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EAST GERMANY FROM STALINIZATION TO THE NEW ECONOMIC POLICY, 1950-1963



Originally microfilmed as Records of the U.S. Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of East Germany, this digital collection provides an in-depth look into the creation of the East German state, living conditions, and its people. Documents included in this collection are predominantly instructions to and despatches from U.S. diplomatic, and consular personnel regarding political, military, economic, social, industrial, and other internal conditions and events in East Germany.

Date Range: 1950-1963

Content: 34,479 images

Source Library: National Archives II, College Park, MD

Detailed Description:

The German Democratic Republic (East Germany) came into existence on October 7, 1949, when the German Economic Commission formed a provisional government in the Soviet zone of occupied Germany. This move occurred in response to the action taken by the United States, Britain, and France, which in 1948 had agreed to unite their respective occupation zones into a West German republic. The division of Germany and the founding of an East German state signified several historical reversals. First, the postwar partition of Germany represented a return to the country's previous existence as a divided nation. As of 1945, Germans had been united in a single sovereign state for only the last seventy-four years. Second, for at least 1,000 years Germans had expanded eastward, conquering territories previously controlled by Slavs and the Baltic peoples. As part of the settlement ending World War II, Germany lost territories to Poland and the Soviet Union that German rulers had controlled for centuries. Third, the lines of economic, cultural, military, and political influence had historically run from Germany to Eastern Europe and Russia. However, after World War II the Soviet Union imposed on East Germany a brand of Marxism-Leninism developed on Russian soil, the ruling Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands—SED), patterned itself after the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and East Germany adopted a governmental system modeled in most respects on that of the Soviet Union.

Historically, East Germany was the Soviet Union's most pliant and loyal ally in Eastern Europe. Lack of international recognition made East Germany dependent on the Soviet Union. Until the Four Power Agreement on Berlin and the signing of the Basic Treaty by the two Germanies in the early 1970s, the noncommunist world treated the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) as the "real Germany" and East Germany as nothing more than an artificial state lacking international legitimacy. For a time, this sentiment seems to have been shared by the Soviet leadership as well. In 1954 Vyacheslav Molotov, the Soviet representative at the Four Power Foreign Ministers Conference in Berlin, proposed simultaneous elections in both Germanies leading to the creation of a unified German state. If such elections had been held, the SED would have lost power. The presence of West Germany also made the SED regime more dependent on the Soviet Union. Before the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, 2.5 million East German citizens had walked across the border to live in West Germany. A common language, family ties, and access to West German media left the East Germans much less isolated from West European culture than were their counterparts in Eastern Europe. All these factors tended to impede SED efforts to win popular legitimacy for the Marxist-Leninist regime in East Germany. Without legitimacy, both in the eyes of most of the world and in the eyes of its own people, the SED could turn only to the Soviet Union and its allies for support. To ensure Soviet loyalty to the cause of the SED regime, East Germany had to act as Moscow's model ally.

This publication reproduces the State Department Decimal Files 762B, 862B, and 962B from the General Records of the Department of State in the custody of the National Archives. These decimal classifications, defined below, present a comprehensive view of the internal affairs of the East German state. This view includes a wide-range of materials, including special reports on political and military affairs; studies and statistics on socioeconomic matters; interviews and minutes of meetings with foreign government officials; court proceedings and other legal documents; reports and translations from foreign journals and newspapers; full texts of important letters, instructions, and cables sent and received by U.S. diplomatic personnel; and countless translations of high-level foreign government documents, including speeches, memoranda, official reports, and transcripts of political meetings and assemblies.

The collection includes pages arranged topically and chronologically on crucial subjects, such as: political parties and elections; unrest and revolution; human rights; government; administration; fiscal and monetary issues; labor; housing; police and crime; public health; national defense; foreign policymaking; wars and alliances; education; religion; culture; trade; industry; and natural resources.

State Department Decimal Filing System

From 1910 to 1963 the State Department used a decimal filing system to organize its Central Files-its correspondence and reporting repository-in which documents were assembled and arranged according to their subject, with each subject having a specific decimal code.

In 1950, the State Department modified the decimal system without changing the basic structure. The complexity of the postwar world and the increasing involvement of the United

States in international affairs had combined to make the original 1910 filing system, last updated in 1939, inadequate to meet the Department's growing needs.

The decimal system from 1950 to January 1963 consisted of ten primary classifications numbered 0 through 9, each covering a broad subject area:

CLASS 0: Miscellaneous.

CLASS 1: Administration of the United States Government.

CLASS 2: Protection of Interests (Persons and Property).

CLASS 3: International Conferences, Congresses, Meetings, and Organizations.

CLASS 4: International Trade and Commerce. Trade Relations. Customs Administration.

CLASS 5: International Informational and Educational Relations. Cultural Affairs. Psychological Warfare.

CLASS 6: International Political Relations. Bilateral Treaties.

CLASS 7: Internal Political and National Defense Affairs.

CLASS 8: Internal Economic, Industrial, and Social Affairs.

CLASS 9: Other Internal Affairs—Communications. Transportation. Science.

Records Relating to the Internal Affairs of East Germany consists of documents contained in Classes 7, 8, and 9. Within these classes each subject is defined by a decimal file number, followed by the country number.

Sources:

Burant, Stephen, ed. *Country Studies*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1987.

U.S. State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1952-1954, Volume VII: Germany and Austria

U.S. State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1955-1957, Volume XXVI: Central and Southeastern Europe

U.S. State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1958-1960, Volume IX: The Berlin Crisis, 1959-1960; Germany; Austria

U.S. State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, John F. Kennedy, Volume XIV: Foreign Relations, 1961-1963, Berlin Crisis, 1961-1962

Publisher's Note: This collection comprises, in their entirety, the Scholarly Resources microfilm collections entitled *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs, Germany, 1950-1954*; *Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs,*

Germany, 1955-1959; and, Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs, East Germany, 1960-1963.