

Speech by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED and Chairman of the State Council of the GDR, Erich Honecker, at the

Meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Treaty Member-States on 7-8 July 1989 in Bucharest

[EXCERPTS]

[...]

Looking at the state of international affairs, we cannot say that there has been a fundamental change for the better. Fearing that disarmament could become irreversible, NATO is dragging its feet in all negotiations and trying to win time to rearm and confront us with a fait accompli. Their goal remains to tip the international balance of power in their favor, to attain military superiority and to get ever more one-sided concessions from us. Banking on the exploitation of revolutionary scientific and technical advances, NATO still wants to force socialism into an intensified arms race. That is shown by the resolutions of the NATO summit meeting held in May of this year and of the subsequent meeting of ministers of defense. NATO's general plan for arms control and disarmament is to maintain the strategy of deterrence and, as is stated literally, to "continue the modernization of conventional and nuclear weapons."

This stance on disarmament is openly coupled with the goal of overcoming the division of Europe on the basis of Western values. The opinion that chances are better than ever to transform our social system according to ideas of the West, to imbue it with Western "values" and lifestyles, is clearly dominant in Western leadership circles, and not only in internal discussions. Catch phrases such as "the inexorable demise of socialism" or "the post-communist era" are ever more frequent in the statements and comments of leading NATO politicians.

Although the various imperialist powers employ different methods, they are all working more and more openly and unabashedly towards the destabilization of socialism. Their goal is to change the political, and eventually the territorial, status quo in Europe in favor of imperialism. Obviously, the realization of such plans is not and will not be tolerated.

In this situation, we consider our most important tasks to be the consolidation of the national and international positions of socialism and lending continuity and a new dynamics to the disarmament process. Our alliance has already prepared itself for this with its disarmament plan. But in our opinion, greater efforts are needed to mobilize world opinion, and the initiatives of our alliance must be undertaken in a more aggressive and coordinated manner. Experience shows that we will make progress if we continue to formulate our long-term goals and at the same time develop steps that can be taken in the immediate future.

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With our conception of a common European home, presented so convincingly by Mikhail Gorbachev yesterday in his speech to the European Council in Strasbourg, we possess a valuable idea for the development of Europe in the 1990s. In the further development of this initiative, it is important to consider the fact that Western Europe is also giving practical shape to this concept. For this reason, our states must now consolidate our plan practically, so that we can preserve and increase our lead. The goals and principles of securing peace, détente and the co-existence of states of different social orders on the basis of equal rights, while preserving the political and territorial status quo, as formulated in the joint declaration on the occasion of the visit of Comrade Mikhail Gorbachev to the FRG, are good starting

points. All of this should now be given a foundation in joint, realistic bi- and multilateral proposals.

In this connection, I would like to make a few remarks concerning the European Communities, which are also part of the reality of the common European home and will occupy no small place there. The development of the Western European integration processes are leading to qualitative changes on our continent, which increasingly also touch on our interests. This applies to developments aimed at the creation of an EC internal market, with all of its political and economic consequences, as well as Western Europe's so-called security policy cooperation and the discussions about a political union of the EC states, which are gaining in intensity. For this reason, we consider it imperative that we agree at the foreign ministers level on our next steps in European policy, so that by taking a common approach, which also includes and requires independent action, we can be certain of influencing future developments.

Developments in the FRG are of an importance for the future face of Europe that should not be underestimated. We consider the visit of Comrade Mikhail Gorbachev to the FRG to be a significant contribution to the further improvement of the situation in Europe and share his assessment of the same.

The FRG, the second-strongest military and third-strongest economic power of imperialism, is pursuing an expansionist policy in the following directions: attainment and confirmation of its international lead in high technology over Japan and the USA; extension of its hegemony through the unified EC internal market and within NATO; a new division of the spheres of influence in Asia, Africa and Latin America; and extension of its role as the strongest capitalist trade partner of the socialist states.

The resistance of increasingly broadening circles of the population against the policy of nuclear armament and dissatisfaction about the progressive dismantling of social and democratic rights have led to a situation in which neither the governing coalition nor the opposition command a majority among the voters. This is also the reason for the rise of the neo-Nazis, which is being supported by reactionary circles and which should be resisted by all democratic forces the world over.

Securing a lasting peace in Europe requires the inclusion of the FRG. Therefore, we must continue to coordinate our policy in its regard. Clearly, it is becoming more important than ever that we intensify our efforts to keep the FRG on the course of respecting the territorial and political realities in Europe and further developing friendly cooperation.

As far as relations between the GDR and FRG are concerned, we are doing all we can to get the Bonn government to commit itself to making an active contribution to peaceful coexistence, disarmament and détente. This remains complicated, without a doubt. Since my visit to the FRG in September 1987, there have certainly been positive results in numerous areas, but also disturbances and setbacks. Much has been set in motion and is moving in the right direction. The joint communiqué agreed upon on the occasion of my visit has proven to be a good foundation for this. Following up on it, we have placed the fight for peace, disarmament and détente at the center of our relations with the FRG.

I have addressed Kohl in several letters. We have proposed a meeting of the defense ministers. We are actively pursuing our initiatives with the ČSSR and the PR of Poland (nuclear weapons-free corridor, chemical weapons-free zone, zone of confidence and security). In this connection, we are continuing to pay great attention to our collaboration with the SPD. I would like to inform you, comrades, that on the occasion of my conversation in

May, Vogel accepted our proposal to work out a political initiative with the SED to achieve a third zero solution for tactical nuclear weapons in Central Europe.

But even these steps forward are no cause for euphoria. The ruling circles of the FRG have not given up their goal of taking social and territorial revenge for their defeat in the Second World War. A very recent example is the appearance of two ministers of the government of the FRG, with which the press spokesman Klein associated himself in the name of the Federal Government, at the “meeting of the Silesians” in Hanover. They declared straight out that the “German Reich still exists within the borders of 1937.” Nor do they want to accept socialism on German soil. There are an increasing number of attempts at interference, slander, application of pressure, in order to bring “reforms” in the sense of a change of system into motion in the GDR. This is the purpose of the NATO campaign against “the wall,” against the GDR’s border regime. SPD forces are increasingly joining in these concerted attempts at interference and slander against the party and state leadership of the GDR. We resolutely reject all of this.

Ever increasing importance is being accorded to human rights in the international class conflict. The progress that we have achieved in this sphere speaks for itself. It is our conviction, however, that it is crucial that we assert the values and advantages of socialism in this conflict much more strongly and prevent the misuse of the instrument of human rights to undermine socialism. We do not deny that the imperialist states have the capacity for impressive progress in the scientific and technical sphere. But only socialism can solve the problems that result from the development of the forces of production by leaps and bounds in the interests of mankind and can resolve global problems.

We should focus our attention on this, on an effective unmasking of the imperialist human rights demagoguery, and at the same time stress more strongly the unity of political and social human rights – the fact that one presupposes the other. Here, we cannot be satisfied with the work that we are doing at present. I make no secret of the fact that we consider it wrong to apologize for the human rights situation in international forums to those who trample on the fundamental freedoms and rights of man and want to divert attention from this by means of a massive smear campaign against us.

Of course, we are in favor of a constructive dialogue on humanitarian matters. But this must not be an excuse for interference in internal affairs. The foundation of every collaboration on the basis of equal rights, in this sphere as well, must be strict respect for the principles of Helsinki, including the right of every state to determine its own laws and decrees, its politics policies and practices. We also do not believe in a return to the “values” of capitalism. For us, the values of socialism are decisive, without any doubt. They exist in each of our countries, and it is our task to develop them further.

As before, an important step would be for our states to conduct a joint evaluation of the lessons learned at the Vienna CSCE meeting and the first follow-up meetings in London and Paris, in order to permit a largely unified performance at future negotiating forums. This would also prevent the West from exploiting differences of opinion in our alliance in order to divide us.

Regarding the solution of regional conflicts, there have been certain positive developments. This is due in no small part to efforts on the part of our alliance, in particular the Soviet Union. This has our full support. This applies above all to Afghanistan, but also to Cambodia, conflict resolution in the south of Africa and other hot spots. As cannot be expected otherwise, these conflicts remain extraordinarily volatile and unpredictable. There continue to be developments in contrary directions, which could, also in the future, endanger international

security. We consider it necessary that we regularly exchange our thoughts on this in our forums and discuss possible new steps.

This also applies to our further treatment of global problems, which are becoming ever more serious and only solvable by means of the joint efforts of all states. Perhaps we should formulate and make public our common position on fighting hunger, debt, energy procurement and other issues, as we have done on problems of underdevelopment and ecology.

The tasks we face – in this we are in agreement with the comrades of all the fraternal states – can only be solved if we consolidate the international position of socialism. This, in our opinion, entails:

- strengthening socialism in each of our countries;
- developing bilateral and multilateral cooperation among our states,
- increasing the attractiveness of our socialist order in the international arena.

Every fraternal party determines its own policies and sets its own course, with responsibility to its own people. This, however, must not allow us to neglect the internationalist content of our policies and our mutual solidarity. It must not relieve us of the responsibilities that we assumed when we entered into the Warsaw Treaty: the strengthening of socialism, mutual solidarity, and the defense of peace.

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We consider it necessary to achieve more timely agreement on our joint strategic goals and tactics, and to conduct regular reviews of the effectiveness of our collective as well as national initiatives. For this reason, it would be advantageous to create a permanent political working body of our alliance, which could rapidly ensure the coordination of our foreign policy and thereby better assert the international importance of the Warsaw Treaty. Strengthening the role of the General Secretary could also be effective in this regard.

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