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

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

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

According to plan and at the designated 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 agreement 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 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."

The declaration of the governments of the states of the Warsaw Pact reads: "The governments of the states of the Warsaw Pact of course understand that resorting to protective measures on the border to West Berlin will create certain inconveniences for the population, but in the face 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 was 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, with disregard for the interests of the German people and the population of Berlin, they exploited the present order on the West Berlin border for their own insidious, subversive purposes. The present abnormal situation must be brought 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 already announced their agreement early 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<sup>1</sup> 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 Manfred explained, “These measures will finally create clear fronts.”

Yesterday, life went on as usual for a Sunday. Some groups of young people who thought they could be 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 position to protect our borders.

Subway traffic ran smoothly and was operating on schedule in accordance with the new regulations. Only on suburban rail lines did delays arise for some time due to the changes that had suddenly become necessary.

As on any Sunday, thousands of Berliners traveled with the suburban rail to recreational areas outside the city. The German Travel Office pavilion at the Friedrichstrasse train station was as busy as on any Sunday. The excursion routes 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 just as high as on recent days. Also, two U.S. State Department representatives remained 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 valid up to 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 has become known that the people of West Berlin received with 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

hectic agitation among the agent organizations, human traffickers, and head hunters, 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.

In the residential areas of the Western sectors, normal Sunday tranquility prevailed, in obvious contrast to the hectic activities of the front city powers 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.

In the early Sunday afternoon hours 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. A chain of police officers also marched in several hundred meters west of the Brandenburg Gate. Police riot vans are standing by behind them.

Source: "Maßnahmen zum Schutz des Friedens und zur Sicherung der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik in Kraft" ["Measures for the Protection of Peace and the Safeguarding of the German Democratic Republic Take Effect"], *Neues Deutschland*, August 14, 1961.

Translation: Allison Brown