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Politburo Decision on the Work of the Ministry for State Security (March 18, 1952)

In the spring of 1952, the Politburo of the SED decided to expand and professionalize the work of the Ministry for State Security (MfS). Founded in 1950, the MfS was the secret service of the GDR. It was responsible for the surveillance of the domestic population. According to the Politburo's decision, ministry employees were supposed to receive better political training, and they were supposed to do a better job enticing the general population to cooperate with them.

[. . .] The Ministry for State Security has had considerable successes in the fight against the criminal enemies of our anti-Fascist-democratic order. Numerous attempts by the warmongers and their agents to inflict serious damage on the GDR have been thwarted.

However, these successes in the work of the Ministry for State Security must not obscure the fact that the work of the ministry and all its organs, both political and technical, must be elevated to an even higher level.

To this day, a number of serious deficiencies and weaknesses can be seen in the work of the Ministry for State Security. Above all, the Ministry for State Security has not understood how to win the full confidence of the entire progressive population, and for this reason it has only been able to rely weakly on its help in carrying out tasks. The reason for this can be found, among other things, in the inadequate connection of the organs of the Ministry for State Security to the population, in the arrogant behavior of some of its members, and in the fact that democratic legality has not always been observed.

This deficit is caused above all by the fact that technical and political training was instituted much too late in the ministry and has remained inadequate to this day.

The development of the mid-level cadre was grossly neglected in particular.

On account of this deficient training, many employees of the Ministry for State Security have fallen victim to practicality. This was also encouraged by the fact that many ministry employees completely lack the level of political understanding needed to carry out their operational work. Party work has long been neglected, critique and self-critique are at an insufficient stage of development. So far, the work of both the ministry and the subordinate offices has been haphazard. Firm working plans were not drawn up. The guidance of state administrations by the ministry and of district

offices by state administrations was completely inadequate. Instead of personal oversight and assistance in the implementation of certain tasks there were written directives.

The measures to strengthen the work discipline and morale of employees are inadequate.

A high rate of employee turnover was one noticeable impediment to the development of the work. Above all, the all too frequent turnover of those employees responsible for on-site work in enterprises and factories has impeded the development of this work.

To remedy all of these defects and to improve the work of all of the organs of the Ministry for State Security, the Politburo recommends the following measures:

1. The decision of the 3rd Party Congress, that the organs of state security should rely on the broadest segment of the population in their work, should be implemented more vigorously than it has been so far. In their work, all the organs of the Ministry for State Security must uphold democratic legality under all circumstances. The German laws and directives on improving the work of the judiciary and the investigative organs must be strictly observed.
2. As part of the preparations for the 2nd Party Conference, decisive measures to improve party work must be introduced. [. . .]
3. a) All necessary measures must be taken to substantially improve the technical training of all employees. [. . .]
4. [. . .] All organs of the Ministry for State Security must deviate from the haphazard work style that has been customary up to this point and pursue their work in a planned way. [. . .]
5. Serious measures must be taken by the ministry leadership and the party organization to strengthen morale and work discipline.

One crucial measure to that end is raising the ideological level of the members and implementing systematic educational work.

Another important means toward improving morale and lifting the general education of the members of the organs of the Ministry for State Security is the progressive creation of leisure time. Work time should be organized in a way that allows employees to attend quality plays, concerts, and movies.

The work of the FDJ groups in the area of organizing joint hikes, excursions, and so on, should be supported with every effort.

The Ministry for State Security is obliged to organize a separate sports club for ministry employees. [. . .]

Source: SAPMO-BArch ZPA, IV 2/2/202; reprinted in Dierk Hoffman, Karl-Heinz Schmidt, and Peter Skyba, eds., *Die DDR vor dem Mauerbau: Dokumente zur Geschichte des anderen deutschen Staates, 1949-1961* [*The GDR before the Building of the Wall: Documents on the History of the Other German State, 1949-1961*]. Munich: Piper, 1993, pp. 104-06.

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