

SPECIAL ATTENTION: Mr.Wm.Griffith.

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EAST GERMANY

THE "PEOPLE'S ELECTION" CAMPAIGN IN EAST GERMANY.

SOURCE BERLIN : 1. All German Ministry  
2. Informations Bureau West (IWE)  
3. US HICOG East Element  
4. East BERLIN press.

DATE OF OBSERVATION : Current.

EVALUATION COMMENT : The story of another Communist election farce in preparation -- according to the customary pattern.

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In the course of its long history, East Germany has seen many hectic political battles. It was, for instance, the scene of some of Adolf Hitler's most spectacular tours. But never has it witnessed so curious a political campaign as the current drive being put on by the nominally super-party, but actually Communist-dominated National Front in connection with the election to the second "People's Chamber" (Sovietzone parliament) scheduled to be held on October 17 1954.

It is unique in the sense that probably never in any election campaign has such an intense effort been made to "get out the vote" as is now being put forth by the East German Communist bosses. But the harder and more determinedly they try to whip up public interest, the more bored and apathetic the citizens become with an "election" that everybody knows is merely a propaganda stunt.

This so-called "People's election" (Volks-wahl) got underway on July 27 and, although the election is still more than a month away, more than 5,000 political mass meetings have already taken place in the factories, cities, towns and villages of the zone. The workers are virtually forced to attend these meetings, for which a new term has been coined.

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They are called "account-giving gatherings" at which all the deputies of the People's Chamber who are up for re-election are supposed to report to their voters on their speeches and votes in the outgoing parliament which was "elected" in October 1950.

Accounting and Enlightenment -- Red Style.

Such "accounts" have already been given to the voters by all the top leaders of the PANKOW regime. Thus, Minister President Otto GROTEWOHL who kicked off the election campaign with a speech in his constituency of DRESDEN on July 28, sounded the keynote when he said "the people's election on October 17 must be a new mile-stone in our great historical work of construction: the creation of a new, unified and democratic Germany -- a Germany of Peace, Prosperity and Happiness."

Walter ULBRICHT, first secretary of the Socialist Unity Party and the real Communist boss of the zone, happened to be taking his annual vacation when the campaign began, so he addressed his electors in LEIPZIG over the radio.

Otto NUSCHKE, leader of the Soviet-zone Christian Democratic Union gave his "accounting" in the Saxon textile town of MEERANE. He is "running" for re-election in the CHEMNITZ (now KARL MARX STADT) district. NUSCHKE introduced a new wrinkle in the campaign by holding a "consultation hour" after his public speech. This was attended by about 100 citizens who plied him with questions and complaints, which NUSCHKE is reported to have received "unwearily."

On a lower level than these big guns, "National Front" propagandists, now officially styled "enlighteners," (a term which the East German Communists have borrowed from the late Dr. Joseph Goebbels) force their way into private homes and apartment houses and compel the unhappy inmates to listen why, as a civic duty, they should take the trouble to go to the polls although there is only one ticket in the field.

Single-List Elections.

For as in the parliamentary elections of 1950, the electors will be handed only one list to vote for -- the list of the National Front. There is, however, one important



difference between the 1950 list and the present ticket. Four years ago, the 400 National Front candidates for the first "People's Chamber" were apportioned out among the various political parties. But this year they run as candidates solely of the National Front. This change is another indication of the declining importance of the satellite parties in East Germany and the steady trend toward the rise of a one-party state as in the Third Reich.

The East German Communists have gained valuable experiences in the art of mobilizing the votes from the three-day plebiscite against the European Defense Community which was held from June 27 to 29 1954. Since that plebiscite, twelve mayors in KOENIGSWUSTERHAUSEN county alone have been removed from office because of their failure "to get out the vote." In other districts, even SED members have been expelled from the Party for failing to vote. Factory cells of the SED are now being called upon to provide reliable party members who are to be trained as electioneering agents to button-hole inoffensive citizens and "personally enlighten" them on why they must vote on 17 October.

#### Voting by Groups.

Needless to say, the call for voting en masse, which was introduced in the June plebiscite, will again be in vogue for the October election. Shortly after the East German election campaign got underway, the athletes were called upon by the "State Committee for Body Culture and Sport" to vote in a body. Various civic organizations and factories hastened to follow their example.

#### The People are not Interested.

Despite or perhaps because of this intensive electioneering, the people of East Germany remain apathetic about the coming election. Reports from the district branches of the Liberal Democratic Party and the CDU indicate that at their mass meetings the citizens continually want to know why there aren't any rival party tickets to be voted on as in normal democracies. One LDP agent reported plaintively to his party headquarters that "more intensive work of enlightenment is required before members of our party can be made to get over their erroneous impression that only separate tickets

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are the expression of true democracy."

The citizens, the LPD agent reported, say outrightly that "by such elections the true will of the people is not expressed and that the outcome of the October elections is known in advance and therefore there is no need for an election."

In many meetings, National Front speakers have been hissed when they maintained that "the unity lists are proof of the true democracy of the German Democratic Republic. The demand of the citizens for free elections have also been voiced in leaflets which are surreptitiously distributed to commuters in the railway stations of the big cities in the morning hours and on the beaches of the Baltic seashore resorts.

#### How to Explain a Rigged Election.

Attempting to answer this complaint of the East German voters, "Berliner Zeitung," a leading Communist organ in East BERLIN, said recently "Many people say that with a unified ticket there is really nothing to be elected and therefore the election has no sense. But our electoral procedure puts the possibility of co-ruling in the hands of the individual citizen in a way the West German voter never dreamed of.

"Our electoral law provides that the candidates have to present themselves to the voters and the voters are justified in rejecting them. The voters have the right in the meetings to give the candidates definite orders. The candidates are obligated to give an account about their activity and especially about the carrying out of these orders. Indeed, the electors are justified when they have reason not to be satisfied with the activity of the candidates to recall these candidates. 'Just how this is to be done is not explained by the "Berliner Zeitung." Where is there in West Germany or any other bourgeois State so great an influence of the elections on the composition of the parliament?"

Similarly, the CDU zonal headquarters have been informed by their agents throughout East Germany that at all this party's meetings an insistent demand for separate election lists have been made by the participants.

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But this is not the only grievance raised by the rank and file of this supposedly "Church" party. In Mecklenburg, for instance, the farmers have complained to CDU "enlighteners" that the prices at which they are required to hand over their products to the State bear no relation to the prices which they are compelled to pay for factory goods. The propagandists have been told by the farmers that they see in these low quota prices fixed by the East German government an indication that PANKOW wants to wipe out independent farmers. In districts like GERA, CDU speakers have heard accusations from private businessmen that government credits are granted only to State-owned firms.

#### East Germans Not Impressed by "Sovereignty."

The argument that East Germany, unlike West Germany, has now been granted its sovereignty by the Soviet government finds little response from the voters. A CDU "enlightener" who tried to develop this theme in ROSTOCK was roundly told by an indignant citizen that the handing over of this so-called sovereignty by MOSCOW was only a "farce."

"You can't expect a German policy to be carried out by government officials like ULBRICHT and PIECK who possess Soviet citizenship" cried out this angry voter.

#### PUSHKIN Not Impressed by Election Preparations.

Gregory PUSHKIN, the newly appointed Soviet High Commissioner to Germany, is reported to be highly dissatisfied with the election preparations by the SED. At a recent meeting of the Party's Central Committee, he charged that the party leaders were not paying enough attention to the stipulations of the Party's statute providing for self-criticism and, as a consequence, the Party organs were not capable of achieving the leadership role of the Party in the democratic bloc to the necessary degree.

It is significant that the day following the publication of the report of PUSHKIN's dissatisfaction, "Neues Deutschland," the organ of the SED Central Committee, came out with a leading article entitled "Intensify the Activity of the National Front," in which was openly stated: "many county headquarters of our Party, such as LEIPZIG, WAREN, FINSTERWALDE

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and others, are criminally neglecting the holding of mass meetings in connection with the preparations of the people's elections, and allow these meetings to go amateurishly carried out and weakly attended and in some cases to be held on a low level. The main obstacle to a further development of our Party work is self-satisfaction and lack of criticism. A wider development of self-criticism is the indispensable prerequisite for the strengthening of the fighting power of our Party in the election campaign."

"Neues Deutschland" also deplored that in RIBINITZ-DAMGARTEN county, only eight per cent of the planned election meetings had been held and in GREIFSWALD only one per cent.

The leading SED press organ went on to charge that "there are localities in which the election preparations are inadequate and the attendance of the population has been weak, and in which the speakers failed to deal with the basic questions of our policy and reactionary opinions were not refuted.

Asserting that "the principal care of all Party leaders is now the mobilization of Party members to achieve the highest activity in the National Front," "Neues Deutschland" added "all Party headquarters and National Front committees must pay attention to the fact that the important thing now is to hold to a far larger extent smaller meetings such as gatherings of the 'house and courtyard communities' in order to discuss better and more exhaustively all questions which concern the voter."

But the truth is that the average citizen of East Germany is fed up with the never-ending series of political meetings and demonstrations and only asks to be left alone--and to have nothing to do with politics in which he has no say.

End.