

June 7th and 8th, 1962, Moscow – Part of the recorded discussion of the Czechoslovak delegation with N.S. Khrushchev in Moscow

Records of a meeting between Comrade Novotný and his fellow comrades with Comrade Khrushchev

The meeting took place in the Kremlin on June 8, 1962, and lasted two hours.
Attending on behalf of the Czechoslovak side: Comrades Novotný, Široký, Šimůnek, Krajčír, Dvořák.

Attending on behalf of the Soviet side: Comrades Khrushchev, Novikov, Andropov and Soviet Ambassador to Czechoslovakia Zimianin.

(...)

8. On several occasions, the discussion touched upon the German Democratic Republic and particularly the attitude of Comrade Ulbricht toward a number of issues.

Comrades Khrushchev and Novotný agreed that the speech delivered by Comrade Ulbricht at the meeting of the representatives of CMEA member countries was improper and immodest, to say the least. Comrade Khrushchev said the information on agricultural production in the German Democratic Republic presented in the speech was not true and that Comrade Ulbricht did not know how the actual situation in his country looked. Lately, Comrade Ulbricht has been making proposals about both the economic life of the German Democratic Republic and the German question to which we cannot agree and that indicate a lack of knowledge and a dogmatic and incorrect approach to the matters in question.

For example, after my speech yesterday Comrade Ulbricht said: “So, am I expected to build socialism in the German Democratic Republic?” Comrade Ulbricht presents the matter as if he did us a favor by building socialism in his country. He sees things very simply. For example, he demanded that a peace treaty be signed with the German Democratic Republic as soon as possible. At the same time, we all know that we have already achieved what we intended to achieve with the peace treaty. The peace treaty could result in an economic blockade of the German Democratic Republic. Comrade Ulbricht would then be the first to come and ask us for gold. We know about cases like this from the past. He always comes and seeks help. This is no longer possible. The Germans fought against us, now their living standard is higher than ours, and we are expected to give more and more all the time. They have to work harder too. The German

Democratic Republic does not make the best use of its resources; its labor productivity is low. Let us take the example of their shipbuilding industry. Comrade Ulbricht stated that if we did not buy their ships, he would close down the shipyards. However, we have the opportunity to buy similar ships, including a long warranty and a supply of spare parts for a far cheaper price elsewhere. Why should we lose money on trade with the German Democratic Republic only because Comrade Ulbricht is obstinate and hardheaded, instead of trying to increase labor productivity in his shipyards? We will trade only on the basis of world-market prices. Anyone can live at the expense of his neighbor. It requires no particular skills or too much common sense. How can anyone come up with the idea of closing down the shipyards, with all the work they put into them?

Comrade Novotný informed Comrade Khrushchev on Comrade Ulbricht's attitudes during the recent visit of the party and government delegation of the German Democratic Republic in Czechoslovakia, regarding the alleged debt that Czechoslovakia owed to the German Democratic Republic, on Comrade Ulbricht's inappropriate and unreliable approach regarding various issues on the agenda.

During our recent meetings, Comrade Khrushchev said, I sharply criticized Comrade Ulbricht for his opinions on several occasions. That is why he has been meeting with me alone for some time, so that the other comrades on the SED Politburo do not know what we are talking about. I am concerned about future developments in the German Democratic Republic because of Comrade Ulbricht's opinions. I am afraid that his age is beginning to show; I know this all too well, having known Stalin. Combined with the huge power that Comrade Ulbricht holds in his hands, these manifestations of senility are very dangerous indeed.

[Translation by Jiří Mareš]