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On the Road to Socialist Economic Integration? (1974)

The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) only adopted a charter in 1959, ten years after its founding. The amendments passed in 1962 and 1974 reflected the targeted political and economic expansion of the organization's functions and marked important developmental phases in its history. The 1974 charter not only confirmed the establishment of new COMECON bodies, but also bestowed upon them the right to sign treaties with third-party states and international organizations.

**Charter of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
(With the amendments corresponding to the protocol of June 21, 1974)**

The governments of the People's Republic of Albania, the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the Hungarian People's Republic, the German Democratic Republic, the People's Republic of Poland, the Romanian People's Republic, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the Czechoslovak Republic,

in consideration [of the fact] that the successfully implemented economic cooperation among their countries is contributing to the most efficient development of their national economies, to the elevation of the standard of living of the people, and to the reinforcement of their countries' unity and cohesion;

filled with determination to continue developing this comprehensive economic cooperation on the basis of the consistent implementation of the international socialist division of labor in the interests of building socialism and communism in their countries and ensuring a lasting peace throughout the world;

convinced that the development of economic cooperation among their countries contributes to achieving the aims laid down in the charter of the United Nations;

in confirmation of their readiness to develop economic relations with all countries, irrespective of their social and state systems, on the basis of equality, mutual benefit, and non-intervention in internal affairs;

in acknowledgment of the constantly growing role of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance in the organization of economic cooperation among their countries,

are agreed in accepting the present charter for this purpose.

Article I Aims and Principles

1. The goal of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance is to contribute to the further intensification and improvement of cooperation and development in socialist economic integration by uniting and coordinating the efforts of the Council's member countries, [to contribute] to the planned development of their national economies, to the acceleration of economic and technical progress in these countries, to an increase in the level of industrialization in countries with less developed industries, to the uninterrupted growth of labor productivity, to the gradual equalization of the level of economic development, and to a steady increase in the welfare of the peoples in the Council's member countries.

2. The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance is based on the foundation of the sovereign equality of all of the Council's member countries.

The economic and scientific-technological cooperation among the Council's member countries will be implemented in accordance with the principles of socialist internationalism on the basis of respect for state sovereignty, independence and national interests, non-intervention in the countries' internal affairs, full equality, mutual benefit, and comradely mutual assistance.

Article II Membership

1. The original members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance are the countries that signed and ratified the present charter.

2. Council membership is open to other countries that endorse the Council's aims and principles and that declare their agreement to assume the obligations included in the present charter.

New members are accepted through a resolution of the Council session on the basis of the countries' official applications.

3. Any member country may withdraw from the Council after informing the depositary of the present charter. The withdrawal will go into effect six months after the depositary receives notice. The depositary shall inform the Council's member countries of the receipt of such notification.

4. The members of the Council agree:

a) to guarantee the implementation of recommendations made by the organs of the Council and accepted by them [i.e., the individual members];

b) to give the Council and its officials the necessary support in exercising the functions provided for in the present charter;

c) to provide the Council with any documentation and information necessary for the implementation of the tasks with which it is entrusted;

d) to inform the Council of the course taken in implementing recommendations made by the organs of the Council and accepted by them [i.e., the individual members];

Article III Functions and Authority

1. In agreement with the aims and principles named in Article I of the present charter,

a) the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance shall organize comprehensive economic and scientific-technical cooperation among the member countries of the Council, with the goal being the most rational use of their natural resources and the acceleration of the development of their productive forces, and [it shall] support the development of socialist economic integration;

b) the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance shall support the improvement of the international socialist division of labor by coordinating plans for developing the national economy [of member countries], and by specialization and cooperation regarding the production of the Council's member countries;

c) the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance shall enact measures for the study of economic and scientific-technological problems of interest to the member countries of the Council;

d) the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance shall assist the Council's member countries in drawing up, coordinating, and implementing joint measures for:

the development of industry and agriculture in the Council's member countries;

the development of transportation, primarily to secure the increasing transport of export, import, and transit goods for the Council's member countries;

the most efficient use of the principal capital investments allocated by the Council's member countries for the development of the mining and manufacturing industries and for the construction of major projects of interest to two or more countries;

the development of trade and the exchange of services among the Council's member countries and between them and other countries;

the sharing of scientific and technological achievements and experiences in advanced production

e) the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance shall adopt other measures that are necessary to achieve the Council's objectives.

2. The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance

a) in accordance with the present charter, is authorized, through organs operating within the scope of their competency, to adopt recommendations and make decisions;

b) in accordance with the present charter, can conclude international agreements with the member countries of the Council, with other countries, and with international organizations.

Article IV Recommendations and Decisions

1. Recommendations shall be taken in matters of economic and scientific-technical cooperation. The recommendations will be given to the Council's member countries for discussion.

The implementation of the recommendations adopted by them shall be carried out by the member countries of the Council, based on decisions made by the governments or the responsible organs of these countries, in accordance with their legislation.

2. Decisions shall be made on matters of organization and procedure. Decisions go into effect the day the session minutes are signed by the corresponding Council organs, insofar as they do not provide for anything else or result in anything else on the basis of their character.

3. All recommendations and decisions shall be adopted by the Council only with the agreement of the interested member countries of the Council, whereby each country has the right to declare its interest in any issue taken up by the Council.

Recommendations and decisions do not apply to countries that have declared their lack of interest in the respective question. Every one of these countries, however, can subsequently endorse recommendations and decisions adopted by the other member countries of the Council.

Article V Organs

1. In order to implement the functions and authority named in Article III of the present charter, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance has the following main organs:

the Session of the Council

the Executive Committee of the Council

the Committees of the Council

the Standing Commissions of the Council

the Secretariat of the Council

2. Other organs deemed necessary can be formed in agreement with this charter.

[. . .]

Article XVIII Closing Provisions

The present charter was drawn up in a single copy in the Russian language. The charter shall be kept by the government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which shall send certified copies of the charter to the governments of all other member countries and shall inform these

governments and the secretariat of the Council that the ratification certificates shall be kept by the government of the USSR.

In confirmation of this, the representatives of the governments of the member countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance have signed the present charter.

Drawn up in Sofia on December 14, 1959.

Source: "Statut des Rates für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe (Mit den Änderungen entsprechend dem Protokoll vom 21. Juni 1974)" ["Charter of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (With the amendments corresponding to the protocol of June 21, 1974)"], in Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Hg., *DDR im Warschauer Pakt und im Rat für Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe* [*The GDR in the Warsaw Pact and in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance*]. Bonn, 1987, pp. 69-72.

Portions of the English translation were taken from *Treaties and Alliances of the World*, edited and compiled by Henry W. Degenhardt. Essex, UK: Longman, 1986, pp. 240-41. The translation was edited by the GHI staff.