

Statement by the Government of the GDR (June 17, 1953)

Abstract

This GDR government statement on the construction workers' protest in East Berlin on June 17, 1953, interpreted the unrest as "fascist" provocation directed by West Germany. To calm the situation, the government emphasized that the compulsory increase in work quotas had been rescinded. By the time this statement was issued, however, the protests were no longer directed solely against work quotas; demonstrators were also demanding the resignation of the government and free elections.

Source

Measures taken by the government of the German Democratic Republic to improve the situation of the population have been answered by fascist and other reactionary elements in West Berlin with provocations and serious disruptions to order in the democratic sector of Berlin. These provocations are intended to impede the unification of Germany.

The grounds for the walkout by Berlin construction workers disappeared yesterday with the decision on the question of work quotas.

The unrest that ensued is the work of *agents provocateurs* and fascist agents of foreign powers and their accomplices from German capitalist monopolies. These forces are dissatisfied with the democratic power in the German Democratic Republic, which is organizing improvements in the situation of the population.

The government appeals to the people:

1. To support measures for the instant restoration of order in the city and to create conditions for normal and peaceful work in the factories.
2. Those guilty of instigating the unrest will be taken to task and severely punished. The workers and all honest citizens are asked to seize *agents provocateurs* and hand them over to the state authorities.
3. It is necessary for the workers and the technical intelligentsia to take measures, in collaboration with the state authorities, to restore normal working conditions.

Source: Statement by the Government of the GDR (June 17, 1953), *Neues Deutschland* (June 18, 1953); reprinted in Beate Ruhm von Oppen, ed., *Documents on Germany under Occupation, 1945–1954*. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1955, p. 590.

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