

Interviews with GDR Citizens on the Building of the Wall (August 13, 1961)

Abstract

On the day the GDR government seals off the sector border - the precursor to the construction of the Wall - Radio DDR broadcasts a survey among its own citizens. Unsurprisingly, only voices praising the government in East Berlin for the measure are broadcast. They tell the reporters that closing the border was necessary in order to protect East Berliners from kidnappings, warmongering propaganda, and currency speculation.

Source

/Speaker: Berlin breathes a sigh of relief that the headhunters in West Berlin and Bonn are finally being stopped. Just two days ago, they tried to abduct the teenager Klaus Purschke from Leopoldstrasse in Berlin-Lichtenberg to West Berlin by car. In this way they hoped to get hold of his father, a senior engineer at the Treptow electrical equipment factory. Kidnapping methods like this must be stopped once and for all. That's what a resident of Leopoldstrasse told our reporter this afternoon.

/Reporter: I'm here right next to the 23rd school at Leopoldstrasse 17. There's also a kindergarten down here, and one of the tenants of the building is Mr. Schulz. Mr. Schulz, you will excuse me if I disturb your Sunday rest today. What is your opinion of the latest measures taken by our government today to protect our republic?

Mr. Schulz: From my point of view, I welcome these measures because a stop has finally been put to this abusive use of the open border of West Berlin, which allows or has allowed even underage children to be abused for political purposes.

/Reporter: Yes, and now that the borders are only open to the peace-loving citizens of West Berlin, something like that will probably not happen again so quickly.

/Mr. Schulz: We certainly hope so, because we are of the opinion, not only mine, but also that of every decent citizen of the German Democratic Republic, that these measures, which are in force as of tonight, are measures that protect our citizens, our children, our entire development in the German Democratic Republic.

/Speaker: Horst Lübeck and Hans Ruden took their microphones to some of the hot spots in the capital of the German Democratic Republic.

/Woman: I work at the ticket counter at Friedrichstrasse station.

/Reporter: And what do you think about the measures taken by our government with regard to West Berlin?

/Woman: Well, my opinion is that it could or should have happened much earlier, let's say, so that there can finally be peace and quiet here in the city. It wasn't tolerable anymore.

/Reporter: So here's the line 82, terminating at Ostbahnhof and now heading towards Lindenstraße. We would like to know your opinion on the latest measures taken by our government?

/Streetcar passenger: It's fine, the way it is now is right. They should have done this much earlier. Now they've put a stop to it. They [West Berliners] should come over [and] come and work for us, we need plenty of people to work, we don't have enough people. That's how it looks.

/Reporter: Well, and maybe the conductor too?

/Conductor: I'm of the same opinion as my colleague here. It should have been done a long time ago so that peace and quiet can finally prevail. That the drama will finally stop, that the eternal agitation will finally come to an end.

/Reporter: At the Oberbaum Bridge in Berlin. Many pedestrians pause, take a look and then see that the traffic here is running smoothly. If you can cross the border to West Berlin, well, it's pretty quick. You too have been watching for a while, and what is your opinion of the measures taken by our government?

/Pedestrian: So far, I can only say that the measures are justified. It's fortunate that this situation with the D-Mark speculation has ended. It's not just that the illegal border crossers have finally been dealt with, but that tough measures have been taken.

/Reporter: Yes, that's one side of it, but then West Berlin was and still is also a hotbed of war provocation.

/Passant: Right, the hotbed of war propaganda. And I welcome the fact that the measures taken by our government have finally put a stop to it.

/Reporter: There are also some older workers here, may I also ask you for your opinion? What do you think of the measures taken by our government in relation to West Berlin today?

/Mr. Fischer: We wholeheartedly welcome the measures taken by our government and are convinced that further measures will follow, which will ultimately lead to the swamp in West Berlin being drained once and for all and the disruptive activities against our German Democratic Republic being finally eliminated.

/Reporter: Yes, could you tell us your name and where you work?

/Mr. Fischer: I'm an employee and my name is Fischer, Willi. I've looked around a bit and can see that traffic is completely normal. There are a few curious people who want to see how it all works here, but otherwise one can say that people are showing understanding for this measure.

/Reporter: Yes, you're here in company, maybe we'll ask your colleague too, what do you think?

/Passant: I think the same thing as Mr. Fischer, who just spoke. Actually, it's a real Sunday atmosphere here today, everything is going on as normal. I also welcome the measures and am naturally interested in how people are passing by here. The West Berliners seem to like coming here.

/Reporter: And quite a lot of them do.

/Passant: Yes, yes, and they come here quite happily and seem to feel quite at home here.

/Reporter: Some workers at the electrical equipment works in Treptow.

/Worker: Yes, we've generally been waiting a long time for something to happen, yes. And then, thank God, it's happened.

/Reporter: And of course that fills you with joy, one can virtually read it on your face.

/Worker: But of course, we were waiting for something to happen. It couldn't go on like this.

/Reporter: Of course I'd also like to ask you for your opinion.

/Worker: Well, I'm particularly pleased that we're showing a different kind of force today than before, because I've been politically organized since 1927. Think in particular of the fact that before '33 and afterwards, we demonstrated for our goals armed with a walking stick at most. Today I was pleased when I went to work in the morning to see that the workers' and peasants' state had also provided some tanks to show that we are prepared to use all means to secure our peaceful path. Because we know that the German fascists only had respect for those who faced them with equal strength, and I think they understand this language very well. And I also believe that the class-conscious workers realize that when we send in the tanks, it does not threaten peace, but on the contrary, it secures peace. If the working class had been able to mobilize like this in 1933 or '39, we would certainly have been spared the Second World War and for this reason I am pleased about the measures.

Source: SWR2 Archivradio

<https://www.ardaudiothek.de/episode/archivradio-geschichte-im-original/die-mauer-entsteht-umfrage-unter-ddr-buergern/swr2/91933426/>

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