

Statement by Viacheslav Molotov (Paris, 10 July 1946)

Caption: On 10 July 1946, during the Paris meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Soviet representative, Viacheslav Molotov, sets out Moscow's stance on Germany's political, economic and military future.

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Statement by Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov at the Council of Foreign Ministers in Paris, July 10, 1946

The time has come when we should discuss the fate of Germany and a peace treaty with that country. The Soviet Government has always held that the spirit of revenge is a poor counsellor in such affairs. It would be equally incorrect to identify Hitler Germany with the German people, although the German people cannot divest themselves of responsibility for Germany's aggression, and for its most grave consequences.

The Soviet people experienced the unparalleled suffering of enemy occupation, as a result of the invasion of the Soviet Union by the German armies. Our losses are great and inestimable. Other peoples of Europe, and not of Europe alone, will long feel the heavy losses and hardships caused by the war which Germany imposed.

It is natural, therefore, that the problem of Germany's fate should be agitating the minds not only of the German people, but also of other peoples who are trying to safeguard themselves for the future, and to prevent a renewal of German aggression. One should also bear in mind the fact that, thanks to her industrial might, Germany is an important link in the whole system of world economy. Nor can one forget that more than once this industrial might has served as the foundation for aggressive Germany's armed might.

Such are the premises from which we must draw our conclusions. I proceed from the fact that, in the interests of world economy and tranquillity in Europe, it would be incorrect to adopt a policy of annihilating Germany as a state, or to agrarianise her, wiping out her main industrial centres.

Such a policy would undermine the economy of Europe, dislocate world economy, and cause a chronic political crisis in Germany, which would spell a threat to peace and tranquillity. I think that, even if we were to adopt such a policy, the course of history would impel us subsequently to renounce it as abortive and groundless.

I think, therefore, that our purpose is not to destroy Germany, but to transform Germany into a democratic and peace-loving state which, next to its agriculture, will have its own industry and foreign trade, but which will be deprived of the economic and military potentiality to rise again as an aggressive force.

While still engaged in the war the Allies declared that they had no intention of destroying the German people. Even at the time when Hitler with overweening presumption openly proclaimed that he wanted to destroy Russia, Stalin, head of the Soviet Government, ridiculing these boastful stupidities, said: "It is no more possible to destroy Germany than to destroy Russia. But the Hitler state can and must be destroyed."

Germany has long held an important position in world economy. While continuing to exist as a single state, Germany will remain an important factor in world trade — which corresponds to other people's interests as well. On the other hand, a policy of annihilating Germany as a state, or agrarianising her and wiping out her principal industrial centres, would cause her to nurture dangerous sentiments of revenge. Such a policy would play into the hands of German reactionaries and deprive Europe of tranquillity and stable peace.

One should look not backward but ahead and concern oneself about what is to be done so that Germany may become a democratic and peace-loving state with a prosperous agriculture, industry, and foreign trade, while lacking the opportunity to revive as an aggressive force. The victory over Germany has given us powerful means of achieving this purpose. It is our duty to utilise them to the full.

It has of late become fashionable to talk about dismembering Germany into several "autonomous" states, about federalising her, and about separating the Ruhr from her. All such proposals originate in the same wish to destroy and agrarianise Germany, for it is obvious that without the Ruhr Germany cannot exist as an independent and viable state. But as I have already said, if the interests of peace and tranquillity are dear to us, the destruction of Germany should not be our objective.

Naturally, if as a result of a plebiscite throughout Germany the German people express their wish to

transform Germany into a federal state, or if as a result of a plebiscite in various former German states the desire is manifested to break away from Germany, it goes without saying that we cannot object. In not a few instances the Allied authorities in the western zones of occupation of Germany have encouraged the idea of a federal structure for Germany. But the attitude of the Allied authorities is one thing, while the German people's real desire or the desire of the population of some part of Germany is another.

We Soviet people hold that it is incorrect to impose some particular solution of this question on the German people. Such an imposition would not, in any case, do any good, if only because it would be precarious. If, on the one hand, we should not stand in the way of the German people's rightful aspirations, once their state has revived on democratic lines, it is equally our duty to prevent Germany's rise as an aggressive force. It would be a crime to forget this sacred duty of ours to the peoples of the world.

If the world is to be safeguarded against eventual German aggression, Germany must be completely disarmed, both militarily and economically, and the Ruhr placed under inter-Allied control exercised by our four countries, with the object of preventing the revival of war industries in Germany.

The proposal for the complete military and economic disarmament of Germany is not something new. The decisions of the Berlin conference deal with it in detail. And it is natural that the Ruhr, as the main base of Germany's war industries, should be kept under the vigilant control of the principal Allied powers.

The aim — Germany's complete military and economic disarmament — must also be furthered by a plan for reparations. The fact that until now no such plan has been drawn up, in spite of the repeated demands of the Soviet Government that the relevant decision of the Berlin conference should be carried out, and the fact that the Ruhr has not been placed under inter-Allied control, on which the Soviet Government insisted a year ago, is a dangerous thing, as far as the maintenance of future peace and the security of nations is concerned.

We take the view that it is impossible to put off the accomplishment of these tasks without running the risk of frustrating the decision to carry out the complete military and economic disarmament of Germany.

Such is the view of the Soviet Government regarding the war industry and war potential of Germany.

These considerations cannot hamper the development in Germany of industries serving the needs of peace. In order that such development may benefit other peoples who need German coal, metal, and manufactured products, Germany should be granted the right to export and import and, if this right to foreign trade is to be effectual, we should not hinder Germany from increasing her output of steel, coal, and manufactured products of a peaceful nature, naturally within certain bounds, and on the understanding that inter-Allied control is inevitably established over German industry, and over the Ruhr industries in particular.

As we know, the Control Council in Germany recently fixed the level which would be reached by German industries in the near future. Germany is far from having reached this level as yet. Nevertheless, it should already be admitted that her peaceful industries must be given the opportunity to develop on a wider scale, provided only that this industrial development is really used to satisfy the peaceful needs of the German people and the requirements of trade with other countries.

All this calls for the establishment of proper inter-Allied control over German industry and over the Ruhr industries in particular. Responsibility for the latter cannot rest upon one Allied country alone.

The adoption of an appropriate programme for the development of Germany's peaceful industries, which will provide for the development of her foreign trade as well as for the establishment of inter-Allied control over the whole of German industry, would serve to implement those decisions of the Berlin conference which provide for treating Germany as an economic whole.

It remains for me to dwell on the question of the peace treaty with Germany. Of course we stand in principle for the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany, but before concluding this treaty there should be set up a single German government sufficiently democratic to be able to extirpate all remnants of Fascism in

Germany, and sufficiently responsible to be able to fulfil all its obligations towards the Allies, including more particularly those in respect of reparation deliveries to the Allies.

It goes without saying that we raise no objection to the setting up of a German central administration as a transitional step towards the establishment of a future German government.

From what I have said it follows that, before talking about a peace treaty with Germany, it is necessary to solve the question of setting up an all-German government. To this day, however, no German central administration of any kind whatsoever has been created, although the Soviet Government raised this question at the Berlin conference a year ago.

But while, at that time, consideration of this question was postponed, it is now becoming particularly urgent as the first step towards the establishment of a future German government.

Even when a German government has been set up it will take a number of years to decide what this new German government represents, and whether it is trustworthy.

A future German government must be a democratic government which will be able to extirpate the remnants of Fascism in Germany, and at the same time be able to fulfil Germany's obligations towards the Allies. Amongst other things, and above all, it will be bound to carry out reparation deliveries to the Allies.

Only when we are satisfied that the new German government is able to cope with these tasks, and is really honestly fulfilling them in practice — only then will it be possible to speak seriously of concluding a peace treaty with Germany. Unless this condition is fulfilled Germany cannot claim a peace treaty, and the Allied powers will not be able to say they have fulfilled their duties towards the nations who are demanding that durable peace and security be assured.

Such is the view of the Soviet Union on the fundamental problems of Germany and on the question of the peace treaty with Germany.