

The Berlin Appeal: “Make Peace without Weapons” (January 25, 1982)

Abstract

Following the example of the Krefeld Appeal, about eighty members of the East German opposition signed the Berlin Appeal, which portrayed the dangers of nuclear war, demanded disarmament, and called on the GDR leadership to begin a constructive dialogue on issues such as military service and military instruction in schools.

Source

1

There can be only one war in Europe, nuclear war. The stockpiles of weapons in East and West will not protect us, but destroy us. We will all have died long ago, when the soldiers in the tanks and missile bases and the generals and politicians in the air raid shelters, on whose protection we depended, are still alive and continue to destroy what is left.

2

Therefore: If we want to live, then away with the weapons! First and foremost: away with the nuclear weapons. All of Europe must become a nuclear-free zone. We propose: negotiations between the governments of the two German states on the removal of all nuclear weapons from Germany.

3

Divided Germany has become a deployment base for the two nuclear superpowers. We propose ending this life-threatening confrontation. The victorious powers of the Second World War must finally conclude peace treaties with the two German states, as was resolved in the Potsdam Declaration of 1945. Subsequently, the former Allies should withdraw all occupation troops from Germany and negotiate guarantees of non-intervention into the internal affairs of the two German states.

4

We propose holding a great debate on peace issues in an atmosphere of tolerance and of recognition as regards the right to free expression, and [we propose] approving and promoting every spontaneous public expression of the desire for peace. We turn to the public and to our government to consult on the following questions and to decide:

- a) Shouldn't we refrain from producing, selling, and importing so-called war toys?
- b) Shouldn't we introduce a course on peace issues in place of courses on military training in our schools?
- c) Shouldn't we permit public-spirited peace service instead of the present alternative civilian service for conscientious objectors?
- d) Shouldn't we refrain from all public demonstrations of military strength and instead use our state celebrations to proclaim the people's desire for peace?
- e) Shouldn't we refrain from all so-called civilian defense exercises? Since a nuclear war affords no options for meaningful civil defense, these exercises serve only to make light of nuclear war. Might they not be a method of psychological preparation for war?

5

Make peace without weapons—this means not only creating security for our own survival. It also means ending the senseless waste of our country’s labor and wealth for the production of war tools and the outfitting of huge armies of young people, who are thereby removed from productive work. Shouldn’t we help the hungry all over the world, instead of continuing to prepare for our own deaths?

Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.
(Jesus of Nazareth in the Sermon on the Mount)

Up to now the balance of horror has prevented nuclear war only by continually postponing it to tomorrow. The peoples of the world fear this approaching morning of horror. They are seeking new ways to give peace a better foundation. The “Berlin Appeal” is also an expression of this search. Think about it, make suggestions to our politicians, and discuss this question everywhere: What leads to peace, what leads to war?

Confirm your approval of the “Berlin Appeal” by adding your signature. Berlin, January 25, 1982

Names of the first signatories (GDR citizens from a number of different cities): Reiner Eppelmann, pastor of the Samaritan parish in Friedrichshain and county youth pastor [*Kreisjugendpfarrer*]; Manfred Altmann, craftsman; Axel Bayer, laborer; Evelyn Bayer, laborer; Eva-Maria Eppelmann, housewife; Volker Elste, deacon student; Stefan Preyer, mechanic; Lorenz Göring, deacon student; Katja Havemann, housewife; Robert Havemann, scientist; Eberhard Henke, manager; Ralf Hirsch, metalworker; Michel Heinisch, deacon student; Christfried Heinke, deacon student; Gerd Jäger, deacon; Daniela Karschewsky, employee; Rosemarie Keßler, laborer; Günter Keßler, laborer; Olaf Kraensel, employee; Detlef Kucharzewski, laborer; Regine Maywald, employee; Johannes Maywald, employee; Lothar Niederohe, laborer; Rudi Pahnke, parish pastor and county youth pastor; Jürgen Pagel, deacon student; Lutz Rathenow, writer; Thomas Schulz, laborer; Ralph Syrowatka, deacon; Friedhart Steinert, laborer; Bernd Schulz, laborer; Winfried Weu, mechanic; Andrea Weu, nurse; Günter Weu, county catechist; Bernd Weu, engineer; Hans-Jochen Tschiche, pastor and director of the Protestant Academy [Evangelische Akademie] in Magdeburg.

Source: “Berliner Appell—Frieden schaffen ohne Waffen” (January 25, 1982); reprinted in Wolfgang Büscher et al., ed., *Friedensbewegung in der DDR. Texte 1978–1982*. Hattingen, 1982, pp. 242–44.

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