



Volume 8. Occupation and the Emergence of Two States, 1945-1961  
“Why is there no Opposition in the GDR?” (May 17, 1957)

Published at a time when intense persecution threatened anyone whose political views differed from those of the party, this article from the SED’s central organ *Neues Deutschland* (May 17, 1957) echoed the official party line: because of the socialist character of the political system of the GDR, there was an absolute unity between the interests of the people and the politics of the government. Any kind of political opposition would invariably be directed against the interests of the people and therefore could not be tolerated.

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### **Why is there no Opposition in the GDR?**

Some citizens ask why we have no opposition and think that an opposition is part of a real democracy. But democracy does not reign where various parties act against each other, where the power of the working class is divided and an opposition exists. On the contrary, the presence of oppositional forces in bourgeois-capitalist states reveals the increasingly harsh conflict of interests between the monopolists and militarists in power and the oppressed population excluded from power. Opposition is merely proof that the masses of the people have to fight for their rights against the ruling class.

The bourgeois cannot deny the opposition that is growing out of the irreconcilable class conflicts. That is why it is trying to falsely tarnish it as a “characteristic of true democracy” for every state.

This view was and is also disseminated by right-leaning Social Democracy. For example, the former chairman of the SPD, Schumacher, said the following: “The essence of the state is not the government, and the essence of the state is not the opposition. The essence of the state is the government and the opposition.”

From such notions comes the absurd claim that our socialist state of workers and peasants is not democratic because we “have no opposition.”

In our German Democratic Republic, the war criminals, monopolists, and noblemen [*Junker*] have been stripped of power. Here, the factories and the banks belong to the people. The army,

police, and judiciary – the state’s means of power – are instruments of the workers. There is no conflict between the policy of our government and the interests of the entire population.

After all, an opposition in the GDR could be directed only against the policy of our government. It would therefore have to be directed against the introduction of the 45-hour week, against the construction of an additional one hundred thousand apartments, against our low rents, against the stability of our prices, against the low MTS (machine tractor station) rates, against the high expenditures on science and culture, against our peace policy. It would have to be directed against the unity of the working class, against our workers’ and peasants’ state. It would have to be in favor of employing militarists and fascists in high positions of power, of the NATO war pact, and of preparations for a nuclear war. Tolerating such an opposition would be criminal.

Source: “Warum gibt es in der DDR keine Opposition?” [“Why is there no Opposition in the GDR?”] *Neues Deutschland* (May 17, 1957), p. 3.

Translation: Thomas Dunlap