

# GDR Council of Ministers' Decision to Seal the Border (August 12, 1961)

## Abstract

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To stem the seemingly incessant flood of East Germans leaving to resettle in the West, the GDR government, with the approval of the Soviet Union, decided to seal the last gap in the inner-German border. In doing so, it sought to stabilize its regime both politically and economically at the risk of deepening the division of Germany.

## Source

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### **RESOLUTION of the Council of Ministers of the German Democratic Republic**

On the basis of the declaration of the member states of the Warsaw Pact and the resolution of the People's Chamber [*Volkskammer*], the Council of Ministers of the German Democratic Republic has come to the following conclusion:

The preservation of peace requires putting a stop to the activities of the West German revanchists and militarists and opening the way for securing peace and for the rebirth of Germany as a peace-loving, anti-imperialist, neutral state through the conclusion of a German peace treaty. The Bonn government's position that World War II is not yet over is tantamount to demanding a free hand for militaristic provocations and civil war-type measures. This imperialist policy, which is conducted under the guise of anti-communism, is the continuation of the aggressive goals of fascist German imperialism in the time of the Third Reich. From the defeat of Hitler's Germany in the Second World War, the Bonn government has concluded that the rapacious politics of German monopoly capitalism and its Hitler-generals should be given one more try—by renouncing a national policy for Germany and transforming West Germany into a NATO state, a satellite state of the USA.

The renewed threat posed by German militarism to the German people and to the peoples of Europe could lead to acute danger, since the fundamental provisions of the Potsdam Agreement on eradicating militarism and Nazism continue to be broken in the West German Federal Republic and in the frontline city of West Berlin.

In West Germany an intensification of revanchist policies, together with escalating territorial demands vis-à-vis the German Democratic Republic and Germany's neighboring states, is being carried out; this is closely linked with the West German Bundeswehr's accelerated buildup of arms and nuclear armament. A systematic preparation for civil war against the German Democratic Republic is being pursued by the Adenauer government. Citizens of the German Democratic Republic who visit West Germany are increasingly subjected to terrorist persecution. Agents headquartered in West Germany and West Berlin are organizing the systematic recruitment of citizens of the German Democratic Republic and a proper human slave trade.

As may be gathered from official government documents and declaration of principles of the party leadership of the CDU/CSU, this aggressive policy and agitation aims to incorporate all of Germany into NATO's Western military bloc and to extend the military regime in the Federal Republic to the German Democratic Republic. The West German militarists want to use all possible deceptive maneuvers, such as e.g. "free elections," to initially extend their military base as far as the Oder, in order to then commence the big war.

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The West German revanchists and militarists abuse the peace policy of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact states in the German question, so that—through hostile agitation, recruitment, and diversionary tactics—they can inflict damage not only on the German Democratic Republic, but on the other states in the socialist camp as well.

For all these reasons, the Council of Ministers of the German Democratic Republic, in accordance with the resolution of the Political Advisory Committee of the Warsaw Pact on the securing of order European peace, for the protection of the German Democratic Republic, and in the interest of the security of the states in the socialist camp, has decided on the following measures:

To prevent the enemy activities of the revanchist and militaristic powers of West Germany and West Berlin, checkpoints have been installed on the borders of the German Democratic Republic, including the border to the Western sectors of Greater Berlin, as is common on the frontiers of all sovereign states. Along the borders of West Berlin, reliable surveillance and effective control will be ensured to block the path for subversive activity. Citizens of the German Democratic Republic may only cross these borders with special authorization. As long as West Berlin has not been transformed into a demilitarized, neutral Free City, citizens of the capital of the German Democratic Republic shall require special certification for crossing over into West Berlin. Visits by peaceful citizens of West Berlin to the capital of the German Democratic Republic (the democratic Berlin) are possible upon presentation of a West Berlin identity card. Revanchist politicians and agents of West German militarism will not be allowed to set foot in the capital of the GDR (democratic Berlin). For visits by citizens of the West German Federal Republic to democratic Berlin, previous control provisions will remain in effect. The entry of citizens of other states into the capital of the German Democratic Republic will not be affected by these provisions.

For travel by citizens of West Berlin along routes that lead through the German Democratic Republic and into other countries, previous regulations continue to apply.

For transit between West Berlin and West Germany through the German Democratic Republic, previous regulations are not altered by this resolution.

The minister of the interior, the minister of transportation, and the mayor of Greater Berlin will be assigned the task of promulgating the necessary provisions for implementation.

This resolution on measures for securing peace, protecting of the German Democratic Republic, and especially the capital city of Berlin, and guaranteeing the security of other socialist states will remain in effect until the conclusion of a German peace treaty.

Berlin, the 12th of August, 1961

Source: “Beschluss des Ministerrates der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik,” *Neues Deutschland*, August 13, 1961; reprinted in Jürgen Rühle and Gunter Holzweißig, eds., *13. August 1961—Die Mauer von Berlin*. Cologne, 1981, p. 95. Republished with permission.

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