled and that there will be real progress in guaranteeing European security.

We wish that the representatives of the government of the West German Federal Republic would actively cooperate in the family of European peoples in bringing about European security. May West Germany not exclude and isolate itself.

### **Aggression in Vietnam – a Threat to World Peace**

President Tito and I could unanimously declare after the conclusion of our deliberations that we are both very satisfied with the course and results of this state visit. Our deliberations and talks, the detailed mutual information, the frank exchange of opinions and experiences on internal developments, on the status and further development of relations between our peoples and states, on current questions of international politics and the international working-class movement were important, interesting and useful for both sides. Both sides have become better acquainted with the problems of the other.

Our conceptions on the assessment of the international situation, the dangers threatening peace, and especially on questions of European security were in agreement. The military aggression of US imperialism in Vietnam is a threat to world peace and the peace of Europe. It encourages the revanchist policy of the West German government. That means that Bonn is strengthened in its refusal to recognize the real situation and the frontiers existing in Europe.

The Federative Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia and the German Democratic Republic support the just struggle of the Vietnamese people. In the Joint Declaration the two sides underline their demand that the bombing of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam be stopped and emphasize that a solution of the Vietnam conflict must be sought on the basis of the Geneva Agreement. This solution must fully correspond to the aims of the just struggle of the Vietnamese people to be able to determine their destiny independently without interference from outside.

Yugoslavia and the GDR promote the cooperation of the European states with different social systems. They welcome the initiative and proposals of the governments of a number of European countries which are aimed at the creation of a more favourable atmosphere, at the further development of cooperation on the basis of equal rights and at the creation of conditions for the settlement of the questions of European security.

There was also agreement that the relations between all European states must be normalized by means of bilateral and multilateral talks. This means:

All European states should maintain normal relations with the two German states. And the relations between the two German states, too, must be normalized on the basis of equality of rights and mutual respect for sovereignty.

The two sides point out that the ruling circles of the West German Federal Republic resist such a development in Europe. Non-recognition of the existing frontiers, the support of revanchist tendencies, the efforts to obtain access to nuclear weapons and the adherence to the Hallstein doctrine which contradicts international

law represent serious obstacles and makes the efforts to strengthen peace and security in Europe more difficult.

We agreed in our conviction that a German settlement is only possible in a peaceful way and in recognition of the reality of the existence of two German states, the necessity of the normalization of the situation in West Berlin and under the conditions of the further improvement of the situation in Europe. The normalization of relations between the two German states would speed up this process. It is expressly stated in the Joint Declaration that the Yugoslav side appreciates the significant contribution already made in this respect by the German Democratic Republic through its peace-loving policy.

It is recommended that the West German Federal Republic give up its policy directed against the peace and security of Europe.

## **The GDR Conducts a Consistent Policy for the Security of Europe**

As concerns ourselves, the GDR has indeed provided the prerequisite for normal relations with all other European states, relations which correspond to the interests of peace and security. Our policy has always been consistently aimed at guaranteeing European security. The GDR makes territorial demands on no other state. We are ready for the contractually agreed upon renunciation of control over atomic weapons and also for participation in a European atomic-weapon-free zone if

West Germany assumes the same contractual obligations. We stand up for disarmament consistently and wish in this connection special disarmament agreements of the two German states. We are consistent promoters of disarmament and in this connection we want special disarmament agreements between the two German states.

The Declaration on the Strengthening of Peace and Security in Europe adopted by the states of the Warsaw Pact in July 1966 explicitly appreciated the peace policy of the German Democratic Republic whose role as the most important factor for guaranteeing peace in Europe is underlined. This declaration demands that the West German Federal Republic take the real situation in Europe into account in its policy. The leading circles of the West German Federal Republic must proceed from the fact that two German states exist; they must give up the demands for the revision of European frontiers, the pretension to represent the whole of Germany and the attempts to exert pressure on other states which want to recognize the German Democratic Republic.

As concerns the situation in Europe, relaxation could thus come about when the West German government recognizes the existing frontiers, renounces its revanchist policy and shows its readiness to develop normal relations on government level and, of course, on the basis of equality of rights with the GDR.

Soviet Foreign Minister Comrade Gromyko recently submitted three significant draft resolutions to the UN General Assembly on behalf of his government. They concern the realization of the declaration on the inadmissibility of interference

in the internal affairs of other states and on the protection of their independence and sovereignty. They concern the obligation of all states having bases on the sovereign territories of independent states or in dependent territories of Asia, Africa and Latin America to disband them immediately and not to erect any bases in the future.

Finally, it is necessary for all states to renounce actions preventing the conclusion of an agreement on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. We welcome these proposals. They also serve peace and security in Europe. Their realization would greatly speed up the process of the safeguarding of European security and contribute to the relaxation of the world situation.



*Discussion of Walter Ulbricht with West German journalists  
on 12 October 1966 in the official seat of the Chairman of the  
Council of State of the GDR*



On 12 October 1966 the Chairman of the Council of State of the GDR gave a reception in honour of the delegates and guests of the Sixth International Journalists' Congress. During the reception Walter Ulbricht had a lively discussion with West German journalists Hans-Joachim Langner of the *Neue Ruhr-Zeitung*, Essen, Dr. Hans-Werner Kettenbach of the *Kölner Stadtanzeiger*, Wolfgang Fechner of the *VZ-Morgenzeitung*, Kiel, and Wilhelm Ingensand, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the *Freie Presse*, Bielefeld.

Here are some extracts from the discussion:

## **The Safeguarding of Peace Decisive**

*Hans-Joachim Langner:*

“Would you assess an economic community between the two German states as a step in the right direction to normalize relations between the two states?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“If the Bonn government negotiates with the GDR on cooperation, then this question will also play a part. But this is not the first question. We know how steel, equipment, coal and other things are bought and the West German capitalists know how they are sold. We do this without coming face to face with any great problems and without having an ‘economic community’. But in Germany it is a

question first and foremost of bringing about a relaxation of tension, of normalizing relations between the two German states, so that we can live in peace.”

*Hans-Joachim Langner:*

“But that is no problem. All Germans, wherever they live, are interested in living in peace.”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“... should be interested.”

*Dr. Hans-Werner Kettenbach:*

“I think that you may say that they really are interested in it.”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“In politics—when one comes upon social relations like those in your society in West Germany—it is not the mood of individual citizens which is decisive. Think of 1914, 1933 and 1939. In those days, too, the majority of people did not want war. The decisive factor is in whose hands the power lies. If the power lies in the hands of those who want war, then there is a great danger that there will be war. In the Bundeswehr former Hitler generals are in command and the West German government leaders are preparing for a war, for example, with emergency laws. The finest speeches about economic communities or other things are worthless if the real measures of the West German government complicate the relations between the two German states.

The sole representation pretension and the emergency laws are effectively cement-

ing the division. Therefore, there is no other way other than discussing how a relaxation of tension can be effected, how we arrive at the point where the two German states renounce atomic weapons, including joint control over atomic weapons, where the two German states agree on a policy of disarmament.”

*Hans-Joachim Langner:*

“Disarmament is not a question for the German states; it is a world problem.”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“Oh, don’t talk about the world! You want to go over the North Pole to achieve disarmament. We’re not going to accompany you on that journey. We’ll stay on German soil. Discussions on disarmament will have to be made in Berlin and Bonn.”

*Wolfgang Fechner:*

“Does this mean that you do not want to discuss any other subject, that you will refuse to negotiate if the federal government is not prepared to discuss your group of problems?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“I didn’t say that. We are prepared to discuss anything that will improve relations between the German states. You should propose for the agenda the problems which interest you and we shall name the problems which we should like to see discussed. We make no prior conditions for negotiations at all. We suggest that the negotiations should take place alternately in Berlin and Bonn.”

## **We are prepared to negotiate with the Bonn government**

*Hans-Joachim Langner:*

“But you are of the opinion that the negotiations must take place at government level, that is, you presuppose the recognition of the GDR?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“Neither shorthand-typists nor post-office officials can settle the problems facing the two German states. It is necessary to have discussions with the masters of the house. Whom you chose as chancellor is your business. Whether we like this chancellor or not, or whether you like our prime minister or not is irrelevant. If Herr Brandt were chancellor we would have negotiations with Herr Brandt. But he doesn't seem to have got that far. He is not even prepared to establish a social democratic government in North Rhine Westphalia. Thus, we are ready to have negotiations with the capitalists—just as they are.”

*Dr. Hans-Werner Kettenbach:*

“You said, Herr Ulbricht, that the mood of the people was not essential to the question of war or peace. What alterations in the political system of the Federal Republic do you demand before an agreement can be reached?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“The changes in the Federal Republic are your own affair. We are prepared to have negotiations with the government which you have in Bonn. You have chosen

Bonn as your capital, you decide who is to be chancellor; what his name is, is all the same to us; we will negotiate with the chancellor you elect.”

### **Ministers Negotiate throughout the World, Why Not in Bonn?**

*Hans-Joachim Langner:*

“Do you think that it would be possible to hold negotiations as suggested by you, in order to get around the complications of recognition or non-recognition, on the state secretary level?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“The state secretaries could discuss the area in which the discussions should take place. You will say: the state secretaries also want something to do. They could conduct the preliminary discussions. But the essential negotiations must be conducted by the heads of the government. This is general practice throughout the world where discussions are involved which are to mean anything and on which decisions can be based. Such discussion as these must be conducted by those responsible for the government. When the negotiations on the permit agreements took place, for example, Willi Stoph, chairman of the Council of Ministers, authorized his deputy, Alexander Abusch, to negotiate with the Senate of Herr Brandt. Willi Stoph was responsible but he delegated this responsibility to Alexander Abusch.

This is how negotiations are handled throughout the whole world and it is incomprehensible why it should be different in Bonn.”

*Wilhelm Ingensand:*

“Assuming that negotiations on the whole complex of problems were to take place, would you then be prepared to discuss economic problems along with those of disarmament?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“This would be a matter for the negotiating partners to settle between themselves.”

## What Is the Position with the SED – SPD Negotiations?

*Wilhelm Ingensand:*

“Herbert Wehner has suggested an economic agreement between the two German states. What do you think of this suggestion?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“We have not read this. (The discussion took place on Wednesday evening and the Wehner interview on this suggestion was published on Thursday in the *Deutsches Panroma* journal.—Editor). In our negotiations on economic problems up to now we have dealt with capitalists because they control the West German economy. The SPD has nothing to say about the economy. Herr Wehner has only got a



piece of paper to offer. Here in the GDR you can talk to Willi Stoph. We are the representatives of the people, and our enterprises are nationally owned.”

*Hans-Joachim Langner:*

“Don’t you think that an economic agreement as suggested by Wehner could be an element of normalization on a broader basis?”

*Wolfgang Fechner:*

“Are we to understand from your last reply that you do not wish to negotiate with the SPD?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“I did not say that. We proposed having official talks on cooperation to the SPD, for we believe that the two biggest German parties could sit down together and must do so if progress is to be made. In France the communists and socialists sat down together and discussed what each side put forward for agreement. The SPD declared that it would not negotiate with the leaders of the SED. This point of view is harmful to the working class and the members of the SPD. But some time will elapse and the SPD leaders will negotiate later.”

*Wolfgang Fechner:*

“That the leaders of the SPD do not want to negotiate is, in fact, only a thesis of yours?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“Oh no, the Executive Committee officially declared: we refuse to negotiate. Moreover, I have this in writing. That fact is well established. In addition, the

offer from the leaders of the SED to the SPD is, as before, still open: We suggest that negotiations between the leaders of the two parties on problems of interest to both sides should take place.”

## **No Humanist Unites with Hitler Generals**

*Dr. Hans-Werner Kettenbach:*

“Let us go back to the subject of government negotiations. Do you wish to negotiate only on relaxation of tension or would you accept as topics for discussion steps towards reunification?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“You could have asked me equally well: when will the Hitler generals in Bonn be dismissed? When you put forward the question of reunification I have to tell you that no humanist can unite with Hitler generals. You certainly understand that? For this reason I unfortunately cannot answer the question of when reunification will come, because I don’t know when you will be finished with your Hitler generals.”

*Dr. Hans-Werner Kettenbach:*

“Could you give us a list of the points for discussion which in your opinion are important?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“Let us begin with the ABCs. On 1 January of this year we listed six points which we regarded as minimum questions. It is a question of simple things: we did not name a single problem which concerned the social system.”

*Dr. Hans-Werner Kettenbach:*

“Does the term minimum questions mean that these six points must be fulfilled before negotiations are possible?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“I have already told you three times this evening that we do not make any prior conditions for negotiations.”

*Wolfgang Fechner:*

“How would you react, Mr. Chairman, if—I may for once make an overstatement—the Federal Republic declared: we do not recognize you but we would be prepared to arrange to exist as neighbours?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“Then we would answer sarcastically: We do not recognize you either but we are prepared to begin negotiations in Bonn on such and such a date and to continue them in Berlin on such and such a date.”

*Hans-Joachim Langner:*

“So, negotiations with an expanded redemption clause?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“No, let’s not talk nonsense! When a minister goes to Bonn he goes as a minister.

Whether you like him or not—you must respect that. When West Berlin concludes a permit agreement with us, then what the West Berlin rulers think of us is also irrelevant; but they must take notice of the existence of the GDR government, otherwise they cannot cross the border. The visitors from West Berlin must accept the permits together with the coat of arms of our Republic and thereby recognize the realities. They can do nothing else, or they are not admitted.”

## **On Human Relationships and Inhuman Practices**

*Hans-Joachim Langner:*

“Are you not of the opinion that the two parts of Germany should do something so that the people are brought closer together?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“The people are brought closer together when the two governments conclude an agreement—as when they are brought closer together by the agreements on permits. Only the human relationships have become a catch-word which is handled in Bonn as it was handled by Hitler—for example when he entered Austria on account of ‘human relationships’. He declared a renunciation of power towards all states—except in the case of Austria, because he had selected this state as his next victim. In the case of Czechoslovakia he did not recognize the frontiers. And when he marched into Bohemia for the purpose of setting up ‘human relationships’ with

the Germans he said: What do you want, no force opposed me. In Bonn the same tactics and the same arguments are being put forward at present.

We say frankly that there is no point in digressing from the subject. The SPD leaders support the sole representation pretension of the Bonn government and that means the annexation of the GDR. Helmut Schmidt approved the guiding principles for the sub-limited war. The emergency laws serve the same purpose as they did for Hitler who introduced them at the beginning of the war. Then there is the Grey plan in the drafting of which Wehner assisted. We know all the details of this plan and have adjusted our defence measures accordingly.”

## **Has Bonn Annexationist Intentions or Not?**

*Wolfgang Fechner:*

“But this Grey plan is the affair of the Research Advisory Council. One cannot really interpret it as a document which proves the annexation intentions of the federal government.”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“Oh, but one can. Vice-Chancellor Mende has confirmed this. It is stated in the Grey plan that the nationally-owned enterprises will be restored to the West German concerns, that the land will be transferred to the Junkers again, and more besides. If this is not enough, then get the information about the Grey plan from

Herr Wehner. It states in detail who will take over the steel works, who the power stations, and so on, and so on. This is what is called in Bonn 'development of human relationships'. When anyone comes to us with documents like this then they must allow us to protect our people from these methods of human relationships à la Third Reich. We protect ourselves with the most up-to-date weapons which are available, for as you know, we have the strongest allies.

So, I emphasize once more that we do not make any conditions for negotiations from the SPD leaders, but we have of course informed the public about the attitude of the leaders of the SPD. There is no point in deceiving the people in the Federal Republic about these connections and in trying to fool oneself.

This is the position. It is no use trying to deceive the people with the words 'human relationships'. The Grey plan is a plan for annexing the GDR, for subordinating our Republic to CDU rule, it is a plan for war. We have fully understood it and noted it. And we tell you quite openly: it won't do. That is also the reason why we carried out the 'Moldau' manoeuvres—so that you could see that we have assessed the situation realistically and will give a harsh answer to revanchism.

The subject is quite simple: Bonn is a blind alley. Bonn has bungled its foreign policy. Even the NATO allies do not want to join in any longer. In a situation such as this we are building a bridge for you. We are offering you the possibility of reaching understanding step by step through negotiations. This is the only real

way. But you must get off the old nag of sole representation and annexation intentions.

All attempts to change the internal structure of the GDR, to pretend to legislative rights over other states and consciously to avoid a renunciation of force with respect to the GDR for transparent reasons can in no way bring about such a normalization and help to get the policy of the Bonn government out of the blind alley.”

*Hans-Joachim Langner:*

“But the federal government does not want to use force?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“Unfortunately, we have not heard anything to this effect. There is no declaration of renunciation of force against us by the Federal Republic. In certain declarations by the Bonn government—as you know yourselves—the GDR is explicitly exempted.”

## **Do Generals Make Policy?**

*Hans-Joachim Langner:*

“Mr. Chairman, you speak repeatedly about the old generals. But the generals do not make policies.”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“Excuse me if I laugh at this remark. You know as well as I how much generals have had a hand in making policies in German history. And you know as well as I the recent events which occurred in the Bundeswehr and in the Ministry of Herr Hassel. Here it was not only a question of military questions. Here it was a question of power. Here it was a question of the policy of the Federal Republic.”

*Wolfgang Fechner:*

“Assuming it is so. Then the generals in your state also have a hand in making policies.”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“Here there are no army leaders who can make policies independently.”

*Hans-Joachim Langner:*

“Do you not think that if your government really wants an agreement, it will have to come down a peg or two?”

*Walter Ulbricht:*

“We do not demand any annexation of West Germany to the GDR. We have not decreed that all laws passed by our People’s Chamber are valid for all Germans, irrespective of which state they live in. We do not like your internal structure. But to alter it is the affair of the West German people, it is the affair of the SPD, the KPD and the other West German parties. If the social democratic leadership is serious about the relaxation of tensions then they should support normal relations



between the two German states and government negotiations, through which such a normalization is reached.”

It had grown late. The West German journalists no doubt had many more questions; no doubt the discussion could have gone on for many hours. But a stopping point had to be made. Walter Ulbricht said in conclusion: “Now you know our standpoint. Please take this as a basis for your reflections. Have no illusions about it. One does not gain anything by evading the real problems. There is a great deal to be achieved if these problems are dealt with earnestly and if their solution is approached from both sides on a basis of equality.”

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