

Manifesto of the Paulskirche Meeting in Frankfurt (January 29, 1955)

Abstract

After failure of the Stalin initiative of March 1952, Adenauer's determination to bind the Federal Republic to the West continued to meet with strong criticism, as many felt that his approach would prevent reunification. The voices of criticism eventually organized themselves in 1955 and hosted a large meeting at the Paulskirche in Frankfurt. The attendees included many prominent representatives of political and intellectual life. The meeting should also be seen within the context of the debate on rearmament and West Germany's membership in NATO, since the discussion peaked at this time. The following manifesto made national unity the first priority. Adenauer's response was that Western integration via NATO accession had to come first. Thereafter, reunification could be negotiated from a position of strength.

Source

According to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, a meeting took place on January 29 at Frankfurt's Paulskirche at the invitation of German Trade Union Confederation Chairman Walter Freitag, Protestant theologian Prof. Helmut Gollwitzer, SPD Chairman Erich Ollenhauer, and Heidelberg sociologist Prof. Dr. Alfred Weber.

The meeting – whose reported slogan was “Save unity, freedom, peace! Against Communism and nationalism!” – was attended by about 1,000 people representing various social strata, religious convictions, and political orientations. What united them, however, was their opposition to the current policy of the FRG government on the questions of rearmament and reunification. More than one hundred domestic and foreign journalists showed up for the meeting.

The speakers were: sociologist Prof. Dr. Alfred Weber (Heidelberg), German Trade Union Federation Vice-Chairman Georg Reuter (Düsseldorf), Protestant theologian Prof. Helmut Gollwitzer (Bonn), Catholic theologian Prof. Dr. Johannes Hessen (Cologne), Protestant pastor Ernst Langer (Gelnhausen), former Minister of the Interior Gustav Heinemann (Essen), and SPD Chairman Erich Ollenhauer.

By a show of hands, the meeting adopted a manifesto with the following wording:

German Manifesto

Out of grave concern for the reunification of Germany, we are convinced that the hour has come to solemnly call upon the people and the government to resolutely oppose the ever stronger tendency toward the permanent division of our nation.

The answer to the fateful German question of the present day – whether our nation can be reunited in peace and freedom or whether it must live in the unnatural condition of political division and progressive human alienation – depends today primarily on the decision about the Paris Treaties.

The stationing of German military forces in the Federal Republic and the Soviet zone will invariably eradicate the chances for reunification in the foreseeable future and reinforce the tension between East and West. Such a measure would increase the moral distress of large segments of our people to an unbearable degree. A terrible fate would become reality: with weapons in hand, siblings from one family would face off against each other in opposing armies.

At this hour, every voice that is capable of speaking out freely must issue an unmistakable warning against this development. Immeasurable will be the responsibility of those who failed to see the danger of ratifying the Paris Treaties, which will slam the door on Four-Power negotiations on the restoration of German unity in freedom.

We appeal to the Bundestag and to the government of the FRG to make all possible efforts to ensure that the four occupying powers will do justice to our nation's desire for unity.

Agreement on a Four-Power accord for reunification must take precedence over the formation of military blocks. Conditions that are acceptable to Germany and its neighbors can and must be found in order to secure the peaceful coexistence of the nations of Europe through the reunification of Germany.

The German nation has a right to reunification!

Source: Manifesto of the Paulskirche Meeting in Frankfurt (January 29, 1955), *Keesings Archiv der Gegenwart* (1955), p. 4984; reprinted in Christoph Kleßmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung. Deutsche Geschichte 1945–1955*. Göttingen, 1982, 484–85.

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Recommended Citation: Manifesto of the Paulskirche Meeting in Frankfurt (January 29, 1955), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/occupation-and-the-emergence-of-two-states-1945-1961/ghdi:document-3085>> [May 03, 2024].