

Proclamation by the political parties in West Berlin (17 June 1953)

Caption: On 17 June 1953, the main political parties in West Berlin openly support the demands of the East Berlin strikers and call for the peaceful reunification of Germany.

Source: Bundesministerium für Gesamtdeutsche Fragen (Hrsg.). Juni-Aufstand, Dokumente und Berichte über den Volksaufstand in Ostberlin und in der Sowjetzone. Bonn: Deutscher Bundes-Verlag, 1953. 64 S. p. 29.

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Proclamation by the political parties in West Berlin (Berlin, 17 June 1953)

It is with profound consternation that we have all been following the spontaneous declarations that are shaking the entire city of Berlin today. What we experienced here grew initially out of the economic misery in which the people of East Berlin and the Soviet Zone have been forced to live for eight years. The whole of Germany knows about this desperate situation and has been trying for years to give wherever help was possible. However, it is not just the economic misery that has led to the present expressions of public will; a much greater factor was the constantly increasing abolition of the rights of the workers and not only of the workers, but of all freedom-loving people in East Berlin and in the Soviet Zone. The brutal system of dictatorship has resulted in these people being thrown into prison in their thousands and being forced to leave their homes in their hundreds of thousands. Those in power in the Soviet Union have been repeatedly warned, but they have simply turned a deaf ear to all warnings.

Now the economic misery, in conjunction with the political crisis, has resulted in East Berliners taking to the streets in order to demand their rights and to bear witness to their desire for freedom and for true democracy. No one can understand this better or support it better than the Berliners who have spent eight years fighting for their fundamental rights and their freedom, often in the most difficult circumstances, and who have been following the events of the last few days with great passion.

We are with you in spirit, and we are certain that the entire German nation is of the same opinion as us. However, we also hope that the occupying forces recognise what must be recognised. And that is, that there must be an immediate and fundamental change in the situation of Berlin and of the Soviet Zone.

This is your will, and it is our will. All Germans are in unanimous agreement about this. This is the will of the people and the path to a free and unified Germany. This is the basic premise of your demonstration, which we fully endorse! Avoid any provocation, which can only damage the cause. Your voice has been heard in the wider world. Everything possible must be done to fulfil your justified desires!

Social Democratic Party of Germany
Franz Neumann

Christian Democratic Union
Egon Endres

Free Democratic Party
Carl-Hubert Schwennicke

Confederation of German Trade Unions
Ernst Scharnowski