

The Communist Justification for the Division of Berlin (August 14, 1961)

Abstract

Neues Deutschland, the official Communist party newspaper in the GDR, tries to justify the Wall as a defensive measure against Western subversion. It cites the support of its Warsaw Pact allies and emphasizes East Germans' approval of the Wall and West Berlin's grudging acceptance of it.

Source

Measures for the Protection of Peace and the Safeguarding of the German Democratic Republic Take Effect

According to plan and at the appointed hour, the measures for safeguarding peace and protecting the citizens of the GDR, as spelled out in the resolution of the GDR Council of Ministers and in accordance with the declaration of the governments of the states of the Warsaw Pact, took effect. The resolution of the Council of Ministers of the GDR reads: "To prevent the hostile 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 customary on the frontiers of all sovereign states."

The declaration of the governments of the states of the Warsaw Pact reads: "The governments of the states of the Warsaw Pact understand, of course, that resorting to protective measures on the border to West Berlin will create certain inconveniences for the population, but in view of the situation that has developed, the Western powers are fully to blame for the action, particularly the government of the Federal Republic. If the border to West Berlin has been left open until now, then this was done in the hopes that the Western powers would not abuse the good will of the government of the German Democratic Republic. However, disregarding the interests of the German people and the population of Berlin, they have exploited the present order on the West Berlin border for their own insidious, subversive purposes. The present anomalous situation must be put to an end by means of intensified monitoring and controls on the West Berlin border."

All steps and measures necessary for the implementation went smoothly, thanks to the understanding and approval of the majority of the population of Berlin. Numerous Berliners expressed their agreement as early as Sunday morning.

"Measures for our protection"; "The decision of the Council of Ministers serves the peace and the security of the GDR"; "An appropriate response to the Ultras^[1] in Bonn"—these are some of the comments made by the workers of the capital.

Brief meetings of the brigades took place in the public utility works. At the Klingenberg power plant, shift worker Helmut Manfried explained, "These measures will finally create clear fronts."

Yesterday, as on all Sundays, life went on as usual. Some groups of young people who thought they could act tough were politely but firmly informed of the resolutions of the Ministerial Council by the officers of the People's Police, who had taken up their positions to protect our borders.

Subway traffic ran smoothly and was operating on schedule in accordance with the new regulations.

Only on the S-Bahn [suburban rail lines] were there occasional delays due to the rapid changes that had become necessary. Long-distance traffic ran regularly.

As on every Sunday, thousands of Berliners traveled by S-Bahn to recreational areas outside the city. The German Travel Office pavilion at the Friedrichstraße train station was as busy as usual on Sundays. The excursion lines of the BVG [municipal transit authority] busses were crowded.

Many West Berliners crossed over from West Berlin yesterday via the designated checkpoints. They did not let themselves be deterred from their travels by the mendacious assertions of rabble-rousing West Berlin broadcast stations and reactionary police officers. The number of West German citizens who visited democratic Berlin with short-term entry permits was as high as on recent days. Also, two U.S. State Department representatives were unbothered as they drove through the capital of the GDR on Sunday with two drivers and two vehicles. They were processed politely and properly, as stipulated in the announcement of the Ministry of the Interior of the government of the GDR, which provides for members of the diplomatic corps and the Western occupying forces to visit democratic Berlin in accordance with the regulations in effect until now. The U.S. State Department representatives returned to West Berlin through Brandenburg Gate at 3:20 in the afternoon.

Traffic on the roads from West Germany to West Berlin continued to flow normally and peacefully.

From West Berlin it is known that the people of West Berlin received the resolution of the GDR Council of Ministers to secure peace and protect the workers' and peasants' state with seriousness and composure. This calm acceptance of the resolution of the Council of Ministers by broad circles of the West Berlin population contrasts sharply with the hectic agitation among the agent organizations, human traffickers, and headhunters who have exploited the front-line city politics of West Berlin, turning it into a trading ground for human trafficking, an open floodgate for agents, and a dangerous center of provocation, and who have now been dealt a painful blow.

Normal Sunday tranquility prevailed in the residential areas of the Western sectors—this in clear contrast to the hectic activities of the front-city power holders in Schöneberg City Hall [in West Berlin]. Totally surprised by the measures taken by the GDR, they were rushing from one consultation to another.

Early Sunday afternoon, the West Berlin police set up barriers to the democratic Berlin on the side of the Western sectors. Police squads are posted on Potsdamer Platz and other places and have been given orders to prevent West Berliners from entering democratic Berlin. Police are standing guard several hundred meters west of the Brandenburg Gate. Police riot vans are standing by behind them.

NOTES

[1] The word comes from “ultramontanism” (beyond the Alps), referring to support of papal supremacy in Rome over regional Roman Catholic authority. In this context, Ulbricht and the GDR used the term to refer to the CDU and their conservative Christian thought in the West (Bonn)—trans.

Source: “Maßnahmen zum Schutz des Friedens und zur Sicherung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik in Kraft,” *Neues Deutschland*, August 14, 1961, p. 1. Republished with permission.

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