

Memorandum regarding a Conversation between Vadim Medvedev and Kurt Hager in the CC of the CPSU in Moscow, 13 October 1989¹

At the beginning Comrade Medvedev expressed his delight to be able to greet Comrade Hager in the CC of the CPSU as an old, trusted friend. He deemed the GDR Cultural Days in the USSR as a great, memorable event in the realm of cooperation between both countries.² This cooperation is meaningful particularly in the present circumstances where the situation in both countries is marked by important events. For the CPSU, support for the GDR is very important to the CPSU, as well as their understanding of the process of reorganization and its problems. This aspect is also important to the Cultural Days.

Important processes are also taking place in the GDR, most of all positive, to which the 40th anniversary of the GDR is included, for it means the forty-year existence of a socialist state on German soil.

The CPSU is equally aware that the SED is confronted with problems today. The Soviet comrades hope very much that they will be overcome.

Comrade Hager on his behalf gave thanks for a friendly reception. He conveyed greetings to Comrade Mikhail Gorbachev and the Politburo of the CC of the CPSU from Comrade Erich Honecker and of the Politburo of the CC of the SED.

The visit by Comrade Gorbachev in Berlin, his encounters with the citizens and youth, particularly at the FDJ's torch-light procession, revealed the great amount of support towards Comrade Gorbachev.³

Especially important was the meeting with Comrade Erich Honecker and the entire Politburo. In these discussions the problems of both countries were named openly and candidly, and the deepening of cooperation was stressed as absolutely necessary, both in the areas of economy and technology and the realm of social sciences and culture as well.

The "Long Term Conception" just signed is an important document and offers a good foundation for both countries, for the cultural and artistic creators, and for the ministries, to raise cooperation to a qualitatively higher level and develop new forms. The Cultural Days have begun successfully and verifies once again that culture makes a contribution, as only it can — namely an emotional one which has an effect on the feelings. In this spirit the Party has resolved single-mindedly to realize this Conception. Comrade Hager proposed that the departments of both central committees act in combination in that aim, and make the corresponding proposals for the conversion of the Conception.

Proceeding onto the matter of the present situation in the GDR, Comrade Hager informed [him] of a two-day Politburo session, in which all the issues and faults in the work of the Party and State were spoken about openly. Altogether it was a very

¹ CPSU Member of the Politburo and CC-Secretary Vadim Medvedev along with Kurt Hager before their talk signed a "Long Term Conception for the Development of Cooperation between the GDR and the USSR in the sphere of Culture until the year 2000."

² The "Days of GDR Culture" in the USSR were pronounced open on the 12 October 1989 in Moscow in the presence of Kurt Hager and the CC-Secretary of the CPSU, Lev Saikov, with a concert by the Leipziger Gewandhausorchester under the direction of Kurt Masur.

³ As the head of a Party and government delegation, Mikhail Gorbachev visited Berlin on the 6-7 October 1989, on the occasion of the festivities for the 40th anniversary of the GDR.

critical discussion. Problems on the role of worker-and-farmer-power, the Party, and also the cooperation between the fraternal parties were handled. To that effect, there was unanimous agreement to throw out everything which was unproven, to give up the routine, and to carry out changes both in the Party work as well as in the state organs, people's representatives, and in the media and information policies. As a result of the discussions, the Politburo adopted a declaration which will be published. Excerpts can also be found in "Pravda."

Comrade Medvedev made the point that the possibility of a verbatim publication is being looked into.

Comrade Hager informed [him] further that the artists and cultural-creators have spoken increasingly critically, having nothing to do with cultural or social problems, but rather most of all about the emerging general situation. The statements by the Academy of Arts and by the Cultural League were published.⁴ On the general situation and its origins Comrade Hager said the following:

1. The emigration of tens of thousands of citizens to the FRG creates great anxiety and raises the question as to the causes.

2. The GDR is at the mercy of a massive campaign by the enemy — a psychological warfare against the GDR, the SED, and socialism — which was a complete failure.

3. An array of opposition groups have emerged, which are trying to organize themselves, among others a Social Democratic Party as well, of which 7 of 14 founders are clergymen.⁵ A group of church dignitaries plays a negative role and incites the atmosphere. Others opposed to this search for a way of agreement with state organs.

4. Cultural and artistic-creators, scientists, and other members of the intelligentsia, workers, and farmers feel there is an inconsistency between word and deed, their everyday experiences do not correspond to official reporting. Consequently a justifiable discontent forms.

On this basis the Politburo adopted the above-mentioned declaration, which contains all these aspects and opens up new paths for the development of the Party and for life in the GDR.

Presently consultations are taking place with the district and municipality leaderships as well as the friendly parties. A plenary session of the CC of the SED is being prepared for, which will comment on the situation and which will present a platform on the tasks for the further development of socialism in the GDR for discussion of the preparations for the IX Party Congress. All these steps and plans mean the introduction of a great dialogue with all circles of the population which support in the majority the strengthening of socialism.

⁴ The declaration of the Presidency of the Academy of the Arts in the GDR and the Communiqué of the Presidential Session of the GDR Cultural League were already published in *Neues Deutschland* on 4 October 1989 and 13 October 1989, respectively.

⁵ The "Social Democratic Party in the GDR" (SDP) was founded on the 7. October 1989 in Schwante (Municipality Oranienburg). The founding appeal "For an ecological social democracy" was first published in *Die Welt* on 9. October 1989.

There are also forces, however, which support anti-socialist positions and choose other forms of discussion, namely that of the demonstration, of attacks on armed [state] organs. In this respect heightened vigilance is required to prevent counterrevolutionary actions. An adjustment in media policy is also important to proceeding further.

In all, a great change is occurring in life in the GDR, in the spirit of the motto of continuity and change, where the stress is placed on change. In this stormy time it is necessary to hold course, to allow no pessimism, and to defend the value of socialism — all tasks of ideological work, in which culture does not have an unimportant roll.

Comrade Medvedev was thankful for the detailed statement and on his part informed [Comrade Hager] of the Politburo session of the CC of the CPSU in the previous days. In these deliberations the outcome of Comrade Gorbachev's visit to the GDR was discussed. Comrade Gorbachev gave a detailed report on the jubilation, the festivities, his talks with people on the sidelines, and on the meetings with the Party leadership and with Comrade Honecker. There was complete agreement on the view that the CPSU will always support the GDR. In the past they always granted aid and support and that will also be so in the future:

- towards the workers' and farmers' state on German soil;
- towards the Party leadership;
- and always aid as well [to withstand] attacks from outside.

At the same time the Politburo expressed hope and confidence that the Party leadership of the SED will solve these problems on the basis of a far-reaching analysis and find ways with which they can continue the building of socialism. Above all, steadfastness to the tenets of socialism is the most important by far for both states and equally for all other socialist states.

Comrade Medvedev expressed determination to deepen the cooperation between both states, Parties, and peoples. It is necessary in the fields of science and the economy — just as his talk with Professor Scheler had stressed — and similarly in the cultural realm.⁶ In this respect, the "Long Term Conception" has great importance, which will also have repercussions on ideological and theoretical work. Therefore, the coordination must take into account the present conditions of socialism and those in the world. In the Party spheres both Parties should see that the cooperation gains in speed and strength, so that concrete goals may be achieved. In conclusion, Comrade Medvedev reported that Comrade Gorbachev was informed of this meeting and conveyed his warmest greetings. He likewise gives his regards to Comrade Honecker and the entire Politburo leadership, that there is much sympathy for the present problems and will follow attentively what is happening in the GDR. One hopes that the Party leadership can cope with the situation and the position of socialism is strengthened.

Comrade Hager expressed his thanks for the discussion and that the positions of socialism will never be surrendered. However, what was achieved could not have

⁶ Vadim Medvedev had beforehand met with the President of the Academy of Sciences of the GDR, Prof. Dr. Werner Scheler.

been, and that remains so. The GDR is always closely bound to the Soviet Union, and knows what it obtained in friendship and solidarity, without which it would not have been able to survive. That points to the responsibility that the GDR has at this point in Europe and in view of the tones heard already once from the FRG.

*Source: Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR
-Bundesarchiv, SED, ZK, IV2/2039/283*

Translated by Christiaan Hetzner
The National Security Archive