

# Banning of the West German Communist Party (August 19, 1956)

## Abstract

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Germany's Federal Constitutional Court banned the West German Communist Party as unconstitutional on August 17, 1956. The decision was based on a section in Germany's criminal code § 86a that outlaws "use of symbols of unconstitutional organizations" outside the contexts of "art or science, research or teaching." In this segment from the East German news program *Aktuelle Kamera*, Manfred Gerlach, the general secretary of the Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands (LDPD) [Liberal-Democratic Party of Germany], condemned the ban of the West German Communist Party. Drawing parallels to 1933, Gerlach criticized the German chancellor Konrad Adenauer and warned that the ban could set a dangerous precedent, leading to bans of other democratic parties or organizations, such as the Social Democratic Party or labor unions. He also warned that the ban could undermine the movement for German reunification. He called for a "united front" of all "oppositional forces" in West Germany to oppose the ban. The LDPD was an East German "block party" that was coordinated with the Socialist Unity Party. Gerlach, however, retained a streak of independence from the SED and later supported the Mikhail Gorbachev's reform movements.

## Source

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Source: Aktuelle Kamera, August 19, 1956, accessed through ARD Mediathek (Retro Spezial DDR), Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv,  
<https://www.ardmediathek.de/video/aktuelle-kamera/verbotsprozess-gegen-die-kpd/ard/Y3JpZDoVLT2hyLW9ubGluZS8xMTcwMzY>

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