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Love for the Socialist Fatherland (October 25, 1968)

Two pillars of Walter Ulbricht's late-1960s politics are apparent in this appeal to the younger generation: his emphasis on the Communist tradition in Germany and his commitment to spreading Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Walter Ulbricht's Speech at the Rally Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the November Revolution

On October 19, according to *Neues Deutschland*, a rally called "Roll Call of the Young Revolutionaries of Today" was held in East Berlin to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the November Revolution.

Walter Ulbricht, First Secretary of the SED Central Committee and Chairman of the Council of State, spoke to a crowd of about 150,000 and said, among other things: "The revolutionary vanguard of the German working class fought heroically during the days of November 1918. Like their Russian class comrades in the Great Socialist October Revolution, they wanted to break the corrupting power of imperialism. Inspired by Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, Wilhelm Pieck, and their comrades-in-arms in the Spartacus League, the red sailors, the revolutionary workers and soldiers, came forward to end the imperialistic war, with its capitalist exploitation and servitude. They attained peace, expelled the Kaiser – but the monopolists, Junkers, and generals remained. For the rightist leaders of Social Democracy betrayed the revolution even before it triumphed. They took advantage of the fact that the working class had no revolutionary party at its disposal. They made a pact with Hindenburg, the general of the Junkers, and with Stinnes, the industrial king, to uphold the capitalistic order. That encouraged the counterrevolution. [. . .]

The socialist republic gives you, young citizens, great confidence; it gives you the most modern education available in the world and a highly developed culture. It calls upon you to be active, to have the courage to assume responsibility, practice conscious self-discipline, and show community spirit. Loving the GDR demands that you, as the nation's young generation, honor the revolutionary tradition of the fight against imperialism and war and for the triumph of socialism, and [it demands] that you, together with the workers, hold true to our constitution and devote all of your strength to the achievement of socialism. In factories, collectives, laboratories,

lecture halls, schools, and military facilities, strive for pioneering achievements for the glory of our republic. Never be satisfied with mediocrity. You have been given the task of striving for higher education, socialist culture, and physical training, of becoming leaders in your field, of studying tirelessly, and of dedicating all your knowledge and abilities to serious work toward the realization of our humanistic ideals. Act as worthy members of the socialist community in the spirit of comradely cooperation, mutual respect, and assistance. Let your individual path to personal happiness converge with the struggle for the happiness of our entire people. Be true patriots and internationalists! Guard our close friendship with the Soviet Union and our brotherly bond with the socialist countries! Show solidarity with the people of Vietnam and other peoples in their struggle for their freedom!”

The “pledge by participants in the roll call of young revolutionaries of today” reads as follows: “We, today’s young revolutionaries, have come together at a historical site. We pledge to keep the revolutionary traditions of the working class alive and to always remain true to the ideas of Marxism-Leninism. We, the children of the victorious revolution, vow to the SED and to our friend and role model Walter Ulbricht to always prove our worth as a fighting reserve for the party of the working class. We, sons and daughters of the first socialist state of the German nation, pledge to guard our friendship with the powerful Soviet Union with all our might, to strengthen the community of socialist countries, to always emulate Lenin’s glorious Komsomol¹, and to act at all times in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. We, the young patriots of our socialist Fatherland, are filled with passionate hatred towards imperialism and militarism. We vow to study, work, and struggle tirelessly for our republic and to protect socialism from all attacks. Our love, our loyalty, and our strength for the socialist Fatherland! Onward to the twentieth anniversary of the GDR!”

Source: Walter Ulbricht’s Speech at the Rally Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the November Revolution, October 25, 1968, *Archiv der Gegenwart*, vol. 5, pp. 4671-72.

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¹ Name of the Communist youth organization in the Soviet Union – eds.