

ABSTRACT

June 17, 1953:
A Fifty-Year Retrospective on a German Cold War Tragedy, 1953-2003

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The failed June 17, 1953, uprising in East Berlin and elsewhere in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) marked an early, tragic flashpoint of the Cold War. While the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) elevated June 17 to a “German Day of Unity” to remind people of the protestors’ sacrifices and national hopes for reunification, the East German regime gained strength from crushing the revolt with Soviet help and justified its actions on ideological grounds while suppressing details of the violence and repression. The materials examined in this study span fifty years, 1953 to 2003, and focus on German, European and American perspectives gleaned from primary and secondary sources. Each chapter views the revolt’s coverage through a different medium and change over time—historiography, film and television, literature and art, and newspapers. Taken together, they create a rich tableau of national remembrance and renewal before an international audience.

June 17, 1953:
A Fifty-Year Retrospective on a German Cold War Tragedy, 1953-2003

by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BPB	Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung
CC	Central Committee
CDU	Christlich-Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union)
CPSU CC	Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee
EDC	European Defense Community
FDGB	East German Free German Trade Unions
FDJ	Freie Deutsche Jugend (Free German Youth)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GDR	German Democratic Republic
KPD	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany)
LDPD	Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands (Liberal Democratic Party of Germany)
LPG	Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften (Agricultural Collectives)
MDR	Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk
NPD	National Democratic Party
PDS	Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (Party of Democratic Socialism)
RIAS	Radio in the American Sector
SCC	Soviet Control Commission

SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)
SMAD	Soviet Military Administration in Germany
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
VE-day	Victory in Europe

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DEDICATION

To Mom and Taylor

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

On May 7, 1945, German General Alfred Jodl unconditionally surrendered to Allied General Eisenhower at Reims.¹ The formal German surrender to Soviet forces followed on May 8, 1945, at Soviet headquarters in Karlshorst near Berlin.² Allied forces declared May 8 VE-day (Victory in Europe). British, American and Soviet leaders carved Germany's remains into occupation zones. Great Britain occupied the northwest, the United States the south, and the Soviet Union the east. Later Britain and the United States awarded the southwest portion to France.³ The Allies divided Berlin into four sectors and maintained the city as an international headquarters.

On April 7, 1949, the French, British, and American zones merged to create "Trizonia."⁴ The East Zone remained separate due to the Soviet Union's contrary goals and expectations for Germany as a defeated nation, including its responsibility to pay reparations. While the Western Allies hoped to move Germany toward a self-supporting, reunified nation, the Soviet Union refused to relinquish direct control of the conquered country. Once the Western Zones released a new Deutsch Mark and established a "Basic Law," or constitution, the Soviet Union countered by formulating a constitution for the Eastern Zone. The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was founded on May 23, 1949,

¹David Clay Large, *Berlin* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 367.

²Ibid.

³Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, Revised ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 9.

⁴Ibid., 28.

for West Germany.⁵ On October 7, 1949, East Germany established the German Democratic Republic (GDR).⁶ The FRG confirmed Bonn as its provisional seat of government in November 1950, pending Germany's reunion.⁷ West Germany intended Berlin to reclaim its position as capital of a united Germany.⁸ East Germany claimed the Soviet sector of East Berlin as the GDR capital, and considered it the "true German capital."⁹ Four Allied powers and a conquered people squeezed into a territory smaller than Texas.

Immediately following WWII, and prior to the establishment of their governments, both East and West Germany started developing political parties. In June 1945, Marshal Georgi Zhukov, Commander-in-chief of the Soviet occupation troops, ordered the creation of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD) to manage the administration of the Soviet zone.¹⁰ The following day he arranged for the development of "anti-fascist" political parties in the Soviet Zone.¹¹ On June 3, 1945, the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD), or Communist Party of Germany, secured its position as the first party officially recognized by SMAD.¹² The Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD), or Social Democratic Party of Germany, experienced its

⁵Ibid., 36.

⁶Large, 412.

⁷Ibid., 414.

⁸Ibid., 416.

⁹Ibid., 415.

¹⁰Gary Bruce, *Resistance with the People: Repression and Resistance in Eastern Germany, 1945-1955* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 22.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., 23.

inauguration on June 7, 1945.¹³ The Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands (LDPD), or the Liberal Democratic Party of Germany, held its first meeting on June 16, 1945, and represented capitalism in the Soviet sector.¹⁴ Finally, the Christlich-Demokratische Union (CDU), or Christian Democratic Union, received official recognition on June 26, 1945.¹⁵ The four parties created the Einheitsfront der antifaschistisch-demokratischen Parteien, also known as the “Antifa-Block” on July 14, 1945, which consisted of five rotating members from each party.¹⁶ This party, later referred to as the “Central Committee,” proved a key player in the GDR government and political atmosphere.

In 1946, the KPD merged with the SPD to create the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED), or Socialist Unity Party of Germany, in the GDR. While Soviet authorities expected the KPD to wield control over the SED as a result of its ties to the Soviet military administration, the SPD gained and maintained a popular following. The forcibly merged party dominated East Germany and the GDR regime while maintaining strong ties with its Soviet “uncles.”¹⁷ The USSR installed proxies to manage the GDR. Walter Ulbricht, head of the SED, studied at the Lenin School prior to World War II, lived in Russia in exile during the conflict, and managed various Communist organizations around Europe. He served as general party secretary and as a deputy to the

¹³Ibid., 24.

¹⁴Ibid., 26.

¹⁵Ibid., 25.

¹⁶Ibid., 27.

¹⁷Large, 397.

minister-president, eventually controlling the SED and the GDR.¹⁸ Otto Grotewohl presided as Minister-President over the People's Chamber.¹⁹

The GDR (and later the SED) strove to create a government ruled by "Staatsmacht" or "power of the state."²⁰ The Volkspolizei (People's Police) and the judicial system (later saturated with SED members) wielded the Staatsmacht.²¹ The GDR immediately strengthened its new government by reevaluating the power structure based in its districts. Fourteen new "Bezirke" (regional districts) replaced the five former provinces.²² With this movement the GDR also decreased the number of jurists and increased the number of judges. The government debenched 104 judges and methodically replaced them with SED members.²³

The SED instituted Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften (LPGs), agricultural collectives, which merged the holdings of large and small landowners until the government discontinued this largely unsuccessful experiment in May 1953, immediately preceding the uprising.²⁴ Prior to eliminating LPGs, the GDR enforced strict production quotas on the farmers. Farmers, like all workers in East Germany, faced fines and imprisonment for failure to produce the quotas. In a five-month period, from

¹⁸Turner, 57.

¹⁹Ibid., 58.

²⁰Bruce, 159.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., 160.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 169.

August 1951 to January 1952, the courts tried 1,247 farmers for production failure.²⁵ These numbers included large, medium and small landholders. Workers outside of farms faced equally harsh quotas and punishment. Between October 1952 and March 1953, the GDR tried 10,194 workers for economic crimes.²⁶ Each month the number rose. In one year, 1952 to 1953, the GDR built fifty prisons. Two hundred established prisons housed 60,000 prisoners, doubled from 30,000 the previous year.²⁷ Small strikes popped up throughout East Germany in early 1951 and increased in 1952.

Besides problems in the agricultural and industrial sectors, population loss was another central challenge for the GDR leadership. As World War II wound down and Soviet troops advanced into Germany, East Germans and some East Europeans retreated west to avoid the revenge of the victorious Soviet forces. Between six and twelve million refugees fled before advancing Russian troops.²⁸

After the initial scare, East German and East European refugees continued to flee the Soviet Zone. Reasons to leave East Germany abounded. For example, East Germany suffered a series of food shortages induced by population hikes from refugees in Eastern Europe, land reform, and farmers and laborers escaping to the West. Families starved. Landowners and wealthy citizens faced accusations of being capitalists or Nazi sympathizers, and eviction from their land and homes. Many left to avoid persecution and abuse. Whatever their reasons, GDR citizens continued to move west, and the German Democratic Republic lost hundreds of thousands of people.

²⁵Ibid., 162.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Turner, 6.

On May 15, 1953, Russian authorities expressed their concern to East Berlin. A memorandum from the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs to Vladimir Semyonov, commander of Soviet occupation forces, stated, “The illegal movement of people from the GDR to Western zones of Germany has become massive.”²⁹ Estimates of the magnitude of the refugee problem vary. East German refugees, registered in West Germany, numbered more than 675,000 between 1949 and 1952 alone.³⁰ By 1953, GDR authorities felt the strain and reacted.

In the spring of 1953, Russian authorities—represented by General Vasiliï Chuikov, Chairman of the Soviet Control Commission (SCC) and Commander-in-Chief of Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany; Pavel Yudin, Political Advisor to the Chairman of the SCC; and Ivan Il’ichev, Deputy Political Counselor for the SCC—examined the severe population situation in the GDR. According to their numbers, in 1951 some 160,560 people left the GDR; 165,571 more fled in 1952; and in the first four months of 1953, an additional 120,531 exited the GDR.³¹ By the end of 1953, more than 300,000 East Germans registered in West Germany as refugees that year.³² The GDR and Russian authorities worried most about losing blue-collar workers in addition to white-collar workers, peasants, the intelligentsia, students, and their family members. They focused on the demographic breakdown of workers fleeing the GDR. Families accounted for

²⁹Christian F. Ostermann, ed., *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 97.

³⁰Turner, 67.

³¹Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*, 100.

³²Ann Tusa, *The Last Division: A History of Berlin, 1945-1989* (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1997), 252.

more than half, representing generations of future workers.³³ The three groups of workers—blue-collar, white-collar, and peasants—accounted for more than forty percent each year.³⁴ Students and Intelligentsia, however, constituted fewer than ten percent in 1951, 1952, and during the first four months in 1953.³⁵ The loss of young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five vexed GDR and Russian officials the most.

Political events in Russia hastened the crisis. After Stalin died on March 5, 1953, Soviet officials engaged in a power struggle. Nikita Khrushchev, Lavrenty Beria, W.M. Molotov, G.M. Malenkov, and W.S. Semyonov shared hegemony as interim leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.³⁶ Aware of the strikes and discontent in their satellites, the Soviet leaders debated the prudence of a socialist, segregated East Germany. Feeling the strains of food and labor shortages in the GDR, Grotewohl, while attending Stalin's funeral, attempted to determine whether the Soviet Union would provide assistance in the form of supplies for starving GDR citizens. Soviet authorities denied Grotewohl's requests, arguing the GDR needed to "solve its own problems as best it could."³⁷ Otto Grotewohl made an official request for assistance in April 1953 and received an emphatic "no." Furthermore, USSR leaders suggested Grotewohl and his fellow leaders take a "softer line" with regard to quotas.³⁸

³³Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*, 101.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶Bruce, 171.

³⁷Arnulf Baring, *Uprising in East Germany: June 17, 1953*, Trans. Gerald Onn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 20.

³⁸*Ibid.*

Ulbricht, Grotewohl, and the SED became rabid. Ignoring Soviet suggestions, the SED and its leaders demanded a stricter approach to work norms, and a stronger appreciation and adherence to Stalin's socialist vision. On May 28, 1953, the Council of Ministers of the GDR passed a decree calling for a ten percent raise of work quotas by June 30, 1953.³⁹ Shortly afterward, on June 11, 1953, the Council of Ministers passed a series of suggested measures called the "New Line" or "New Course" designed to encourage GDR citizens to remain in East Germany, invite others to join the GDR, improve the lifestyle and existence of GDR citizens, and improve outside perception.⁴⁰ However, this "change" went unpublicized by GDR and SED authorities and unnoticed by the public. Regardless of the "New Course," the GDR increased its work quotas again on June 16, 1953, by 25 percent. Failure to meet quotas was punishable by fines and pay cuts.⁴¹ East German workers rebelled the very next day.

Many sources trace the roots of the uprising as far back as June 11, then manifesting itself in the form of small protests, "work slow-downs," discussions, and localized demonstrations. On June 15, Vladimir Semyonov, commander of Soviet occupation forces, and Colonel-General Andrei Grechko, commander-in-chief of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, ordered troops at summer training to return to their bases in preparation for responses to strikes, demonstrations, and riots.⁴² Discontent escalated on June 16, 1953, when workers along the Stalinallee at construction sites "Hospital Friedrichshain" and "Stalinallee Block 40" dropped their tools and gathered to

³⁹Large, 425.

⁴⁰Baring, 27.

⁴¹Large, 426.

⁴²Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*, 169.

strike.⁴³ *Die Tribüne* sparked events on June 16 when it reported that an East German, Free German Trade Unions (FDGB) executive, Otto Lehmann, announced intentions to maintain and uphold the work quotas.⁴⁴ Workers met at the Strausberger Platz and marched toward SED headquarters. As they rallied, they gathered momentum and numbers, and enlarged their demands to include a higher standard of living, a lower cost of living, free elections, an end to the new work quotas, and no persecution or prosecution of strikers.⁴⁵

The SED Central Committee (CC), already in session on June 16, learned of the expanding strike and rescinded the recent work norm increases. Once the mob arrived at SED headquarters, it demanded to speak with Ulbricht and Grotewohl. The two refused. Instead, Fritz Selbmann, Heavy Industry Minister, and Robert Havemann, president of the GDR Peace Council, stepped out and announced the Council of Ministers had already renounced the work quotas.⁴⁶ It was too little too late. Commandeered sound trucks spread the call for strikes and spurred the strikers' discontent by reading the *Tribüne* article and proclamations passed by the Council of Ministers calling for higher work norms. Word spread for plans of a larger, more organized strike the following day, June 17, 1953, and the crowd disbanded. The strikers planned to meet at the Strausberger

⁴³Ibid., 163.

⁴⁴Baring, 33.

⁴⁵Ibid., 72.

⁴⁶Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*, 163.

Platz at 6:00 a.m.⁴⁷ Evening newspapers advertised the call for a general strike for June 17.⁴⁸ Isolated unrest, statue vandalizing, and small clashes continued through the night.

The uprising on June 17 extended past Berlin. Workers went on strike all across East Germany. The largest movements occurred in the cities. Magdeburg, Dresden, Leipzig, and Görlitz led the GDR in riots, damage to public buildings, and wounded citizens. In an odd twist, Ulbricht called the party “secretaries” of each district to Berlin on June 17, to brief them on precautionary actions. As a result, the government machinery of the GDR lay abandoned and vulnerable to the mass movement on June 17.⁴⁹

On June 17, 1953, GDR citizens and individuals from West Berlin gathered in the Strausberger Platz around 7:00 a.m.⁵⁰ Estimates of the number of participants at the June 17 rallies vary greatly, particularly between Eastern and Western sources. Soviet and GDR calculations typically rank lower than West German, American, and British estimates. By 8:00 a.m., between 10,000 and 30,000 people gathered at the square. In total, between 80,000 and 120,000 people participated in the uprising on June 17 in Berlin alone. Estimates vary between 300,000 and 400,000 participants across the GDR. In a nation of nearly six million workers, the strikers represented fewer than ten percent of the working class. Around 9:00 a.m., groups marched on government buildings, police stations, telegraph offices, and prisons. One group took over the GDR government headquarters, which Soviet troops quickly regained. The East German People’s Police

⁴⁷Ibid., 181.

⁴⁸Ibid., 260.

⁴⁹Ibid., 261.

⁵⁰Ibid.

unsuccessfully fought rioters to maintain order. At noon, GDR authorities cut off all U-Bahn and S-Bahn transportation within East Berlin and all traffic between West and East Berlin.⁵¹ At 1:00 p.m., Russian and GDR authorities declared martial law in East Berlin, and Russian tanks rolled onto the streets.⁵² That day, twenty-one protesters were killed, more than 300 wounded, and over 3,000 arrested. Afterward, eighteen received capital punishment in swift “kangaroo” courts, and more than 1,300 were imprisoned.⁵³ By June 18, the GDR tried and executed six people.⁵⁴ Small groups of insurgents continued to rise throughout June. On August 4, 1953, the West German parliament in Bonn declared June 17, the “Day of German Unity,” a national holiday.⁵⁵

While most historians consider the uprising of June 17 a failure, coverage of June 17, 1953, in history books, the media, the internet, newspapers and magazines, documents, art, and literature, on a local, national, and international levels, reveals the event clearly remained imprinted on society’s consciousness. A variety of individuals memorialized, remembered, and recounted the uprising through the years. The revolt gained particular attention in 2003, on its fiftieth anniversary, and solidified June 17 as a politically, ideologically and emotionally influential moment in modern times. Internet sites, newspaper and magazine articles, films, and historical projects of remembrance, among other sources and outlets, demonstrate on many levels the continuing German and

⁵¹Ibid., 186.

⁵²Ibid,

⁵³Turner, 77.

⁵⁴Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*, 219.

⁵⁵Ibid., 415.

global interest in commemorating the events of June 17 and defining their proper place in the annals of modern history.

CHAPTER TWO

Historiographical Perspectives and Retrospectives

The failed East German workers' uprising of June 17, 1953, has captured the attention of innumerable historians. It represents a defining moment in Soviet, German, and Cold War history. This chapter analyzes a representative sample of historiographical works and assessments from both, West and East Germany, as well as, the United States, Canada, and Great Britain. These publications span the period from 1957 to 2001.

West German historians approach the Cold War and the 1953 uprising differently than their colleagues in the English-speaking world. While representatives of the Western powers sought to focus on "what happened," West German historians, prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, tended to concentrate on reaching out to the West and "educate" the masses on the German situation. Their works ultimately held out the hope for reunification. In short, West German historians had a personal interest or investment in their historiography not necessarily shared by the Western powers.

Stefan Brant, also known as Klaus Harpprecht, offers an extreme and reactionary response through strong words and interpretations. Born in Stuttgart in 1927, Harpprecht became a director of the S. Fischer Publishing House in Berlin and an advisor to Willy Brandt, chancellor of the FRG (1969-1974). Published in 1957, *The East German Rising* attempts to "educate" the West and the world through a largely propagandistic approach.¹ Brant presents an emotionally charged history of the events leading up to June 17, and of the day's proceedings. John Hynd wrote the foreword, describing June 17 as an

¹Stefan Brant, *The East German Rising: 17th June 1953* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1957).

indication of the “insecurity of Communism in the satellite countries, if not—as well may be—in Russia itself.”² Brant’s and Hynd’s stance, clearly anti-socialist, anti-Stalin, and pro-rebellion, employs inflammatory language brimming with words like “freedom,” “liberty,” “oppression,” “revolt,” “democracy,” and “martyrs.” When describing the GDR’s political system and working conditions, Brant labels the Russians and GDR authorities as the “high priests of the Plan,” who, “drive in well-upholstered limousines and allow no pause for rest.”³ Brant recounts Stalin’s death as a reprieve which built hopes of freedom. “The people of the Soviet Zone and East Berlin received the news quietly,” he writes, “scarcely daring to hope that the dictator’s sudden end would change their lot.”⁴

Brant contends many of the East German strikers did not want Western help. Instead, they wanted to send their own message to the GDR leadership and its Russian backers. Only as the strike wound down, Brant claims, a few strikers begged for assistance from the Western powers. They received flat refusals. Brant considers the West bound and unable to assist the East Germans owing to its inability to understand the workers’ plight. Still, he finds tragedy in the circumstances that any successful East German revolt required Western assistance.

Brant compares the events of June 17 to the struggle of David against Goliath. “Without warning,” he relates, “half a dozen Red Army tanks roared out of a side-street.”⁵ The tanks advanced on unarmed citizens, and the People’s Police and Russian

²Ibid., 10.

³Ibid., 21.

⁴Ibid., 47.

⁵Ibid., 76.

troops fired at the crowd with machine guns. The rebels continued to push against the tanks and even “link arms and advanced on the tanks in line.”⁶ Brant considers the revolt an “achievement of the working class,” because it received attention from every layer of the Russian and GDR government.⁷ Brant portrays the Soviets and the People’s Police as evil, strong-armed dictators; the East German people as heroic, brave, good people; and the West Germans, British and Americans as helpless, left to bandage and care for the wounded. In addition, Brant paints the East German police as spineless, weak, and ineffective without the Soviet tanks. When describing a massacre in a prison yard, Brant writes, “Two hours before, the police had been surrendering their weapons. Now—reinforced by the Red Army—they were shooting.”⁸ Brant considers the Soviet goal of socialism misguided and tragic. In closing he states, “But on June 17 the people rose against the men who wanted to bring heaven down to earth and had in fact opened the gates of hell.”⁹

Brant concludes with a plea for the West to assist the East German people and stand by them should they revolt again. “They place all their hopes in the Western Powers. A policy of appeasement is the last thing they want from the West. They ask for strength, courage and imagination. During the rising the people of the Soviet Zone waited in vain for help. Today they believe that the West is firmly on their side. These

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., 77.

⁸Ibid., 86.

⁹Ibid., 198.

hopes should not be disappointed.”¹⁰ Brant’s book attempts to engage Western people with East German issues.

Arnulf Baring takes a more passive approach to the uprising than Brant’s inflammatory and reactionary work. Many consider Arnulf Baring’s *Uprising in East Germany: June 17, 1953*, the authoritative historical retrospective on the June 17 uprising, and most books recounting the revolt cite his account.¹¹ Baring, born in Dresden in 1932, was twenty-one years old at the time of the riots. He studied in Hamburg, Berlin, New York, and Paris, and afterward lived and taught in West Germany. Baring relates a capacious history on the people’s revolt divided into two parts: “The events leading up to June 17” and “June 17.” Contrary to most Western accounts, Baring argues the Soviets did not quash the uprising. Instead, the riots and the participants “ran out of steam.”¹² Baring also claims the Soviets adopted a more passive approach than commonly reported, usually shooting over the heads of the protesters and using scare tactics to discourage violence. Only twenty-one people died in the whole of the GDR—evidence in favor of Baring’s conclusions.

Baring describes Soviet behavior as marked by concern and patient resolve, and Western reactions as removed, reserved, and cautionary. He claims the Radio in the American Sector (RIAS) served as the only engaged news service during the uprising, and RIAS stepped lightly. The American director of RIAS strictly monitored the coverage and its wording and proceeded with extreme caution. Baring also explains how

¹⁰Ibid., 202.

¹¹Arnulf Baring, *Uprising in East Germany: June 17, 1953*, Trans. Gerald Onn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972).

¹²Ibid., 76.

American and British authorities ignored pre-warnings due to disbelief. Baring laments the West's inactivity, and considers this passivity a root cause of East German alienation from the West and their long-term acceptance of their condition. Baring first published his book in West Germany in 1965, at a time when Germany's division seemed cemented in the Berlin Wall. The wounds inflicted on June 17, 1953, still felt raw, and Ulbricht and the SED continued to hold power. Baring's approach embraces peace, acceptance, and healing.

In his introduction to Baring's book, David Schoenbaum, a professor at the University of Iowa, examines the history and memory of the uprising. Schoenbaum suggests the historiography and memory of the uprising, both in the East and West, moved between history and myth.¹³ He claims that legend influenced practices and policies on both sides. "In official Western and Eastern versions alike," he explains, "the myth of June 17 had a kind of instrumental function as both symbol and foundation of a whole view of political reality and international relations."¹⁴ Schoenbaum, like Ostermann and Turner, believes the events of June 17 directly colored Soviet and GDR relations with the Western powers. They influenced their reaction and resolve which led to the Berlin Wall and nearly a half century of division and alienation. Although the uprising assumed legendary status for many, Schoenbaum recognizes that with time the holiday became "an occasion for rueful editorials and family picnics."¹⁵ He labels the revolt a failure. "Germans alone," he states, "can decide whether and how it should be

¹³Ibid., VIII.

¹⁴Ibid., VIII.

¹⁵Ibid., IX.

celebrated, but it deserves to be remembered.”¹⁶ In the foreword, Richard Lowenthal calls June 17 a “missed opportunity for the western powers.”¹⁷

The GDR ban on discussing or publishing information about “Tag X” created a drought of East German sources. Few East German works survived or were ever published communicating the East German perspective on June 17, 1953. Stefan Heym represents a communist faction, using his craft (writing) to criticize and analyze the communist system. He believed in reform influenced by loyal communist voices of reason. Heym spent his early years exiled for his communist persuasions - in 1933 by Hitler’s Germany and in 1951 by the United States gripped in the “Red Scare.”¹⁸ After his final expulsion, he moved to East Germany in 1952 where he witnessed his “first East German political experience” on June 17, 1953.¹⁹

Heym represents a political ambiguity which puzzled socialists and capitalists alike. David Rock describes Heym’s position as a combination of unwavering analysis and communist loyalty. “Heym was an extraordinary mixture of belief in the socialist ideal,” he writes, “and unrelenting criticism of the ‘actual existing’ version of it.”²⁰ His criticisms received little appreciation and he was eventually barred from the East German Writers’ Union. However, he was equally critical of Western systems and deficiencies. Heym was an “equal-opportunity” critic, which made him less than popular.

¹⁶Ibid., XVII.

¹⁷Ibid., XXVII.

¹⁸David Rock, *Voices in Times of Change: The Role of Writers, Opposition Movements and the Churches in the Transformation of East Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 170.

¹⁹Richard K. Zachau, “Stefan Heym and GDR Cultural Politics,” in *Politics and Culture in Twentieth Century Germany*, ed. William Niven and James Jordan (New York: Camden House, 2003), 127.

²⁰Rock, 171.

He supported the Soviet system, including Soviet intervention in the uprisings and “hard-line Stalinism,” but refused to join the SED and disapproved of the “Communist Party’s cultural course.”²¹ In 1953, he wrote a detective novel, *Goldsborough*, which acquired controversial standing in the communist community. In *Goldsborough*, communist characters falter under “fascist provocation”—a suggestion which incited SED criticism since “enlightened workers do not fall for capitalist provocations.”²² The GDR could not afford a respected communist writer authoring a novel which concludes on a revolutionary note.

Stefan Heym followed his controversial *Goldsborough* with *Fünf Tage im Juni* [Five Days in June] which was not published in the FRG until 1974 or the GDR until 1989.²³ Heym described his novel as “socialist entertainment literature.”²⁴ Following reunification, Heym ran for parliament in 1994 under the Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (PDS), or Party of Democratic Socialism.²⁵ Heym’s contemporaries considered the PDS the progeny of the former SED. At 81, Heym served in the House as the oldest member, and gave an opening speech with equal criticism of the East and West systems—maintaining his drive for public criticism and reform.²⁶ Inasmuch as *Fünf Tage im Juni* is a novel and not a strictly historical account, it will be discussed in more depth in Chapter Four.

²¹Zachau, 127.

²²Ibid., 129.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Rock, 184.

²⁶Rock, 185.

American sources examined for this chapter represent a variety of interests, methodologies, and purposes. The Cold War obviously restricted access to Soviet and Eastern bloc government records. Only after the fall of the Berlin Wall were such made available. In addition, United States historiography on the Cold War and the 1953 uprising tends to focus on Germany as a divided and conquered nation, or on narrower aspects of the uprising such as the reaction of intellectuals, political responses, and its cultural impact.

In *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., professor of history at Yale University, chronicles a general history of Germany from 1945 to 1990.²⁷ Turner offers a brief but comprehensive examination of Germany after 1945, including the uprising in 1953. His book analyzes the actions of the SED, Ulbricht, Grotewohl and the Soviet authorities. Turner claims the East German revolt solidified Walter Ulbricht's position, the GDR's existence as a separate entity from West Germany, and the Soviet Union and its satellites as socialist nations.²⁸ Prior to the uprising, the existence and power of each of these entities wavered. Turner believes the defeat of the workers' revolt strengthened Soviet domination.

Anthony Read's and David Fisher's *Berlin Rising* charts Berlin's history, rising and falling, as a world capital starting in the twelfth century.²⁹ In this sweeping history of Berlin, culminating in its reunification in 1990, Read and Fisher see the uprising of 1953 as central to Berlin's story. They view June 17 as a direct result of Ulbricht's

²⁷Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, Revised ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

²⁸*Ibid.*, 80.

²⁹Anthony Read and David Fisher, *Berlin Rising: A Biography of a City* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994).

mismanagement of the Soviet satellite. They also track the negative reactions of such East German intellectuals as Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Bartel. *Berlin Rising* criticizes the West's apparent unwillingness to help East German citizens for fear of instigating a third world war. Read's and Fisher's wide-ranging history of Berlin indicates the importance and consequences of the uprising in history and in the memories of contemporaries as both an international and local event.

While working on his dissertation in 1994, Christian Ostermann wrote a working paper for the Cold War International History Project of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. The Cold War Project encourages the release of information on the Cold War and assimilates information from former East Germany into contemporary historiography.³⁰ Ostermann's paper, *The United States, the East German Uprising of 1953, and the Limits of Rollback*, cites many of the same sources later published in the National Security Archive book referenced below.³¹ Ostermann details the events leading up to, during, and after June 17, and defines the uprising of 1953 as "one of the most significant focal points in the history of the Cold War."³²

Ostermann examines the American and Western influence on the June 17 uprising. He contends that, contrary to previous historical accounts, the Western powers encouraged and manipulated the people of East Germany into revolting through the use of propaganda, radio, and food programs. In addition, Ostermann states Western powers played on the people's hopes for Western interference, and then neglected to help the

³⁰Christian F. Ostermann, *The United States, The East German Uprising of 1953, and the Limits of Rollback* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1994), Introduction.

³¹Christian F. Ostermann, *The United States, The East German Uprising of 1953, and the Limits of Rollback* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1994).

³²*Ibid.*, 2.

East Germans when it mattered. The paper also presents evidence that the Eisenhower administration conducted a psychological war against the GDR and Russian authorities which kept GDR citizens in a continual state of discord and repeatedly delayed East-West unification talks.³³ Through subversive activities including propaganda, psychological manipulation, and broadcast media, the United States and other Western powers knowingly incited the 1953 uprising and diverted reunification attempts.

Although it examined an earlier period, 1945-1949, *The Russians in Germany* by Norman M. Naimark, history professor at Stanford University, imparts a comprehensive view of Germany following World War II and the conditions leading up to 1953.³⁴ More importantly, Naimark analyzes Russian, West German, and East German treatment of history and their approaches to memory as individuals and as nations. Naimark argues that all sides essentially neglected East German history until the 1990s. Whether derived from restrictions, lack of interest, lack of sources, or feelings of embarrassment or guilt, this story of this era of history remained largely untold. Naimark claims the GDR's and Russian influence restricted East Germans from "dwelling on the difficulties" of the occupation and division of Germany for nearly fifty years.³⁵ Historians did not address Soviet behavior and management in the GDR until the last decade of the twentieth century.

Naimark explains the equal disregard for East German history by West Germans as emanating from an absence of sources or lack of access, capricious personal accounts

³³Ibid., 35.

³⁴Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995).

³⁵Ibid., 2.

and memoirs, and a preference for “contemporary history”—a movement toward propaganda and politically and sociologically based history.³⁶ According to Naimark, Western interest in East German history fell under four categories: little to no interest fueled by lack of sources and pangs of guilt or fear; interpretation of the East German embrace of the GDR to avoid accusations of Nazi sympathizing; the desire for a comprehensive East German history; and, during reunification, wanting a “real” and honest history of Soviet and Western activities and management in East Germany, the Communist system, and the East German people.³⁷ Naimark’s book concentrates on an earlier period than the uprising of 1953. Still, his analysis of East German historiography mirrors the interest in and historiography of the workers’ revolt.

In *Battleground Berlin*, David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev, and George Bailey explore the history of the United States’ and the Soviet Union’s struggle for power in Berlin through the CIA and the KGB.³⁸ Kondrashev headed the KGB, and David Murphy led the CIA in Berlin. The authors include a chapter on the East German uprising. In particular, they debate the extent of American provocation and participation in the revolt. Through Russian and American intercommunication reports and accounts, Murphy, Kondrashev, and Bailey retell the events of the uprising from June 11 through the aftermath. They agree on American lack of involvement in the initial uprising, but concede the American Food-Package Programs probably prolonged the strife and discord within the GDR. However, they argue American authorities did not intentionally develop

³⁶Ibid., 3.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev, and George Bailey, *Battleground Berlin: CIA vs. KGB in the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

the food programs to create friction. They also discount reports, including Christian Ostermann's paper, *The United States, The East German Uprising of 1953, and the Limits of Rollback*, that American officials requested permission to arm the citizens. *Battleground Berlin* focuses on the intensely concentrated pressure in Berlin with the close proximity of two superpowers. The uprising of 1953 demonstrated the strain and resulting distrust ever-present in Berlin.

In 2000, Donald Steury, senior historian for the CIA, compiled and edited *On the Front Lines of the Cold War: Documents on the Intelligence War in Berlin, 1946 to 1961*.³⁹ *On the Front Lines* examines the Cold War as it manifested itself in Berlin and presents rare government documents for public access, as photocopied images. The documents stretch from the later stages of World War II to the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Steury includes four documents on the uprising of 1953: "Probable Soviet Courses of Action with Respect to Germany Through Mid-1954, 22 May 1953;" "Probable Effect of Recent Developments in Eastern Germany on Soviet Policy with Respect to Germany, 24 July 1953;" "Comment on the East Berlin Uprising, 17 June 1953;" "Closing of Berlin Borders, 18 June 1953." All four documents were created by the Central Intelligence Agency, and no individuals were credited.

From these documents and his research Steury concludes the East German uprising proved completely unexpected for United States officials and the CIA. "Comment on the East Berlin Uprising" contains a detailed, dry recounting of the events on June 16 and 17. The cable alerting the CIA to the closing of the Berlin borders testifies to troops and civilians firing on people trying to cross the border illegally. "This

³⁹Donald P. Steury, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War: Documents on the Intelligence War in Berlin, 1946 to 1961*, 2nd ed. (Washington D.C.: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2000).

is the most complete isolation of West Berlin,” the cable reports, “from the Russian zone that has yet been enforced.”⁴⁰ Steury’s inclusion of June 17 events and related cables indicates the central importance of the uprising for international relations and the Cold War. He also stresses the role the revolt played in the series of events leading to the Berlin Wall and nearly thirty years of its existence.

Also in 2000, David Clay Large, professor of history at Montana State University, released *Berlin*, an historical overview of Berlin’s history from Germany’s unification in 1871 to its reunification in 1990.⁴¹ Large traces the origins of the 1953 revolt to the early measures to cut East Berlin and East Germany off from West Germany and West Berlin. He narrates a sweeping history of June 17, including its origins and after-effects. Countering Ostermann’s conclusions, Large deduces that the Western powers did not encourage, create, or spur the uprising. Large contends the West only broadcasted news across the radio and strictly reported the days’ events.

Large considers the West’s lack of interest or action lamentable. He frames this indictment by describing how the American, British, and French troops stood firm while they watched the Russian soldiers and GDR police beat unarmed citizens. As a result, Large claims, West Germans, Americans, the British, and West Europeans grew uncomfortable and resisted remembering the uprising and the East Germans. Out of guilt, citizens from western societies remained respectfully and safely distant. Large explains West Germans eventually regarded the Day of German Unity as another holiday or “picnic day” with little reflection on the anniversary of the events in East Germany. June 17, 1953, denoted a day of shame for West Germans and their Western allies.

⁴⁰Ibid., 228.

⁴¹David Clay Large, *Berlin* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

Recently, in 2001, the National Security Archive in Washington, D.C., compiled a “Cold War Reader,” containing never-before-seen, translated documents from East Germany, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and the United States pertaining to the 1953 uprising. Christian F. Ostermann, currently director of the Cold War International History Project for the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, compiled and edited the materials as *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*.⁴² The book has three parts: “The Origins of the Crisis,” “The Uprising,” and “The Aftermath: Implications for U.S. Policy.” Ostermann introduces each part with extensive historical background and explains each document, offering an historical account detailing the causes, events, and repercussions of the June uprising, making it an invaluable source of translated primary documents. Contrary to Steury’s collection of documents, Ostermann does not present photocopies of the original material. The material is translated and edited as needed.

In addition, the preface by Charles S. Maier tracks public focus, remembrance, and historical concentration since the uprising. Maier suggests that, as a poignant insurrection, it became the first “real,” general revolt by one of the Soviet satellites against its oppressors.⁴³ The preface also provides overpowering images of citizens fighting Soviet tanks.⁴⁴ However, the images quickly passed into memory as backdrop to a convenient holiday and later as a symbolic “artifact.”⁴⁵ Through the years, 1953 and its casualties grew distant and inconsequential. Maier praises Ostermann’s book as a revival

⁴²Christian F. Ostermann, ed., *Uprising in East Germany, 1953* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001).

⁴³*Ibid.*, XV.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, XVI.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, XVII.

of human interest in June 17, and asserts that Ostermann's writing and documentation infuse the shadowed memories with color and palpable relevance.

Ostermann represents June 17, 1953, as a predicament with historical and international impact and interest. He recounts each period (before, during, and after the uprising), drawing on a variety of government sources from around the world, while maintaining a keen perspective on international concerns, interaction, and consequences. June 17, 1953, reemerges and endures as a day with indelible significance for modern and contemporary history.

In addition to historical accounts on the revolt produced in the United States, Canadian and British works offer Western perspectives on the uprising. John C. Torpey's work represents a Canadian angle. In *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent*, Torpey, of the University of British Columbia, investigates the role of intellectuals in East Germany and their gradual path toward protest and resistance.⁴⁶ Torpey documents and explores the Intelligentsia's limited participation in the uprising. The intellectuals reserved their support for three reasons: they earned more money than most workers and did not want to rock the boat; fewer intellectuals lived in the GDR to participate in any protests due to an earlier mass exodus (they were "numerically insignificant");⁴⁷ and most intellectuals relied on the new regime for social and financial advancement.⁴⁸ As a result, most intellectuals did not participate in or support the 1953 uprising. Indeed, the GDR hired several of them to write statements published in newspapers or printed on leaflets

⁴⁶John C. Torpey, *Intellectuals, Socialism, and Dissent: The East German Opposition and Its Legacy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

⁴⁷Ibid., 28.

⁴⁸Ibid.

and distributed to the public, indicting the uprising, its instigators, and its participants. Stefan Heym, the East German novelist, produced an account of June 17, for the *Tägliche Rundschau*. In his view, the West instigated the uprising and played on East German weaknesses. However, Heym, contrary to many intellectuals, sympathized with the workers' plight.⁴⁹

Torpey recounts Kurt Bartel's piece, "How Ashamed I Am," that was published in *Neues Deutschland* just three days after the uprising. Its title clearly defines Bartel's stance. His article patronized, insulted, and demeaned the workers.⁵⁰ Bartel's article met criticism from the famous East German poet and writer Bertolt Brecht who solidified his disapproval in his poem, "The Solution." However, Brecht did not publicly release his poem. Instead he wrote a letter to Ulbricht stating his disapproval of the workers' behavior. The SED published the letter in *Neues Deutschland*.⁵¹ Torpey suggests that the intellectuals earned concessions from the SED for their support of the regime during the uprising. In the end, the uprising of 1953 isolated the intellectuals and workers from each other at a time when unity would have served them better. Torpey concludes the intelligentsia's agendas reinforced the SED's and GDR's power and resolve.⁵²

Great Britain represents a Western power directly influenced by events in Europe. Their close geographic proximity to Europe makes British historians sensitive to the strain of the Cold War, but keeps them slightly removed by Britain's insularity. In *Politics and Popular Opinion in East Germany, 1946-1968*, Mark Allinson, born in the

⁴⁹Ibid., 29.

⁵⁰Ibid., 30.

⁵¹Ibid., 31.

⁵²Ibid., 39.

late 1960s in Brighton, England, and currently professor at the University of Bristol, argues the SED and the socialist regime remained in power because the majority of GDR citizens supported the government.⁵³ Allinson narrows his focus to the Thuringian city of Erfurt to represent sentiment and events around the GDR in a case study. Allinson considers the legends and stories surrounding June 17 exaggerations.⁵⁴ Also, he disagrees with his contemporaries that the uprising in 1953 hardened the GDR's power and resolve against peace accords or agreements of reunification with the West. Instead, Allinson argues the GDR's and Soviets' swift reactions to the revolt prove that the GDR was already in place and functioning at full power like a well-oiled machine. In addition, the People's Police efficiently quashed all strikes reverberating from June 17.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the people did not ultimately gain any power or leverage over the GDR government.

Allinson characterizes the revolt and its historical significance as symbolic, focusing on the image of Soviet tanks running through the streets of Berlin. He concedes that this choice of response by the Soviets and the GDR undermined the people's trust. Allinson claims any reference to the uprising as a political stance denotes an emotionally charged grasp of a symbol instead of actual personal experience and genuine oppression.⁵⁶ He labels the participants in the uprising a minority and argues that the majority of East Germans accepted, either actively or inactively, the SED and the GDR.

⁵³Mark Allinson, *Politics and Popular Opinion in East Germany, 1945-68* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

⁵⁴Ibid., 56.

⁵⁵Ibid., 63.

⁵⁶Ibid., 62.

This “mass” support solidified and stabilized their hold on power.⁵⁷ Allinson considers the revolt unsuccessful for the people and inconsequential for the government. “The 17 June had been more of a failure for the population than for the government,” he writes, “and all the structures of power remained intact.”⁵⁸

This selection of history books focuses on the East German uprising of 1953 and embodies an array of interpretations and viewpoints representative of Western historiography on the subject. These publications span fifty years between 1953 and 2003. This sampling concentrates on the East German revolt, its effects on international policy and relations, and its role in the division and continued segregation of Germany. This historiographical essay establishes the East German uprising’s immediate importance, its continued effects, and the continuing interest in, and quest for, the truth regarding June 17, 1953.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

June 17 and the Visual Media

Television programs, films, and internet sites today represent the most popular form of global communication and education. Over the years, historians and other observers and commentators have expanded coverage of the June 17 uprising to every form of popular media—educating the masses about the East German revolt. Most sources discussed in this chapter are German. Mass media not only plays a significant role in the public’s education, but also increases historical understanding and fosters collective memory. Television, films, and the internet furnish a forum for discussions about the June 17, 1953, uprising so its place in world affairs will not be forgotten. As technology changes, historians, organizations, museums, and individuals update public coverage to keep pace and to explore new angles. Technological advances and especially the growing internet community equip society with direct admittance to global history, issues, knowledge, and culture. Individuals now share accounts based on personal experience and post them for the world to witness.

Pre- and post-1989 German documentaries and/or docudramas comprise the majority of the films considered in this chapter. The internet sites consulted consist of four varieties: (1) educational sites devoted strictly to the uprising and contiguous events; (2) sites of museums or organizations featuring the uprising as an educational site; (3) media sites, for example broadcasting companies and newspaper pages, highlighting articles, interactive sites, or educational material concerning June 17; and (4) personal accounts or testimonies, including oral histories, documents, diaries, and reports. The

uprising has not faded from the public spotlight. Strike participants, succeeding generations, and historians continue the fight for historical preservation and recognition.

Films documenting the June 1953 uprising, mostly television productions, encompass two categories: educational documentaries and “docudramas” which reconstruct the events in a narrative form, often straying from the historical record for dramatic effect. Educational documentaries focus on the events of June 16 and June 17, 1953, and the actions and decisions that led to the rebellion. Most films concentrate on personal accounts and the strikers’ perspective.

Der 17 Juni in Berlin, released in 1953, recounts the events of June 17 and consequent days of strikes and revolts.¹ This documentary appeals to emotional or propagandistic leniency. It closes with the burial ceremonies of the uprising’s victims and the Bundestag’s memorial service.²

On the twentieth anniversary of the uprising, in 1973, Director Lutz Lehmann released *Ein Mittwoch im Juni*.³ This film exposes the dichotomous perspective of East and West on the events of June 16 and 17, 1953, and its aftereffects.⁴ By examining the events from June 16 to June 27, Lehmann attempts to recapture the series of revolts and

¹*Der 17 Juni in Berlin* (17 June in Berlin), 1953, 16 mm. For information contact Landesinstitut für Schule und Medien Berlin.

²Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZF, “Dokumentarfilme: Der 17 Juni in Berlin,” URL: www.17juni53.de/material/filmliste_2.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

³*Ein Mittwoch im Juni* (One Wednesday in June), dir. Lutz Lehmann, 60 min., 1973, 35 mm.

⁴Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZF, “Dokumentarfilme: Ein Mittwoch im Juni,” URL: www.17juni53.de/material/filmliste_2.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

to portray the reaction and memory of Soviet, GDR, and Western observers. He utilizes personal accounts, eye witnesses, press releases, and photographs.⁵

In 1982, Jüergen Haese Production Company produced *Und Freiheit vor Allen Dingen: Erinnerungen an den 17. Juni 1953*.⁶ *Freiheit* opens with an original news report from June 17 backtracking to 1945, and surveys the eight years leading up to the revolt.⁷ This film captures the national and international political atmosphere, which contributed to the workers' discontent. The documentary directly addresses faulty historical recollection by highlighting the later so common perception of June 17 as a work-free picnic day without widespread thought or knowledge of the date's significance for West Germany.⁸ The interviewees include well-known figures, among them Bundespräsident Carl Carstens, and historian Arnulf Baring, who wrote *Uprising in East Germany: June 17, 1953 (Aufstand im Juni: 17. Juni 1953)*.⁹

Jene Tage im Juni, based on a book by Jürgen Rühle and Peter Schultz, directed by the authors and produced in 1983, concentrates on eyewitness accounts, including testimony from journalists and strikers who witnessed the events on June 16 and 17,

⁵Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, "Der 17. Juni in der deutschen Literatur: Ein Mittwoch im Juni," URL: www.mdr.de/mdr-figaro/hoerspiel/765310-hintergrund-767103.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

⁶*Und Freiheit vor Allen Dingen: Erinnerungen an den 17. Juni 1953* (And Liberty for All First: Memories of 17 June 1953), 28 min., Multimedia, 1982, 16 mm.

⁷Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, "Dokumentarfilme: Und Freiheit vor Allen Dingen," URL: www.17juni53.de/material/filmliste_2.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

⁸Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung (bpb), "Und Freiheit vor Allen Dingen: Erinnerungen an den 17. Juni 1953," URL: www.bpb.de/publikationen/THWLRI,0,0,Und_Freiheit_vor_allen_Dingen.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

⁹Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, "Dokumentarfilme: Und Freiheit vor Allen Dingen," URL: www.17juni53.de/material/filmliste_2.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

1953, and on the events leading up to the rebellion.¹⁰ Rühle and Schultz provide a spectrum of perspectives and stories from industrial workers and factory administrators to national and international politicians. They present a vision of the Soviet Union countered by the Western powers—a contrast between passive and aggressive reactions. The film includes strike reports throughout East Germany from Leipzig, Bitterfeld, Merseburg, Rathenow, and Dresden.¹¹ Essentially an educational tool, the film lasts ninety minutes.¹²

In 1998, forty-five years after the uprising, Jeremy Isaacs Productions and Ted Turner produced a CNN/BBC series film, *After Stalin: 1953-1956*, with narration by Kenneth Branagh.¹³ This documentary commences with Stalin's death in March 1953, and closes with the Hungarian uprising in 1956.¹⁴ Personal testimony of strikers highlights June 17, 1953, as a poignant moment in the three-year period.

Between 1957 and 2002, German studios released four docudramas, portraying aspects of June 17 in a dramatic narrative. DEFA Studios produced the earliest feature

¹⁰*Jene Tage im Juni* (Those Days in June), dir. Jürgen Rühle and Peter Schultz, 90 min., Studio Hamburg für SFB/WDR, 1983, videocassette.

¹¹Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, "Dokumentarfilme: Jene Tage im Juni," URL: www.17juni53.de/material/filmliste_2.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

¹²Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung (bpb), "Jene Tage im Juni: Der Deutsche Aufstand 1953," URL: www.bpb.de/publikationen/9J4AXF,0,0,Jene_Tage_im_Juni.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

¹³*After Stalin: 1953-1956*, 45 min., Jeremy Isaacs Production, 1998, videocassette.

¹⁴Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, "Dokumentarfilme: After Stalin: 1953-1956," URL: www.17juni53.de/material/filmliste_2.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

film represented in this paper and the only one from the GDR. Soviet authorities established DEFA Studios in May 1946.¹⁵

Kurt Maetzig directed *Schlösser und Katen*, in two parts, lasting over three hours.¹⁶ *Schlösser* premiered in August 1957 and aired on television on the fortieth anniversary of the uprising in 1993.¹⁷ Kurt Barthel, also known as “Kuba,” wrote the script. Barthel served as the Secretary for the Akademie der Künste (Academy of Fine Arts) in East Berlin.¹⁸ Part 1, “Der Krumme Anton,” and Part 2, “Annegrets Heimkehr,” covers a ten-year period beginning in 1945. “Der Krumme Anton,” set in an East German village in 1945, witnesses the advance of Soviet troops into Germany. The large landholder in the village, a count and his family, flee west before the Soviet troops arrive, leaving his land for expropriation. His former servant Anton, a permanently hunched man, obtains portions of the Count’s property, land, and an old document bequeathing upon Annegret, Anton’s daughter, the sum of 5000 Marks. With this, Anton hopes for a better life for his daughter. A plot develops. A local man contrives a marriage between his son and Annegret. He hopes to gain Annegret’s land and property. Part one closes with Annegret discovering the man’s true intentions and false claims of love. She runs away.¹⁹

¹⁵DEFA Sternstunden, “Geschichte,” URL: www.defa-sternstunden.de/indexhist.htm. Accessed 17 May 2004.

¹⁶*Schlösser und Katen* (Castles and Cottages), dir. Kurt Maetzig, 204 min., DEFA-Studio für Spielfilme, 1956, 35mm or videocassette.

¹⁷Deutscher Tonfilm, “Schlösser und Katen 1. Teil: Der krumme Anton,” URL: www.deutscher-tonfilm.de/suk1tdka1.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

¹⁸Net-Lexikon, “Kurt Barthel: Definition, Bedeutung, Erklärung im Lexikon,” URL: www.net-lexikon.de/Kurt-Barthel.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

¹⁹*Schlösser und Katen* (Castles and Cottages), dir. Kurt Maetzig, 204 min., DEFA-Studio für Spielfilme, 1956, 35mm or videocassette.

Annegret's true love, Klimm, a young comrade in the new socialist system, toils away building the new socialist GDR. She fears Klimm will not want to marry someone with means, scoffing at the old system of wealth and materialism. Part two, "Annegrets Heimkehr," brings Annegret, now educated and a mother, home to her village and family where trouble brews. The June 17, 1953, uprising ensues, but the "old guard" with their non-socialist agenda is successfully quashed. At this time, Anton realizes that the Count's document, making Annegret an heiress, is worthless. This frees Annegret and Klimm to finally marry and live "happily-ever-after" in a socialist utopia.²⁰

While the film partially blames land collectivization for the uprising, ultimately the people who feed the revolt are considered people trapped in the old fascist system. Only when the GDR successfully extinguishes the revolt, and her father abandons his attraction to the old materialistic system, can the new generation live happily and freely. The GDR's message radiates.

Auf der Suche nach Gatt, directed by Helmut Schiemann, produced in 1976 and based on Erik Neutsch's novel by the same title, follows the life of the main character, Eberhard Gatt, a miner who rises to the position of journalist and newspaper editor in the socialist system.²¹ Neutsch matches the main character's internal conflicts with the country's economic and political struggles. The "search for Gatt" also counters the GDR search for stability and answers. As a journalist, Gatt provides an eyewitness account of the June 17, 1953, uprising, and views the protest unfavorably.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹*Auf der Suche nach Gatt* (On the Search for Gatt), dir. Helmut Schiemann, 170 min., Zweiteiliger Fernsehfilm des DDR-Fernsehens DDR, 1976, videocassette.

Die Plebejer Proben den Aufstand, produced in 1970 by director Hans Lietzau, based on Günter Grass's 1966 play of the same title, is set in an East Berlin Theater.²² The troupe of actors rehearses a production of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. *Coriolanus* tells the story of a Roman hero, Caius Marcius, who leads the Roman army victorious against Corioli and earns the name Coriolanus. Coriolanus shares a capricious and fitful relationship with the plebeians, who one minute try to revolt and resent Coriolanus and the next consider electing Coriolanus consul. Meanwhile Coriolanus remains loyal to them, but continues to chide them for their decisions. Coriolanus, ultimately a victim of his arrogance and banished from Rome by the people, sides with his former enemies, the Volscians, to take Rome. His mother talks him out of his betrayal, whereupon the Volscians consider him a traitor. Although the Volscians respect him, they eventually murder him.²³

Coriolanus embodies heroism, betrayal, loyalty, and arrogance. Grass's main character, the Boss, mimics Coriolanus's challenges and follows a similar path. As the theater troupe rehearses the play, an uprising erupts in the streets of East Germany, and strikers come to the Boss for his endorsement of the strike and a rousing speech or pamphlet to encourage the people. The Boss questions the seriousness of the strike and ultimately reduces the strikers to little more than extras in his play. Kozanka, a government speaker and SED supporter, also approaches the Boss to speak against the strikers. The Boss refuses. Both sides curse him as unaffected and spineless, and liken

²²*Die Plebejer Proben den Aufstand* (The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising), dir. Hans Lietzau, 130 min., ARD-Service, 1970, videocassette.

²³Ibid.

him to Coriolanus. At one point, the people decide to hang the Boss with his stage assistant, but the stage assistant successfully talks them out of it.²⁴

The uprising runs its course, and the Soviet tanks suppress the people. As the company meets after the revolt, Kozanka approaches the Boss once again to join him in opposition to the strikes and sign his list of government supporters. The Boss refuses to sign the list, but authors a letter to the “First Secretary of the Central Committee” critiquing the government’s actions in the first two paragraphs, then proclaiming his solidarity with the government in the final paragraph. His fellow theater staff foreshadows the people’s judgment of his letter, and the Boss seems doomed to humiliation as a traitor.²⁵

Grass’s play/film presents the juxtaposition and turmoil inherent between the people, the government, and the intellectuals who historically became key figures courted by both sides in the actual uprising. Indecision or lack of inspiration creates a tragic hero who lives the rest of his life in ridicule by the same people who vied for his approval and support.

In 2002, the ZDF (German Public TV Channel 2) produced *Liebesau—Die Andere Heimat*, a television drama based on Peter Steinbach’s book.²⁶ This “serial” consists of four parts set in a small German town, Liebesau, and spans forty years, June 15, 1953, to 1993. The first part opens on June 15, 1953, and focuses entirely on the June 17 uprising. The story is fictional but reflects the emotions and strife experienced in

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶*Liebesau – Die Andere Heimat* (Liebesau – The Other Homeland), dir. Wolfgang Panzer, 90 min., Vierteiliger Fernsehfilme des ZDF, 2002, videocassette.

Germany during the Cold War, particularly the impact and perception of Soviet tanks rolling into the streets of East Berlin and East Germany on June 17, 1953. The story captures a village torn apart by political and socio-economic strife. Family members argue their positions as demonstrated by a father and son feuding over political perspectives, while their farm joins an LPG (a collective). The village deals with the issue of political prisoners and work quota hikes as villagers disappear or are murdered because their political stance. Farmers and workers rise up June 17, 1953. Episode One closes with Soviet tanks entering the village.²⁷ The following parts do not follow up on the uprising, but capture the history of the village down to 1993.

With the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising in 2003, Germany produced four new television films in remembrance. *Ausnahmezustand – Berlin, 17. Juni 1953: Zwei Tage Hoffnung*, produced by Nico Hoffmann and teamWorx in Berlin, and directed by Peter Keglevic, tells the fictitious story of two estranged brothers, Helmut and Wolfgang Kaminski.²⁸ The separated brothers' relationship mirrors the split between East and West. Helmut works in West Berlin as a journalist, while Wolfgang is a government (SED) official in East Berlin. Problems arise for the family when East German forces kidnap Helmut's friend, Rüdiger Krohn (a photographer), and take him East. Helmut fears for his father, Otto, and brother, Wolfgang, because Krohn carries a list of GDR citizens, including the names of his brother and father. Helmut does not know that Wolfgang orchestrated Krohn's kidnapping. When their father participates and dies in

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸*Ausnahmezustand – Berlin, 17. Juni 1953: Zwei Tage Hoffnung* (State of Emergency – Berlin, 17 June 1953: Two Days of Hope), dir. Peter Keglevic, 90 min., Nico Hoffman and teamWorx, 2003, videocassette.

the June 17 revolt, the two brothers unite to flee west. Wolfgang successfully escapes across the border while the East German police arrest Helmut and his girlfriend.²⁹

This film couches the historical events of June 17, 1953, in a family and personal setting, projecting the division of the country onto a set of friends and family. In the final analysis, the film conveys a sense of healing and reunion. Helmut and Wolfgang reunite to foreshadow the ultimate reunion between East and West in 1989. At times the movie resembles more dramatic fiction than a “docudrama” or historical narrative.

In 2003, Thomas Freudner directed *17. Juni: Tage des Sturms*, a film produced by the State of Saxonia on behalf of its public radio and television company, Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (MDR).³⁰ Similar to *Ausnahmezustand*, *17. Juni* shows how the uprising affected an entire family. This fictional story, set in Bitterfeld, a town southwest of Berlin and directly north of Leipzig, captures the life of an electro-chemical worker, Hartmut Brücken, and his pregnant wife, Claudia. As the events of the uprising unfurl, Hartmut, a strike leader, finds it necessary to flee west as Soviet tanks roll into Bitterfeld. Eastern authorities imprison his wife. Her release hinges on Hartmut’s return and surrender.³¹

In an interview posted on the DREFA Medien-Gruppe website, Hans Werner Honert, one of the authors and managing directors, explained his goal in the story of *17. Juni*.

Historical events make it possible to show basic human behavior in all its facets. When we reenacted June 17 on film, we not only intended to pay homage to a

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰*17. Juni: Tage des Sturms* (17 June: Days of Storms), dir. Thomas Freudner, 90 min., Saxonia and MDR, 2003, videocassette.

³¹Ibid.

major historical event, but also to provoke in the viewers a deeper sensitivity regarding human nature. After all, the events of 1953 and 1989 were not altogether dissimilar and may occur again in the future. For these reasons I do not share the notion that the film may fail to address the needs and interests of the audience.³²

Furthermore, Honert carefully explains, those involved in the production resisted instilling a slant or bias in the film, and he judiciously decided to refrain from basing the story on any previous works, such as Stefan Heym's *Fünf Tage im Juni*, for fear of reproducing someone else's story. Originally aired in 2003, MDR replayed the film again on June 19, 2004.

Der Aufstand was written by Guido Knopp, directed by Hans-Christoph Blumenberg, and produced by ZDF.³³ This docudrama details East Germany's history between the death of Stalin in March 1953 and the uprising on June 17, 1953. *Aufstand* reenacts the events of June 17, 1953, in a narrative form, but interrupts the story periodically with interviews and photographs. Recreated circumstances of June 17, 1953, include characters and moments described in Rainer Hildebrandt's *The Explosion: The Uprising Behind the Iron Curtain*, including Erika Sarre, an instructress for the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ) (Free German Youth). The ZDF quotes Knopp: "Our project

³²DREFA: Media Holding GMBH, "Nachdenken Provozieren," URL: www.drefa.de/aktuell/archiv/09/index_2.html. Accessed 17 May 2004. Honert's original statement reads: "Gerade historische Ereignisse machen es möglich, die Grundzüge menschlichen Verhaltens in all seinen Facetten zu zeigen. Unsere Intention bei der filmischen Realisierung des '17. Juni' war somit nicht nur eine Würdigung des geschichtlichen Moments und Jubiläums, sondern auch beim Zuschauer Sensibilität gegenüber menschlichem Verhalten zu provozieren. Denn ähnliche Konflikte hat es 1989 gegeben und werden sich mit Sicherheit auch künftig zutragen. Aus diesen Gründen kann ich Ihre Befürchtung, der Film könne an den Bedürfnissen und Interessen der Zuschauer vorbeigehen, nicht teilen."

³³*Der Aufstand* (The Uprising), dir. Hans-Christoph Blumenberg, 105 min., ZDF, 2002, videocassette.

‘The Uprising,’” he says, “is intended to create for the heroes of June 17 a place of honor in the annals of German history.”³⁴

The internet educates people across languages, borders, and cultures. Individuals, organizations, and companies utilize the internet to share information and insights about the June 17 uprising. Internet sites pertaining to the historical events, personal accounts, government reports, literature, movies, interviews, and articles abound. Although some organizations devote entire sites to the uprising, the internet also allows broadcasting and other media to post hundreds of news and magazine articles, as well as interviews, for mass access. Internet sites devoted to the 1953 uprising consist of four types: (1) sites created solely to relate the uprising’s history; (2) sites devoted to other subjects such as politics, museums, history, and organizations which feature segments on the strikes; (3) media sites which present articles or interactive sites on the revolt; and (4) sites posting personal accounts and histories connected to the uprising.

Deutschland Radio, the Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung (BPB), and the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam developed the largest and most educational internet site devoted solely to the history of the uprising.³⁵ It exercises a well organized and perhaps simplistic approach: posting historical data—primary and secondary sources—on the internet so people can learn about the uprising. It also proffers combinations of media genres, including original video clips.

³⁴ZDF, “Umstrittener Tag der deutschen Geschichte: Guido Knopp über das Doku-Drama ‘Der Aufstand,’” URL: www.zdf.de/ZDFde/inhalt/29/0,1872,2046973,00.html. Accessed 17 May 2004. (“Unser Projekt ‘Der Aufstand soll mit dazu beitragen, dass den Helden des 17. Juni jener ehrenvolle Platz in der Geschichte zukommt, der ihnen gebührt.”)

³⁵Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, “17. Juni 1953,” URL: www.17juni53.de/home/index.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

BPB divided the site into six divisions to help the viewer navigate through the information efficiently. These categories are *Home*, *Chronik* (“chronology”), *Karte* (“maps”), *Material*, *Forum*, and *Veranstaltungen* (“current events”). The *Home* page supplies a compendious introduction to the site’s subject matter and the events of June 17. It also imparts contact instructions for individuals with further interests or questions. In addition, the *Home* section posts links to *Jahrestag 2003* (“Anniversary 2003”), *Newsletter Abonnieren* (“newsletter subscription”), and two search links.³⁶

The *Jahrestag 2003* section contributes two studies by Dr. Christoph Kleßmann and Edgar Wolfrum written for the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising. Kleßmann’s paper, “Der 17. Juni 1953 im Geschichtsbild Deutschlands gestern und heute,” examines the legacy and the history of June 17, 1953, in German historiography and public perception up to the fiftieth anniversary in 2003. Edgar Wolfrum’s paper, “Neue Erinnerungskultur? Die Massenmedialisierung des 17. Juni 1953,” addresses popular culture and memory of June 17 as well as the impact of the mass media on public awareness. The *Newsletter Abonnieren* link allows the viewer to register and receive a newsletter through their email. The two search links, which appear throughout the site, allow researchers access to relevant topics.³⁷

In addition, this introductory page features three media links. First, the site posts two versions of a video clips on the circumstances of June 17, 1953. This video includes original news footage of the uprising. Although the site offers several methods, viewing proves difficult or even impossible—apparently due to differences between German and American scripts. The other two links, always viewable, provide a picture and a “multi-

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

media map.” The picture captures a group of workers marching in front of the Brandenburg Gate.³⁸

The “multi-media map,” an invaluable source, presents a street map of Berlin with a blow-by-blow breakdown of events on June 17. The map opens with a brief introduction of the uprising and then leads to a legend and finally to a map, navigable at the viewer’s speed. As the viewer clicks on an arrow, a dot appears at a location with a drop-box. The box contains a time and a description of what happened, using several media sources. The media accounts draw on eyewitness reports, information blocks, quotes, RIAS radio reports, GDR radio reports, images of original bulletins, and pictures. The timeline begins at 8:15 a.m. on June 17, 1953. The source transforms a rich agglomeration of resources into a detailed account, and acts as an invaluable teaching tool. This concludes the *Home* page.³⁹

The *Chronik* page contributes a detailed timeline of the events leading up to June 17 and its aftermath.⁴⁰ While much of the information proves dry and straightforward, the timeline implements an easy-access means for the viewer to jump around and quickly access different time periods. The chronicle of monthly events begins on April 1, 1952, and ends December 1953. This section also features a multi-media approach. Radio reports, audio accounts and recordings, pictures, documents, written reports, video clips, and graphs support the information provided. As the viewer selects a month, a breakdown of events appears in chronological order. The viewer then decides whether to

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, “17. Juni 1953: Chronik,” URL: www.17juni53.de/chronik/index.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

view the supplemental sources. In addition, *Chronik* furnishes a more detailed, daily timeline for the month of June 1953. The daily chronicle works the same as the monthly timeline.⁴¹

The third section, *Karte*, consists of two sections, *Einleitung* (Introduction) and *Karte der Bezirksstädte* (Map of Major Cities).⁴² The introduction imparts a brief overview of the map and its purpose for the site. The second section, *Karte der Bezirksstädte*, exhibits a map of the fifteen districts in the GDR, and West Berlin, the viewer can select any district. After the visitor selects a district, an overview of the events which occurred in that particular district appears. In addition, this section utilizes multi-media sources. After the historical summary of the events in each district, the viewer has a choice of supplementary sources, including radio broadcasts, reports, pictures, and videos.⁴³

Material, the fourth section, contains the most productive links for researchers.⁴⁴ An introduction describes this section as a “handbook.” It serves as a directory of information and sources for those interested in further research. Links exist to *Archiv-Anschriften* (Archive addresses), *Dokumente*, *Zeitzeugenberichte* (“Documents and Eyewitness Accounts”), *O-Töne* (Original Audio Sources), *BPB-Materialien*, *Bibliographie* (Bibliography), *Linkliste* (Link list), *Filmliste* (Film List), *Prosa-Literaturliste* (Prose-Literature List), *Personenverzeichnis* (People index), and

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, “17. Juni 1953: Karte,” URL: www.17juni53.de/karte/index.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, “17. Juni 1953: Material,” URL: www.17juni53.de/material/index.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

Abkürzungsverzeichnis (Abbreviation index). The *Archiv-Anschriften* section supplies complete contact information for twenty-nine archives containing material relevant to the June 17, 1953, uprising.⁴⁵

The *Dokumente* component posts official documents, arranged chronologically or regionally, related to the 1953 uprising.⁴⁶ Chronologically, the material covers April 1952 to December 1953, and the browser selects from the furnished timeline. The *Zeitzeugenberichte* contains twenty-three personal testimonies concerning the events of June 17, 1953, and subsequent developments.⁴⁷ *O-Töne* offers original audio-recordings of speeches, news reports, and statements regarding the strikes.⁴⁸ The audio material's organization mirrors that of the *Dokumente* section. All of the recordings are RIAS or DDR-Rundfunk broadcasts.

The *BPB-Materialien* section incorporates speeches, publications, and statements given by various East and West German officials and noted intellectuals.⁴⁹ The speeches span a period from June 23, 1953, to 2001, and include individuals such as Konrad Adenauer, Willy Brandt, and Christoph Kleßmann. Subject matter ranges from the events and remembrance of June 17, 1953, to the state of socialism in the GDR, to Soviet-German relations and the future of Germany, divided and reunited.

⁴⁵Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, "17. Juni 1953: Material: Archiv-Verzeichnis," URL: www.17juni53.de/material/archiv.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

⁴⁶Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, "17. Juni 1953: Material: Dokumente," URL: www.17juni53.de/material/dokumente.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

⁴⁷Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, "17. Juni 1953: Material: Zeitzeugenberichte," URL: www.17juni53.de/material/zeitzeugen.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

⁴⁸Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, "17. Juni 1953: Material: O-Töne," URL: www.17juni53.de/material/otoene.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

⁴⁹Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, "17. Juni 1953: Material: Texte der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung," URL: www.17juni53.de/material/bpb.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

The *Bibliographie* is vast and highly informative.⁵⁰ Each subdivision lists publications relevant to the heading. The final section, *Der 17. Juni als Gedenktag*, shares material on the meaning of June 17 as a holiday and its place in history. The texts range from the 1960s to the twenty-first century. *Linkliste* has five sections: research, media, chronology, eyewitnesses and school projects, similar to the bibliography section.⁵¹ Organized identically to *Linkliste*, the *Filmliste* organizes pertinent films under six categories: Introduction, Basic Materials, Documentaries, Movies, Updates, and Addresses.⁵² The *Prosa-Literaturliste* is divided into three parts, not including the introduction.⁵³ Each section expresses a decade: 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s-1980s. This section attempts to track the course of prose writings and literature in East and West Germany over a forty-year period. Each essay marks authors of the time period and their contribution to June 17 literature, and each author's perspective and message.

The two final sections, *Personenverzeichnis* and *Abkürzungsverzeichnis*, supply a significant collection of indices of people and terms or abbreviations.⁵⁴ Given the complex history of politics, strife, revolt, and community, these ancillary services offer researchers efficient and invaluable assistance. The fifth major category of the website,

⁵⁰Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, "17. Juni 1953: Material: Bibliographie," URL: www.17juni53.de/material/biblio.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

⁵¹Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, "17. Juni 1953: Material: Linkliste," URL: www.17juni53.de/material/linkliste.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

⁵²Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, "17. Juni 1953: Material: Filmmaterial, Dokumentar und Spielfilme zum 17. Juni 1953," URL: www.17juni53.de/material/filmliste.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

⁵³Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, "17. Juni 1953: Material: Prosa-Literaturliste," URL: www.17juni53.de/material/prosa.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

⁵⁴Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, "17. Juni 1953: Material: Personenverzeichnis," URL: www.17juni53.de/material/personen.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

Forum, allows people to share information directly with other researchers.⁵⁵ The website posts some of the shared data and does not require registration.

The final section, *Veranstaltungen*, supplies brief descriptions of projects designed for the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising by the BPB, Deutschland Radio, then Bundespräsident Johannes Rau, the Hamburger Körber-Stiftung, and the Stadtarchiv and Museumsverein.⁵⁶ They reflect some of the measures taken in 2003 to commemorate the strikers of 1953.

The *Vereinigung 17. Juni 1953, e.V.*, the organization for commemorating the June 17, 1953, uprising, created an internet site to educate the public about the revolt and to keep it updated on events commemorating the anniversary.⁵⁷ *Vereinigung 17. Juni 1953, e.V.*, originally created to commemorate the events of June 17, 1953, and fight for a united Germany, achieved the latter part of its mission in 1989/90. A board, which meets every June 17 in Berlin, runs the society. Manfred Plöckinger, a participant and survivor of the revolt, founded the organization. Plöckinger served more than two years in prison after his arrest in 1953. Upon his release, he fled to West Berlin and founded *Vereinigung* in 1957. He served as one of two chairpersons who ran the *Vereinigung* until his death in 2002. The active chairperson, Carl-Wolfgang Holzapfel, “fought the Berlin Wall” through demonstrations in the 1960s. The GDR sentenced Holzapfel to eight years in prison, but the FRG ransomed him in 1966. He became chairperson in 2000, and oversees the website.

⁵⁵Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, “17. Juni 1953: Forum,” URL: www.17juni53.de/forum/index.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

⁵⁶Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Deutschland Radio, and Potsdam ZZf, “17. Juni 1953: Veranstaltungen,” URL: www.17juni53.de/veran/index.html. Accessed 17 May 2004.

⁵⁷Vereinigung 17. Juni 1953 e.V., “Vereinigung 17. Juni 1953 e.V.,” URL: www.17juni1953.de. Accessed 20 May 2004.

The website incorporates seven main sections: *Home*, *Vorstand/Beirat* (President/Board of Directors), *Presse*, *17. Juni 1953*, *Veröffentlichungen*, (publications) *Gästebuch*, (guest book) *Links*, and *Kontakt*. The *Home* page acts as a bulletin board, posting dates and events commemorating the uprising of 1953 and informs viewers of the organization's history, goals, and plans for the future.⁵⁸ *Vorstand/Beirat* contributes a short history and outline of the organization and the names of the board members and advisors.⁵⁹ In addition, it includes links to give brief histories of the two chairpersons, and a concise obituary for Manfred Plöckinger supplemented by a brief outline of his contributions to the society. The *Presse* section advertises a limited number of press releases given by *Vereinigung* between 2001 and 2004.⁶⁰ The fourth division, *17. Juni 1953*, hosts an overview of the history of June 17, 1953 in East Germany accompanied by a link to a bibliography and a fine selection of black and white photographs of the strikes.⁶¹ *Veröffentlichungen* (Publications) contains two brochures, authored by Carl-Wolfgang Holzapfel and published in 1993 and 2003 at the fortieth and fiftieth anniversaries.⁶² The site only offers a digital image of the pamphlet covers, concise text outlining their contents, and a link to buy the brochures. *Gästebuch* (guestbook), an interactive page, allows viewers to register with the website and post their comments

⁵⁸Vereinigung 17. Juni 1953 e.V., "Home," URL: www.17juni1953.de. Accessed 20 May 2004.

⁵⁹Vereinigung 17. Juni 1953 e.V., "Vorstand, Beirat," URL: www.17juni1953.de. Accessed 20 May 2004.

⁶⁰Vereinigung 17. Juni 1953 e.V., "Presse," URL: www.17juni1953.de. Accessed 20 May 2004.

⁶¹Vereinigung 17. Juni 1953 e.V., "17. Juni 1953," URL: www.17juni1953.de. Accessed 20 May 2004.

⁶²Vereinigung 17. Juni 1953 e.V., "Veröffentlichungen," URL: www.17juni1953.de. Accessed 20 May 2004.

pertaining to the website or the uprising, and read other viewers' feedback.⁶³ The website also supplies a forum for the public and Carl-Wolfgang Holzapfel to respond to questions and comments. The *Links* page includes a list of websites for organizations similar to *Vereinigung 17. Juni 1953, e.V.*⁶⁴ Related sites endeavor to educate the public about various aspects of Germany, East and West, during the Cold War. The Mauer Museum site is devoted to the Berlin Wall, its history and the people's story. The final section, *Kontakt*, delivers the contact information for members of the board and a forum for visitors to email the organization.⁶⁵

The Deutsches Historische Museum in Berlin devotes a section of its website to the 1953 revolt. It features two famous pictures of strikers throwing stones at the Soviet tanks and an article summarizing the history of the uprising. The Museum's website also furnishes press releases announcing exhibits at the museum commemorating the 2002 and 2003 anniversaries.⁶⁶

Several general history sites include extensive sections and educational material on the 1953 revolt. *Deutsche Geschichte—Das Jahrtausend* focuses on German history in general.⁶⁷ The site includes a page on the revolt titled "Aufstand—17. Juni 1953" with

⁶³Vereinigung 17. Juni 1953 e.V., "Gästebuch," URL: www.17juni1953.de. Accessed 20 May 2004.

⁶⁴Vereinigung 17. Juni 1953 e.V., "Links," URL: www.17juni1953.de. Accessed 20 May 2004.

⁶⁵Vereinigung 17. Juni 1953 e.V., "Kontakt," URL: www.17juni1953.de. Accessed 20 May 2004.

⁶⁶Deutsches Historisches Museum, "Der 17. Juni 1953 in Berlin Leipziger Strasse," URL: www.dhm.de/ausstellungen/bildzeug/qtvr/DHM/n/BuZKopie/raum_38.02.htm. Accessed 20 May 2004.

⁶⁷Deutsche Geschichte, "Deutsche Geschichte: Das Jahrtausend," URL: www.e-papyrus.de/index_home.html. Accessed 20 May 2004.

pictures of the revolt supplementing an historical overview of the uprising and its surrounding events.⁶⁸ The site is brief, concise, and informative.

In 2003, on the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising, the German Embassy in Washington, D.C., created a page linked to their website to commemorate the uprising.⁶⁹ The page, completely in English, includes an extensive history accompanied by pictures and news articles. The page opens with an article posted on June 20, 2003, regarding the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising and various commemorative activities. A link leads to the German Embassy's page of educational material. The opening page, a retrospective article, considers the uprising fifty years later and puts it into contemporary perspective. The article portrays the uprising as a significant event in history carrying long-term effects with which society continues to grapple.

From this page, visitors select five related links all created by the German Embassy. The first, *50 Years On: The June 17, 1953, Uprising*, introduces the uprising, describing the events, consequences, impact, and the German community's continual remembrance, and celebration and commemoration of the day.⁷⁰ The site attempts to explain the East German effort to erase June 17 from history. "Just as protesters had been swept from the country's streets and squares in a single militarized blow," it explains, "glorification of the uprising was blotted from public discussion."⁷¹ However,

⁶⁸Deutsche Geschichte, "Volksaufstand in der DDR: 17. Juni 1953," URL: www.e-papyrus.de/aufstand_17._juni_1953.html. Accessed 20 May 2004.

⁶⁹German Embassy Washington, D.C., "50th Anniversary of the June 17 uprising in the German Democratic Republic," URL: www.germany-info.org/relaunch/politics/new/pol_viewpoint_17_june_50.html. Accessed 21 May 2004.

⁷⁰German Embassy Washington, D.C., "50 Years On: The June 17, 1953 Uprising," URL: www.germany-info.org/relaunch/politics/new/pol_viewpoint_17_june_50.html. Accessed 21 May 2004.

⁷¹Ibid.

the site emphasizes the uprising's importance in the west as a holiday and as a German and international incident.

The June 17, 1953, Uprising: The Events in Berlin, the second link, offers a comprehensive explanation of the events leading up to the strikes and the day's occurrences in East Berlin only.⁷² It contains an impressive selection of photographs taken in East Berlin on the day of the uprising. The photographs create a sense of empathy for the strikers.

The third page, *The June 17, 1953, Uprising: Time Line*, displays a timeline beginning on March 10, 1952, and ending on June 26, 1963.⁷³ In addition to significant events leading up to and during the uprising, the timeline includes major episodes in German and World history during the Cold War, encompassing the reunification of Germany and international relations. The German Embassy couples its comments with photographs of the revolt, and closes the timeline with a short bibliography for "further reading," including websites, articles, and books.

Commentaries by Jeffrey Herf, a professor of history at the University of Maryland, and Christian Ostermann constitute the last two links. Jeffrey Herf's exposition scrutinizes the social and historical significance of the uprising and attempts to place the revolts into perspective with previous historical and social events.⁷⁴

⁷²German Embassy Washington, D.C., "The June 17, 1953 Uprising: The Events in East Berlin," URL: www.germany-info.org/relaunch/politics/new/pol_viewpoint_17_june_details.html. Accessed 21 May 2004.

⁷³German Embassy Washington, D.C., "The June 17, 1953 Uprising Time Line," URL: www.germany-info.org/relaunch/politics/new/pol_viewpoint_17_june_50_timeline.html. Accessed 21 May 2004.

⁷⁴German Embassy Washington, D.C., "The June 17, 1953 Uprising: Commentary by Jeffrey Herf, Associate Professor for History at the University of Maryland," URL: www.germany-info.org/relaunch/politics/new/pol_viewpoint_17_june_50_commentary.html. Accessed 21 May 2004.

Specifically, Herf relates the uprising to the Nazi issue and the “Jewish question” which defined modern German history up to June 17, 1953. Herf concentrates on Jewish and German citizens and their hopes and goals surviving World War II and watching the uprising unfold.

Christian Ostermann’s observations consider the international significance of June 17, placing the revolt within the broader East-West Cold War confrontation.⁷⁵ He tracks the immediate reaction of politicians and of the media, and later those of historians. He highlights the use of the uprising as a propaganda tool by the Soviets, the GDR, the FRG, and its Western allies. The press and historians immediately used the strikes as fodder to feed their respective agendas. The Soviets and the GDR predictably proclaimed that Western powers instigated the uprising, while the West used the reports of the revolt as an indication of the unhappiness of the Eastern people and the oppression of Communist rule. Ostermann goes on to explain the aftereffects of the uprising and each side’s position. The German Embassy does not present the definitive website on the uprising, but it grants access to the English-speaking public and a solid introduction to the history behind the revolts of 1953. It acts as a springboard for further research and understanding, even if it propagates a western slant with emotional responses at times.

Media websites document the recent interest in June 17, 1953, by posting news articles and interactive educational pages. *OpenDemocracy* defines itself as an “online global magazine of politics and culture.”⁷⁶ It acts as an online forum for people all over

⁷⁵German Embassy Washington, D.C., “50th Anniversary of the June 17 uprising in the German Democratic Republic,” URL: www.germany-info.org/relaunch/politics/new/pol_viewpoint_17_june_50_commentary1.html. Accessed 21 May 2004.

⁷⁶openDemocracy, “About oD: Overview,” URL: www.opendemocracy.net/about/index.jsp. Accessed 21 May 2004.

the world to write and post editorials as well as read news reports and feedback from intellectuals and writers. In 2003, *openDemocracy* posted several articles relevant to the uprising.⁷⁷ While not focusing on the facts and history of the uprising, the site exhibits personal views that highlight the relevance of the uprising to the present and displays the impact of the uprising fifty years later. The website presents most of its articles in English. Older articles require a subscription to access.

Many mainstream broadcasting organizations and newspapers include the June 17, 1953, uprising on their websites. One of the largest broadcasting companies in Germany, the Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (MDR), features several articles about and links corresponding to the uprising, as well as information on pertinent broadcasts and television programs.⁷⁸ Each link or article connects to other links. The MDR site exhibits articles written over the past years by its affiliated journalists. A majority of these articles include interviews of historians, both old enough to remember the events first-hand and young enough to offer a different perspective. The site also includes interviews with witnesses of the strikes. MDR attempts to incorporate the interviews and personal testimonies into a fluid account of the day.

Clearly, MDR's primary interest, broadcasting information, includes television programs and movies. The site showcases updated research and articles on recent documentaries and docudramas. It also contains articles and interviews related to older productions and movies broadcasts for relevant anniversaries or commemorative occasions.

⁷⁷openDemocracy, "openDemocracy," URL: www.opendemocracy.net. Accessed 21 May 2004.

⁷⁸Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (MDR), "MDR," URL: www.mdr.de. Accessed 21 May 2004.

In addition to the articles and broadcast information, MDR brandishes timelines of the uprising's events and supplementary historical information. MDR delivers a link list to helpful sites for more information on the uprising. These links include the Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung (BPB) site discussed above. A bibliographic list of literature referring to the revolts suggests further reading. MDR influences encourages to pursue further research. The site does not claim thorough or comprehensive analysis of June 17 or a precise analysis of the political situation in East or West Germany. MDR aims to engage and peak public interest.

CNN created an interactive site on the Cold War. This site, obviously not solely devoted to the uprising, presents an engaging, comprehensive, and clearly western overview of the Cold War, predominantly concentrating on tensions with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The CNN site breaks down the Cold War into "episodes." Episode 7 examines the years immediately after Stalin's death (1953-1956), concentrating on conjuncture in the Soviet satellites.⁷⁹ The site incorporates pictures, radio broadcasts, interviews, documents, interactive maps, and an interactive segment presenting scenarios, allowing visitors to make decisions.

CNN features additional material on the June 1953 revolt, including original RIAS radio reports and an interactive map. Although in German, CNN provides an English translation of the RIAS report, which the viewer can read as they listen. The RIAS report, a transcript of news correspondents stationed throughout Berlin reporting the events as they see them, focuses mostly on the Potsdamer Platz and includes dramatic descriptions of injured citizens and the offensive of the People's Police and Soviet forces.

⁷⁹CNN Interactive, "Episode 7: After Stalin: 1953-1956," URL: www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/episodes/07/. Accessed 21 May 2004.

As a special feature, the interactive map supplies overviews of revolts and skirmishes in the East European Soviet satellites. Similar to the MDR site, CNN's interactive site, although not a definitive historical source, strives to engage the public and create interest in historical events.

Newspapers too, have created websites with internet-accessible archives. This new format allows people access to searchable archives featuring, at a minimum, summaries of articles. Newspapers usually scan the entire article and submit it in its original form. The only limitation is that newspapers often require a nominal fee for access to the archives. Also, availability can be limited.

Personal accounts and testimonies, the final category of websites, are surprisingly numerous. The recent popularity of oral history has created a considerable demand for interviews and personal accounts of eyewitnesses and on-site participants. Due to its relatively recent date, the 1953 uprising features large numbers of witnesses. For example, Karl-Heinz Pahling, a self-proclaimed strike leader on June 17, 1953, has a website devoted to his testimony and experience.⁸⁰ Although he died in 1999, his children maintain his website initiated in the last year of his life. His original German website even accommodates the English-speaking public with a translated version.

The home page displays pictures of Pahling in his later years and a brief outline of his life, including his participation in the uprising and his subsequent arrest and imprisonment. The site explains the family's motives and goals for posting Pahling's

⁸⁰Karl-Heinz Pahling, "June 17th, 1953: People's Uprising in East Germany (GDR)," URL: www.volksaufstand1953.de/index.html. Accessed 25 May 2004.

information and memories: “All interested people now,” it explains, “have the unique opportunity to get to know facts, reports and memoirs first hand.”⁸¹

The *Die Ereignisse* section expresses a comprehensive reconstruction of the political backdrop of the uprising, beginning in 1952 and continuing through the events of June 17, 1953 and its aftereffects, including a link to the *Bundesministerium der Justiz*.⁸² The *Bilder* (Image) page features a selection of photographs and images of documents, articles, or posters, complete with captions explaining each image. Each caption is offered in German and English.⁸³

The third page, *Erinnerungen*, supplies three sources of Pahling’s story: articles or essays by Pahling; book excerpts concerning Pahling and the uprising; and news articles about Pahling and June 17.⁸⁴ The news articles, dated 1991 to 1994, were selected from a variety of newspapers, including *Berliner Tagespiegel* and *Berliner Morgenpost*.

Next, *Das Urteil* recounts the original charges, including listening to RIAS and being a provocateur in the June 17 strike, and the accusations raised against Pahling in August 1953.⁸⁵ The courts found him guilty and sentenced him to ten years with a minimum of five years served.

⁸¹Ibid. The original Pahling website statement reads: “Jetzt haben alle interessierten Menschen die einmalige Gelegenheit, Fakten, Berichte und Erinnerungen aus erster Hand zu bekommen.”

⁸²Karl-Heinz Pahling, “Die Ereignisse,” URL: www.volksaufstand1953.de/Ereignisse/ereignisse.html. Accessed 25 May 2004.

⁸³Karl-Heinz Pahling, “Bilder,” URL: www.volksaufstand1953.de/Bilder/bilder.html. Accessed 25 May 2004.

⁸⁴Karl-Heinz Pahling, “Erinnerungen,” URL: www.volksaufstand1953.de/Erinnerungen/erinnerungen.html. Accessed 25 May 2004.

⁸⁵Karl-Heinz Pahling, “Das Urteil,” URL: www.volksaufstand1953.de/Urteil/urteil.html. Accessed 25 May 2004.

In addition to Pahling's biographical information and related material, two sections of the website lead researchers to further information. The *Literatur* section features an extensive bibliography of more than 250 texts related to the June uprising,⁸⁶ while expanded coverage of the uprising can be found through the *Links* section, itself divided into six categories.⁸⁷

The seventh segment of the overall website, *Neues*, features a personal letter from the Pahling family, explaining the site and particular pieces of interest for the family.⁸⁸ This letter portrays Pahling as an individual, a family man, a participant in the strike, and the uprising itself, and gives the uprising a face. The *Gästebuch* invites visitors to sign and leave comments regarding the site.⁸⁹ The final section, *Kontakt* facilitates contact between guests and the family through email.⁹⁰

Karl-Heinz Pahling's website tells his story as a former DDR citizen, a strike leader, a political convict, and finally as a free man in a reunited Germany. The internet affords Pahling and his family the opportunity to preserve his story and communicate it to the world. In addition to his personal story, Pahling's family has demonstrated a concern for the conservation of information and knowledge regarding all aspects of the uprising, related topics, and recent German history, through their internet links and bibliography.

⁸⁶Karl-Heinz Pahling, "Literatur," URL: www.volksaufstand1953.de/Literatur/literatur.html. Accessed 25 May 2004.

⁸⁷Karl-Heinz Pahling, "Links," URL: www.volksaufstand1953.de/Links/links.html. Accessed 25 May 2004.

⁸⁸Karl-Heinz Pahling, "Neues," URL: www.volksaufstand1953.de/Neues/neues.html. Accessed 25 May 2004.

⁸⁹Karl-Heinz Pahling, "Gästebuch," URL: www.guest.de/guest.php?id=5860. Accessed 25 May 2004.

⁹⁰Karl-Heinz Pahling, "Kontakt," URL: www.volksaufstand1953.de/Kontakt/kontakt.html. Accessed 25 May 2004.

Thus, the internet facilitates access to history on a microcosm level and makes individual stories accessible and meaningful.

To sum up: the history and memory of the June 17 uprising remain alive and controversial thanks to the mass media, television, movies, and the internet. Film and television programs divide into two categories: documentaries and docudramas. Movies, created in every decade following the uprising, experienced upsurges around significant anniversaries such as the fiftieth anniversary in 2003. Most films addressed in this text are West German or post-1989 German productions and contain an abundance of information and opinions. East Germany banned the public from discussing or referencing “Day X,” so the only film from the East widely available portrays the movement as a capitalist provocation feeding on personal weaknesses. German television channels usually air the movies on anniversaries. In the 1990s, the increase of computers in homes and the growth of the internet created a new forum for organizations and individuals to maintain and preserve the uprising’s history and memory. Once considered a narrow medium with limited numbers of viewers, the internet now has the potential of reaching and connecting every home around the world. Interested parties have not failed to keep the 1953 uprising accessible to the public through updates. This small sample of the material generated for the commemoration and education by and for participating individuals and future generations reveals the continuing relevance and interest in the June 17 uprising.

CHAPTER FOUR

June 17 in Literature and Art

Literature and art, arguably the most intimate and revealing expressions of a society, provide a window into people's feelings, motivations, beliefs, and reactions. The following discussion of literary and visual works on the June 17 uprising or events related to it, focuses predominantly on German authors and artists and includes such genres as novels, poetry, plays, short stories, photography, stamps, coins, memorials, and sculpture. These literary and visual expressions mark Germany's remembrance of the June 17 revolt in its highest and most public form.

The following literary works cover the uprising in the form of personal histories, novels, poetry, plays, and short stories. Rainer Hildebrandt's *The Explosion: The Uprising Behind the Iron Curtain*, typifies a broad movement to record personal narratives and oral histories for the public.¹ Whereas his story recounts actual events, Stefan Heym's novel, *Fünf Tage im Juni*, signifies the large collection of fictional novels relating the context against whose backdrop the uprising must be understood.² Bertolt Brecht's infamous work, *The Solution*, embodies private anguish or emotion in the shortest, most intimate form of literary expression—poetry.³ Günter Grass's, *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising* expresses the author's personal views, presents political

¹Rainer Hildebrandt, *The Explosion: The Uprising Behind the Iron Curtain*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1955).

²Stefan Heym, *Five Days in June: A Novel*, trans. Peter Tempest (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1978).

³Bertolt Brecht, "The Solution," in *Poems, 1913-1956*, ed. John Willett and Ralph Manheim, trans. Michael Hamburger (New York: Methuen, Inc., 1976), 440.

issues, personal experiences, and public concerns.⁴ However, the play reenacts a three-dimensional expression for the public to witness. Finally, Jochen Ziem's short story *Uprising in East Germany* sends a personalized message of introspection (on an individual and national level) and personal turmoil.⁵ Ziem's character reflects personal and national attitudes, actions, and policies. This literature evinces the authors' individual take on the event and the larger German dilemma.

Rainer Hildebrandt's *The Explosion: The Uprising Behind the Iron Curtain*, published in 1955, two years after the uprising, relates nine personal accounts.⁶ Norbert Muhlen wrote the introduction for *The Explosion*, carefully interjecting Hildebrandt's personal history and his family's opposition to the Nazi regime prior to and during World War II. Muhlen tiptoes around Hildebrandt's German citizenship (born in Stuttgart in 1914)⁷, the book's close contiguity to the uprising and World War II, his Western audience, and Hildebrandt's service in the German army during World War II. According to Muhlen, Hildebrandt's mother's "non-Aryan" status (a Bavarian Jewess) and his father, a professor who claimed to be "unpolitisch" (nonpolitical) in search of the "True, Good and Beautiful," classified them as outcasts.⁸ Hildebrandt's father, eventually fired, was considered "a corrupter of German youth."⁹

⁴Günter Grass, *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising, A German Tragedy*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966).

⁵Jochen Ziem, "Uprising in East Germany," in *Uprising in East Germany and other Stories*, trans. Jorn K. Bramann and Jeanette Axelrod (Rochester: Adler Publishing Company, 1985), 158.

⁶Hildebrandt.

⁷Ibid., VI.

⁸Ibid., IX.

⁹Ibid., IX.

Muhlen stresses that Hildebrandt felt deeply betrayed and disappointed when Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia, and eventually joined the “anti-Nazi opposition” participating in spy games. He was drafted into the German army and served as a private.¹⁰ After being turned in by an acquaintance, Hildebrandt fled the Gestapo and the army. He remained on the run until caught and court-martialed. Sentenced to time served, he was returned to the army. He deserted again and spent the remainder of World War II in hiding.

After establishing Hildebrandt’s “anti-Nazi” position, Muhlen transitions into Hildebrandt’s growing understanding and opposition to Communism after the war. He fought to educate the masses about the use of concentration camps by communists as prisons. He disapproved of the communist use of the concentration camps just as he had opposed the Nazi practices. On the day of the uprising, Hildebrandt was shocked and excited to hear of the strikes and ran out to talk to the workers and participants. *The Explosion* resulted from Hildebrandt’s interviews with workers and strikers initiated during the uprising.

Muhlen’s introduction uses emotionally charged appeals and accusations which indict Nazis and Communists and appeal to the West. He presents disappointment in the West for not supporting the uprising, and expresses hope for the future in Western help for the citizens caught in the Eastern zone. “The events of June 1953, proved beyond a doubt,” Muhlen asserts, “that the overwhelming majority in the East wish to liberate themselves from their Soviet master, and that they might be able to liberate themselves if

¹⁰Ibid., XV.

the West is willing to help rather than ignore them.”¹¹ Muhlen explains that the events of June 17 are still fresh and relevant in the Eastern sector as a call for liberation of the people and a reminder to the government. “It remains a threat,” he suggests, “which keeps the Soviet rulers awake at night. It remains the hope of the silent, Soviet-suppressed people who wait for revival and victory.”¹² The uprising’s place in common memory, Muhlen suggests, might fade in Western minds, but it remains fresh in the East. “If this extraordinary event seems all but forgotten today on our side of the Iron Curtain,” he declares, “its memory is still very much alive throughout the Communist world.”¹³

Nine personal testimonies illustrate the June 17 events in a narrative form. The characters include East and West Germans and Soviets. Their relevance extends from participants in the strikes and strike leaders, to prisoners and Soviet soldiers. Marianne Maas’s story, told by Frau Kunter, her cellmate in the Görlitz penitentiary at the time of the riots, provides an understanding of the extreme conditions placed on East German citizens and the excessive sentences passed down for minor crimes.¹⁴ Marianne Maas, sentenced to twelve years for hiding a Polish refugee, represented youthful ideals and love with tragic results. Her fiancé, also arrested, served a sentence in a neighboring prison. They waited to be reunited. Insurgents “liberated” the prisons during the revolt on June 17, and Marianne Maas and Frau Kunter escaped. Miss Maas immediately reunited with her fiancé; however, as the riots waned the police recaptured escaped prisoners. Frau Kunter split from Ms. Maas and her fiancé, and later received reports the

¹¹Ibid., VI.

¹²Ibid., V.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., 3.

police recaptured the couple. Frau Kunter escaped to the West, but Ms. Maas and her fiancé were never heard from again.

Horst Schlafke epitomized the young, impressionable German citizen who served in the Hitler Youth during the 1930s and later as a soldier in the German army. After the war ended and Soviet forces captured him, he found a place in Communist classes. He supported the Communist ideology and instructed others; however, a minor incident left him embittered and discarded by the communist regime. Schlafke returned to Berlin and worked on the Stalin-Allee in construction. When the GDR authorities instituted another quota hike, Schlafke led the protests for his construction site. As the strikes progressed, he became a target for the police. He escaped to West Berlin.

As a Communist Youth representative, Ella Sarre told her story which defined a symbolic moment during the uprising. Ella Sarre, an instructress for the Frei Deutsche Jugend (FDJ) (Free German Youth) when the strikes began, believed in the Communist ideology. She marched with the striking workers, trusting she supported the workers in true Socialist spirit. As she marched and witnessed fellow protestors' motives and intent, Ms. Sarre became disenchanted with the GDR and SED leaders and the system. When the crowd reached the government building they set up tables for speakers to stand on and address the crowd. At one point, Ms. Sarre jumped on top of the table only to receive boos and hisses once the crowd recognized her FDJ jacket and badge. She ripped her jacket off, threw it down, and informed the crowd of spies she recognized. The workers embraced Sarre as a figurehead for the strike. When she returned home, she realized she was under surveillance by the police. She survived the night without an arrest, but fled the next day to West Berlin.

Gerald Wagner, a West German citizen and editor for the Soviet zone broadcasts at RIAS, signified the helplessness of the West. His story includes East German strikers who escaped to West Berlin on June 16 and 17 to reach RIAS. The strikers begged the RIAS authorities to announce a general strike. Although Wagner wrote an announcement to be aired, his managing editor barred participation. RIAS stalled releasing general strike plans for fear of sparking another war. Wagner was faced with his personal disillusionment and the fear and dashed hopes of the workers looking for encouragement and support.

Horst Sowada led the strikes and the storming of the prison in Bitterfeld. Sowada characterized the silent motivation behind the revolt. An electrician with a wife and family, Sowada led the strike in his local area. They took over the prison, but were unable to hold it for long. As the strike weakened, Sowada tried to get word to other territories of the strike in Bitterfeld, unite East Germany in a general strike, and inform RIAS in West Berlin. The story portrays the Bitterfeld strikes as short-lived and uncontrolled outbursts. Sowada eventually became powerless.

Willi Hagedorn, a security chief at the Handels-Organisation (chamber of commerce) in Rathenow and a Soviet informant, reportedly informed on “three hundred” East German citizens.¹⁵ His story is the only chronicle pieced together from eyewitness accounts. A RIAS broadcast warned East Germans of Hagedorn’s betrayals, and he became a target of the people’s aggression as he left work on June 17. When identified by an angry mob, his apathy toward his actions and his victims incited an angry and violent reaction. The protestors beat him profusely and attempted to hang him. Some people, including the police, tried to liberate him, but the mob overwhelmed any rescue

¹⁵Ibid., 108.

attempts. At one point he claimed “If I live through this day there’ll be a lot more than three hundred sent away.”¹⁶ This comment turned the angry crowd into a rabid mob. He eventually jumped into a river, escaping the crowd and swimming to some policemen. He died in the hospital. A nurse reported his last words as, “Three hundred wasn’t enough. I’ll have them all sent away.”¹⁷

Horst Ballentin also embodied one of the most symbolic and memorable moments of the strikes. Ballentin, a twenty-two year old truck driver who lived in Berlin with his wife, served as a runner for the German army and earned a rescue medal from Hitler.¹⁸ He escaped from Soviet capture after the war. Once he heard the broadcasts reporting the strikes on June 16, he decided to join the movement the following day. He went straight to the Brandenburg Gate where he and another man pulled down the Soviet flag on top. He spent the rest of the day searching for a German flag to replace it. Once found, the two men returned to the Brandenburg Gate and attempted to run it up the flagpole atop the Gate. They raised it halfway before machinegun fire forced their retreat. The German flag stood at half-staff in memory of those killed on June 17.¹⁹

The final character in Hildebrandt’s story limns the Soviet troops charged with quelling the uprising. First Lieutenant Rakit Kastanov’s division traveled from its usual deployment along the border between East and West Germany to the town of Gommern. They encountered Germans who explained that they were striking. The interaction, though peaceful, was marked by the lack of understanding between the Soviet soldiers

¹⁶Ibid., 115.

¹⁷Ibid., 107.

¹⁸Ibid., 119.

¹⁹Ibid., 130.

and the German people. The German police participated in the strike, and the participants approached the Soviets with apathy and calm. Kastanov sympathized with the strikers, and left the town without attempting to subjugate the people. German citizens latter suspected that he wanted to flee the Soviet army for the West. Kastanov, later court-martialed and executed for “cowardice and insubordination,” and his troops left Gommern peacefully.²⁰

Hildebrandt closes his book with an emotional conclusion, cheering those who participated in the strikes, and pleading for help from the West in future Eastern attempts to revolt. His last sentence reads, “If the West would consider them its allies, too, and assist their fight accordingly, they feel the outcome might well lead to victory for the common goal – freedom in ‘humaneness’ and peace.”²¹ Hildebrandt emotionally refers to those who participated in the strikes as momentarily victorious. “For a brief moment in their lives,” he writes, “for a brief moment in the life of the oppressed people behind the Iron Curtain, on June 17, 1953 – [they] shattered the most powerful dictatorship of history.”²² His motive clear, Hildebrandt attempts to “enlighten” the West in the living conditions in the East and what he proposes as a united desire with the East to revolt against Socialism and reunite Germany.

Stefan Heym personified a faction in the East which used his craft (writing) to criticize and analyze the communist system. He believed in reform influenced by loyal communist voices of reason. Heym typified a group of writers and intellectuals in East Germany often criticized for their spurious support of the communist system and the

²⁰Ibid., 196.

²¹Ibid., 198.

²²Ibid., 194.

SED. Although financially supported by the government, the writers remained privately critical of the SED. David Rock characterizes the intellectual endorsement of the GDR system as misguided because intellectuals and writers generally did not experience the socialist system as the people did.²³

Heym spent his early years exiled for his communist persuasions—in 1933 by Hitler’s Germany and in 1951 by the United States gripped in the “Red Scare.”²⁴ After the final extradition he moved to East Germany in 1952 where he witnessed his “first East German political experience” on June 17, 1953.²⁵

Heym stood for a political ambiguity that puzzled socialists and capitalists alike. David Rock describes Heym’s position as a combination of unwavering analysis and honest and communist loyalty. “Heym was an extraordinary mixture of belief in the socialist ideal,” he writes, “and unrelenting criticism of the ‘actual existing’ version of it.”²⁶ His criticisms, not widely appreciated, motivated the East German Writers’ Union to bar him. An “equal-opportunity” critic, Heym earned disparagement from Western authorities for his equally critical observations of Western systems and deficiencies.

He supported the Soviet system including Soviet intervention in the uprisings and “hard-line Stalinism,” but refused to join the SED and disapproved of the “Communist Party’s cultural course.”²⁷ In 1953, he wrote a detective novel, *Goldsborough*, which

²³David Rock, *Voices in Times of Change: The Role of Writers, Opposition Movements and the Churches in the Transformation of East Germany* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 187.

²⁴Ibid., 170.

²⁵Richard K. Zachau, “Stefan Heym and GDR Cultural Politics,” in *Politics and Culture in Twentieth Century Germany*, ed. William Niven and James Jordan (New York: Camden House, 2003), 127.

²⁶Rock, 171.

²⁷Zachau, 127.

acquired controversial standing in the communist community. In *Goldsborough*, communist characters falter under “fascist provocation,” a weakness which incited SED criticism since “enlightened workers do not fall for capitalist provocations.”²⁸ The political and economic climate, too raw to have a respected communist writer author a novel that concludes on a note of revolt, rejected the work.

Fünf Tage im Juni, not published in the FRG until 1974, nor in the GDR until 1989, followed Heym’s controversial *Goldsborough*.²⁹ Heym described his novel as “socialist entertainment literature.”³⁰ Following the reunification in 1989-1990, Heym ran for parliament in 1994 under the Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (PDS) (“Party of Democratic Socialism”).³¹ Heym’s contemporaries considered the PDS the progeny of the former SED, and many observers still do today. At 81, Heym served in the Bundestag as its oldest member, and gave an opening speech with equal criticism of the East and West systems, maintaining his campaign for public criticism and reform.³²

Fünf Tage im Juni centers on a plant, VEB Merkur, in East Berlin and its labor union secretary, Comrade Witte.³³ Heym’s book tracks the events surrounding the uprising of June 17 from June 13, 1953 to June 17, 1953. Heym arranged the work into mini-chapters examining the five days sporadically. Periodically inserting original reports, RIAS broadcasts, newspaper articles or editorials, government statements and

²⁸Ibid., 129.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Rock, 184.

³²Ibid., 185.

³³Heym.

other relevant primary material, he set the stage for his fictional narrative. Heym also tells the story from a third person perspective, allowing the reader to experience the characters' personal thoughts and fears. This technique provides a window for the reader to better understand the general and varied feelings in the Eastern Zone during the strikes.

The main character, Witte, mirrors Heym's struggle in the Soviet Zone as a loyal but circumspect communist. Witte serves as the loyal communist character, persecuted by Hitler's Germany during World War II, who fought for the "ideal" government prior to World War II. When betrayed during World War II, he spends the remainder of time in a concentration camp or prison. After his release, he takes his place in the new communist government. Witte truly believes in the government belonging to the people.

Fünf Tage begins with Witte's suspension at work. He refuses to persuade the workers in the plant to accept and approve the new norm hikes. He explains to his superiors his support for the government and the workers, but he hopes for a different method for the East German system to work. "I want us not to command," he states, "but to convince."³⁴ Witte believes completely in the East German system as a workers' government. Witte, similar to Heym, openly questions the East German government's methods and decisions. He believes reason and his loyal record will convince the government to lift the norms and concentrate on relating to the workers and building a true worker's government. Heym defends his right to question the government and authority through Witte. "There is no party rule," Witte comments, "that forbids you to think."³⁵ Heym pleads his case through his characters and situations.

³⁴Ibid., 10.

³⁵Ibid., 214.

The plant employs two types of workers: disgruntled workers who contemplate strike, and those in support of the government. In the end, Heym portrays the workers who strike as pawns for the forces in the West who antagonize and manipulate the workers into striking.

Heym sympathizes with the strikers. Kallman, a faithful worker and strike leader, who is directly manipulated by Western agents, observes the innocence and victimization of most of the strike participants. “These were no rebels,” he observes, “these were people bewildered, they had their expectations and felt let down.”³⁶

While the workers debate their choices, Heym portrays three outside forces at work. First, western agents (whether politicians, capitalists, communists, or otherwise), represented as an insidious parasitic group working among the good citizens of East Germany, conspire to pressure Eastern workers to strike and overthrow the government. Meanwhile, the East German government, the second group, portrayed as preoccupied with the accusations against Witte, has no concern for possible strikes and fails to prepare for them. The final group, the Soviet forces, receive little attention in the book, but are shown as a third party, called to perform a duty.

With these powerful forces focused on this tight area, Heym accurately exposes the turmoil, fear, and subversion present in East and West Germany at the time. The pure confusion is intimidating. “Amazing hodgepodge inside those German skulls,” he states, “if you add it up, there’s really not a soul who has a conception of what’s to become of this divided, mixed-up country and this divided, mixed-up city, and behind all this mess

³⁶Ibid., 210.

you sense an apparatus at work, magnifying each rumor, blowing up every compliant, until the whole thing becomes unmanageable.”³⁷

As the story unwinds, Heym manages to describe characters from all walks of life. This helps to paint a comprehensive view of East German citizens, the tribulations they faced, and their perspective. The confetti collection of characters rounds the story out to render an extensive depiction of life in the communist zone.

During the proceedings of June 17, Heym includes actual events that occurred during the strikes as witnessed by Witte. Heym’s book bridges fiction and reality, creating a more persuasive and realistic picture of the people and their actions. Heym’s story, however, represents a biased perspective. The only western characters, sinister agents, connive to sway honest East German citizens for personal gain. Meanwhile, the West in general sat on its hands and failed to help the workers. The admirable characters support or believe in the communist system. Heym portrays those who turned away from the communist message as increasingly abusive and destructive, even beating or raping their wives or girlfriends. In the end, with the uprising suppressed, most of the workers return to the plant. The subversive characters fail and meet personal loss or imprisonment. The main character, Witte, triumphantly earns his place back in the government and plant, and gains a wife and child. However, Heym does not close his work on a purely positive and uncritical note. A year later, the VEB Merkur plant bureaucrats muscle Witte out of his position. A faithful comrade, bullied with threats of slander, sacrifices Witte and the system he fought for his whole life. Heym maintains his reputation as a rabid defender of the socialist system, but upholds his right to criticize his government.

³⁷Ibid., 138.

Heym's main character, Witte, voices a concept questioning the government and its reaction to the uprising and its people. "There you have an interesting thought," he muses, "that the Government choose another people."³⁸

Bertolt Brecht mimics this yarn in his poem, *The Solution*.

After the uprising of the 17th June
 The secretary of the Writers' Union
 Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee
 Stating that the people
 Had forfeited the confidence of the government
 And could win it back only
 By redoubled efforts. Would it not be easier
 In that case for the government
 To dissolve the people
 And elect another?³⁹

Following the uprising, Brecht, unquestionably the most prominent East German writer, composed a letter to Ulbricht in which he vowed his loyalty to the Socialist system and suggested the GDR bargain with the people.⁴⁰ Ulbricht published selections from the letter, which led to a general distrust of Brecht by the people. Perturbed, Brecht authored *The Solution*, which circulated secretly among his friends and was published after his death.⁴¹ Not surprisingly, East German historians painted Brecht as an ambiguous figure, depending on the occasion: a representative of East German culture and literature, or as a spineless traitor to the people supported and paid for by the GDR. Regardless of the controversy, Brecht is generally regarded as a tragic pawn.

³⁸Ibid., 346.

³⁹Brecht, 440.

⁴⁰David Clay Large, *Berlin* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 429.

⁴¹Ibid.

In *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising*, Günter Grass's character, "The Boss," is generally considered a representation of Bertolt Brecht. The story takes place in a theater in East Germany run by "The Boss," a national treasure—well respected in the community and by the government. The first act opens with the theater company rehearsing *Coriolanus*, a Shakespearean play. Many of the actors, waylaid by the strikes in the streets, enter late and wet from the downpour outside. Volumnia (a voice of reason) vents concern regarding the climate of the nation and the theater's safety. The actors change from wet clothes into costumes as Plebeians, and the two plays overlap and take on a third dimension.

As discussed previously, *Coriolanus* recounts the story of Caius Marcius ("Coriolanus"), a Roman general, who leads the Romans to victories and is proclaimed a hero. His relationship with his troops and the people swings between love and hate. Coriolanus ultimately falls to pride and arrogance and sides with the Volscians, the Romans' sworn enemy. Coriolanus' mother talks him out of his betrayal, and he decides to return to Rome. However, the Volscians learn of his second thoughts and kill him. Coriolanus, a tragic hero, embodies misfortune caused by arrogance and pride. A mystery, he also represents bravery, loyalty, faith, and heroism. Coriolanus, The Boss, and Bertolt Brecht embody the same characteristics and tragedy.

Workers participating in the strikes enter the theater to ask the Boss to lead the strike or to support them with a public written statement. The Boss doubts their resolve and orders them to leave. In a rage, they liken him to Coriolanus, but the Boss has them play extras in his rehearsal. Their antagonist, Kozanka, the party speaker and SED supporter, requests the Boss's public support for the government and condemnation of

the strikers. The Boss, equally dismissive and insulting to Kozanka, thwarts both sides. Both sides attempt to persuade, blackmail, pressure, and bribe the Boss to take their side—to no avail. Kozanka eventually abandons the scene, but the workers' rage reaches a frenzied state, and they decide to hang the Boss and his assistant. The assistant successfully talks them out of murder, and the workers exit.

With the uprising unsuccessful, the troupe meets back at the theater the following day. Kozanka resurfaces to request the Boss's signature on a petition declaring his support of the government and his opposition to the strikes. The Boss refuses his signature, but decides to write a personal letter to government authorities. The first portion of the letter states his dissatisfaction with the government, but the final section declares his complete support of the government and its system. His future foretold, authorities will publish an edited version of his letter, and the public will consider him a traitor. The parallels are purposeful; Coriolanus, the Boss, and Brecht share a fate. The Boss adds a final note reminiscent of Brecht's poem and the line from *Fünf Tage im Juni*. "And if this people doesn't suit you, comrade," he remarks, "find one that suits you better, comrade."⁴² Grass's play leaves little to insinuation.

In 1985, Adler Publishing Company issued an English translation of a collection of Jochen Ziem's short stories, originally published in Germany in 1968. The book, a collection of ten stories, culminates with the final short story, *Uprising in East Germany*. The translators, Jorn K. Bramann and Jeanette Axelrod, provide a brief background to the collection and on Ziem's writing method. They claim that Ziem's stories "represent a

⁴²Grass, 73.

cross-section of post-war West German society.”⁴³ Although some of Ziem’s stories take place in East Germany, the attitudes and perspectives epitomize Western ideals and positions.⁴⁴ Ziem also focuses on inner turmoil in his characters, usually focusing on a divergence between the characters’ “self-image” and their choices and behavior.

In *The Uprising* Ziem’s main character, unidentified, condemns strike participants and non-participants alike for their cowardice and apathy, but when faced with the opportunity to act, he runs. He clearly states his contempt for other East German citizens early in his short story. “I’m ashamed for all of them,” he says, “I don’t want to hear their excuses, their justifications. I should just spit on them—all of them.”⁴⁵

The main character tells the story from a first person perspective and in the form of a letter to “Marianne.” He opens the story claiming his disgust with the system and his plans to escape west in the next couple of days. Afterward, he looks for debates and strikes. Shortly after finding a public debate where a group of rowdy students “disturb the peace,” Soviet soldiers storm the plaza and everyone scatters. The main character secretly drops brass knuckles he carried and runs away. “Why should I,” he asks, “take any useless risks for those door-slamming cowards?”⁴⁶ His previous accusations and insults condemn him as he runs.

As he walks around Berlin, he witnesses activities on school campuses, plazas in front of government buildings, and prisons. The strike scenes lack inspiration, motivation or organization. Other than assembling in given areas, the people take no

⁴³Ziem, 173.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., 158.

⁴⁶Ibid.

effective action. He eventually finds a group of people beating an informant. The spectacle escalates into a movement, and the Russian soldiers surface again. At each movement, the main character remains detached, always providing an excuse. At the final strike he witnesses, he explains his lack of participation. “I want to shout for liberty like all the others,” he rationalizes, “but I’m afraid that their idea of liberty has little to do with my own. So I keep quiet.”⁴⁷

In the end, he returns to his apartment sharing his room for the night with his landlord’s son. He closes the day with a prediction for tomorrow. “I know that tomorrow they will all be together again,” he foretells, “in the streets, in offices, in factory halls, and in classrooms—and they’ll act as if nothing had happened. They’ll try to talk about trivial matters, and they’ll act like they’ve all been to a party where everybody got out of line. I couldn’t stand that.”⁴⁸ Although he claims he will run to the West, he ultimately decides to stay in the East because he can finish his education cheaper in the East. His morals and ideals come at a price. Ziem’s stories communicate a sense of anguish, internal turmoil, self-loathing, condemnation, and hypocrisy. The individual reflects a plethora of emotions coursing through nations and governments.

In addition to literary works, Germany supports remembrance of the uprising through the visual and performing arts. These expressions include state funded stamps and coins as well as monuments, sculpture, photography, and artwork.

In 1953, West Berlin released two stamps commemorating the June uprising. One stamp, worth 0,20 DM at the time, all in black, features two hands shackled in chains with “17. Juni 1953” printed across the center. The second stamp, all red and worth 0,30

⁴⁷Ibid., 167.

⁴⁸Ibid., 170.

DM, presents a stylized image of the Brandenburg Gate surrounded by light rays. The stamps are simplistic but moving. Their message rings clear—oppression countered by the hope of freedom.

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising, Deutsche Post debuted three new products in June 2003.⁴⁹ These products consisted of a new stamp, a pre-stamped envelope, and a commemorative stamp and poster collection. On June 12, 2003, Deutsche Post released the fiftieth anniversary, 0,25 Euro, stamp.⁵⁰ Professor Ernst Jünger and Lorli Jünger designed it.⁵¹ Simple but striking, the stamp features the famous black and white photograph of two East German men throwing stones at a Soviet tank in the streets. The *Berliner Morgenpost* Magazine released an article regarding the new stamp the week before its release. It described the picture used, reminding the public of its continued emotional significance.

Fifty years ago, this image went around the world. Newspapers everywhere printed it, a dramatic document of its time that needed no commentary: young East Berliners hurling rocks against approaching Soviet tanks. Even in the years that followed the image did not lose any of its powerful and disturbing message, indeed became the visual symbol of the people's uprising on June 17, 1953, a revolt that the GDR regime could only put down with Soviet military help.⁵²

Across the bottom in red, stamped letters, “17. Juni 1953” remind citizens of the date and event. Its simplicity strikes a raw emotional chord.

⁴⁹Deutsche Post, URL: www.deutschepost.de. Accessed 15 January 2004.

⁵⁰Deutsche Post, “17. Juni 1953,” URL: <http://philatelie.deutschepost.de/philatelie/css2/shop/produkt.jhtml?id=prod1120025&navCount=10&navAction=jump>. Accessed 15 January 2004.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Syna, “Eine neue Briefmarke erinnert an den 17. Juni 1953,” *Morgenpost*, 7 June 2003, URL: <http://morgenpost.berlin1.de/archiv2003/030607/ttt/story608742.html>. Accessed 15 January 2004. The article originally reads: “Das Foto ging vor 50 Jahren um die Welt. Zeitungen in fast allen Ländern druckten es: Ein dramatisches Zeitdokument, das keines Kommentars bedurfte: Junge Ostberliner werfen Pflastersteine gegen heranrollende Sowjet-Panzer. Und auch in den Jahren danach verlor das Bild nichts von seiner beklemmenden Aussagekraft, wurde zum optischen Symbol für den Volksaufstand des 17. Juni 1953, den das DDR-Regime nur mit sowjetischer Militärhilfe niederschlagen konnte.”

In addition to the stamp, Deutsche Post celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising with a commemorative, pre-stamped, decorated envelope.⁵³ The stamp in the upper right corner is the same as the one described above. On the same side, but on the left, the envelope carries 3 images commemorating the Uprising. In red ink, the famous picture of strikers marching arm-in-arm, carrying the German flag in front of the Brandenburg Gate occupies the middle. Two smaller pictures of a tank rolling through the Berlin streets and a collection of strikers at a rally flank the larger Brandenburg Gate picture in blue. Across all three pictures the words “17 Juni 1953” and “50 Jahrestag des Volksaufstandes in der DDR” stamp the time, moment, and memories.⁵⁴

Deutsche Post also offers a collectors’ series of German stamps and posters documenting the history of Germany from the end of World War II to the present in a series titled “Fight for Freedom, 17 June 1953.”⁵⁵ This extensive assemblage includes original stamps, posters, and facsimiles accompanied by an historical narrative. The stamps come from East and West Germany, including stamps representing the division and the uprising. Deutsche Post amassed a series of a public and government art (in the form of stamps and posters) and arranged it for any person to order and own.⁵⁶

In addition to the stamp, Germany released a 10 Euro commemorative coin celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising on the same day as the stamp.

⁵³Deutsche Post, “GeBfu: Volksaufstand 17. Juni 1953,” URL: http://philatelie.deutschepost.de/philatelie/shop/templates/produktseiten/produktdetail_standard.jhtml?id=prod1070021. Accessed 16 July 2005.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Deutsche Post, “Abonnement Exklusiv-Dokumentation Kampf um Freiheit 17. Juni 1953,” URL: http://philatelie.deutschepost.de/philatelie/shop/templates/produktseiten/produktdetail_standard.jhtml?id=prod1170015. Accessed 16 July 2005.

⁵⁶Ibid.

Designed by Hans Joa Dobler, the two-sided silver coin exhibits symbolic, emotionally weighted messages. The front side, sports a stylized Eagle with wings outstretched. Twelve stars accompany the words, “Bundesrepublik Deutschland 2003.” On the other side, tank tracks role across terms symbolizing the oppression on June 16, 1953. The inscription, “50 Jahre, 17. Juni 1953” reminds the public of the event. The tank tracks crush powerful, emotion-evoking words such as “Freiheit,” “Demokratie,” “Streik,” “Nieder mit den Normen,” “Freie geheime Wahlen.”⁵⁷ These terms not only represent Western ideals, but also teach the specific goals and demands of the strikers on June 17, 1953.

Art work focused on the uprising relates various perspectives and goals. Usually employed at monuments and commemorative locations, sculpture constitutes the broadest and most abstract representation of the uprising. Photographs capture history in the making, the essence of a moment frozen for eternity. These famous images of the uprising are frequently used for contemporary art, stamps, news articles, and memorials. They serve to educate and move the masses and communicate individual and community values through time.

Sculpture, typically exhibited as memorials, represents the largest form of artistic expression stemming from the uprising. Prior to the uprising, Karl Hartung designed a small, spherical sculpture in 1948 out of wood.⁵⁸ A six-foot version was created in 1951,

⁵⁷Bundeswertpapierverwaltung, “50 Jahre Volksaufstand 17. Juni 1953,” URL: <http://www.bwvp.de/sammlermuenzen.php3?iid=425&mid=26&uid=37>. Accessed 17 January 2004.

⁵⁸Godehard Janzing, “Große Kugelform,” URL: www.janzing.com. Accessed 17 January 2004.

named “Große Kugelform,” and placed in the Hannover city center.⁵⁹ In 1959, Hartung dedicated the sculpture to the uprising of 1953.

Although they might not directly represent the 1953 revolt, monuments inspired by the uprising stress the importance of and hope for German unity. The memorial to German Unity in Münster hosts a sculpture by Anni Buschkötter in 1960.⁶⁰ This sculpture symbolizes the struggle and drive for German unity. Two giant, nine-foot high concrete blocks stand close together with a hole in each block. A heavy steel chain ties the blocks together through the holes. The sculpture seems held together as much by its sheer weight and massive size as by the chains linking the blocks together. Their unity seems simultaneously inevitable and impossible.

In 1967, Arnold Schatz erected his aluminum sculpture, “Wiedervereinigung” (reunification) in Berlin.⁶¹ Two sharp spikes rise into the air, separate but tied by a single loop around their center. Schatz’s design shares a fundamental theme and similarity to Buschkötter’s sculpture. The two segregated pieces appear fundamentally linked but hopelessly divided.

Memorials commemorating the uprising abound and consist of a variety of forms from small plaques, to parks, sculptures, assorted statuary, and cemeteries. Friedhof Seestraße in Berlin, a famous cemetery/memorial, often hosts political commemoration events. The cemetery houses a memorial titled “Den Opfern des 17. Juni 1953,” (“For the Victims of 17 June 1953”), a stepped concrete foundation accompanied by a statue of

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

a stylized human being.⁶² On June 17, 2003, leading political figures, including Berlin's mayor and Germany's president, participated in a commemorative event at the Friedhof Seestraße.⁶³

Many of the memorial sites are in public venues to remind citizens while they are engaged in everyday activities. Another memorial in the Spreeplatz at the Paul-Löbe-Haus of the Bundestag was dedicated on June 17, 2003.⁶⁴ It holds white crosses inlaid on black backgrounds which function as a barrier between the walkway and the canal passing behind the memorial. The approachable and personable memorial resembles a peaceful burial at sea.

A series of photographs taken during the revolt represent and embody the uprising and its motivation, communicating the Western perception of oppression countered by the struggle and demand for freedom. Artists, newspapers, and others have reused the images for artwork, posters, newspaper articles, and internet sites. The photographers of most of the pictures are unknown. Two of these black and white photographs have become the most famous. The first embodies a "David and Goliath" theme. Two men stand on a sidewalk throwing stones at tanks rolling through the streets of Berlin. The second communicates the hope for unity. A mass of demonstrators march down Unter den Linden Avenue in front of the Brandenburg Gate waving a German flag.

Not only have these photographs been used to supplement articles and information, they have also been reproduced to decorate websites such as

⁶²Berlin.de, "17 Juni 2003: Wowereit bei den Gedenkfeierlichkeiten," URL: <http://www.berlin.de/rbmskzl/rathausaktuell/archiv/13241/index.html>. Accessed 17 January 2004.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

www.17juni53.de, and the covers of books, CDs and DVDs, movie advertisements, and posters. The first picture listed above (rebels throwing stones at tanks) was employed for the commemorative stamps discussed previously. Other, less famous photographs taken on June 17 include tanks rolling through the streets of Berlin, crowds surrounding tanks, a man hitting a tank with a wooden bat, angry demonstrators, and wounded citizens being dragged through the streets. All of these photographs elicited strong emotional responses from free citizens in the West, including those in Great Britain and the United States.

These works, literary and visual, represent a vast spectrum of personal and public notions expressed after the June 17 uprising. Here is a nation's collective value system exhibited for the world to see. The literary works draw on a variety of genres, including the novella, poetry, the personal account, essays, stage plays, and short stories. Each uses language to retell individual stories or narrate a personal perspective or feeling. The artwork ranges from photographs taken on the day of the revolt and photos reused in more recent works, to three-dimensional memorials or sculptures. Such personal expressions were often adapted or embraced by the government to represent the nation's interpretation of its history. Whether exhibited individually or publicly, every piece offers a perspective or moment in the general public's response to the uprising.

CHAPTER FIVE

June 17 in the *New York Times*

The *New York Times* first addressed the 1953 East German revolt on June 18, 1953. The last article on the subject, for the purpose of this retrospective, was printed June 16, 2003. Coverage of the revolt had three objectives: recounting the uprising's history, progression and sources; relating responses of officials and citizens; and reporting accusations from the East and denials from the West.

First, the *New York Times* carefully reconstructed and printed histories of the uprising. Second, it itemized official and public opinion that the revolt demonstrated weakness within the Soviet and East German regimes and embarrassed the Soviet Union. Public opinion questioned why the Western Allies did not intervene to help the East German citizens. The decision and its impact would be debated over the next fifty years. Third, accusations and denials of responsibility between the Soviet Union and East German Governments and the United States accentuated the tension between the superpowers. After the novelty of the revolt wore off, international focus, and that of the *New York Times*, centered on four additional objectives: (1) honoring the revolt and announcing and recounting celebrations and events; (2) reminding readers of the uprising's history; (3) repeatedly calling for German reunification, free elections, disarmament, and the internationalization of Berlin; and (4) reporting the aftermath on an international scale, including the political and social impact of the anniversary, and living standard changes within the German Democratic Republic.

The *New York Times* reports on June 18, 1953, focused on three subjects. First, the paper reported reactions of officials and the general public (in America, Britain, and West Germany) regarding the uprising and its predicted consequences. Second, it recounted the events on June 16 and 17 and subsequent activities, and kept readers informed of developments. Third, it tried to sort out conflicting claims of accusation and denial through interviews and statements.

Initially, official and public reactions repeated two themes: the failure of the Soviet system and apparent discontent of the East Germans (contrary to common Soviet publicity); and the Western powers' inability to help the strikers and protestors in the East. The Western powers' first reaction, stressing the uprising's effect on the Soviet Union's image, surfaced on the first day of reporting the riots, June 18, 1953. President Eisenhower released a statement labeling the uprising an indication of a Communist system and indicative of the fallacy of Russian propaganda. "It was a significant development," the paper paraphrased, "in view of the propaganda about the happiness of the people and the concern for them on the part of the Iron Curtain governments."¹ In the same issue, United States High Commissioner for Germany, Dr. James B. Conant, concurred with President Eisenhower and labeled the uprising a "spontaneous manifestation of the spirit of freedom."²

The *New York Times* gave particular attention to London's reaction. The dispatch described British observers as "excited" and "impressed."³ It depicted diplomats similar to scavengers hoping to exploit the uprising and the Soviet Union's apparent

¹Walter H. Waggoner, "Eisenhower Sees Lesson in Berlin," *New York Times*, 18 June 1953, p. 1.

²"'Spirit of Freedom' Seen," *New York Times*, 18 June 1953, p. 10.

³Clifton Daniel, "London Welcomes Uprising in Berlin," *New York Times*, 18 June 1953, p. 11.

humiliation.⁴ Western Allies and Western papers initially marked the uprising as an embarrassment to the Soviet Union and its policies in East Germany and other satellites. Later, on June 24, 1953, the *New York Times* related London's outlook.⁵ It claimed the uprising led to the Soviet empire "crumbling."⁶ According to the news, London expected Soviet control over its satellites to diminish. This article also couched the June 17 marchers as participants in a "David and Goliath" story. This small, intense movement held the Soviet Union and East German government hostage. "It is ironic that the Germans under her power have put Russia on the defensive."⁷ The article expected the Allied powers to pressure the Soviet Union into allowing German reunification at the impending four-power meeting in Bermuda.⁸

Europe shared this reaction with the United States and Great Britain. Anne O'Hare McCormick reported from Rome, claiming Europeans deemed the uprising a reflection of the "Communist problem."⁹ "Countries with an internal Communist problem do not think first of the effect of the workers' revolt in connection with the eventual fate of Germany. They think of it as a body blow to the Communist movement in Europe."¹⁰ Europe also considered the revolt a revelation of the unrest in the Soviet

⁴Ibid.

⁵Anne O'Hare McCormick, "The Revolt in East Germany Will be Felt in Bermuda," *New York Times*, 24 June 1953, p. 24.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Anne O'Hare McCormick, "The Reaction in Europe to the Riots in Berlin," *New York Times*, 20 June 1953, p. 16.

¹⁰Ibid.

sector and the Soviet Union's satellites. McCormick claimed the uprising had changed the "international atmosphere."¹¹

Although West Germany, Great Britain and the United States released statements of support, they provided no official aid to the uprising's participants. This lack of action attracted immediate attention. Western officials hastened to explain they could not assist the East German citizens due to the stressed relations with East Germany and the Soviet Union. The Mayor of Berlin, Ernst Reuter, explained the West's position on the day of the uprising from Vienna. "The dreadful part of our situation is that we in West Berlin want to help but cannot. You can imagine what would happen if my West Berlin police marched into East Berlin. The Western Allies also cannot do anything."¹² West Germany, Great Britain, and the United States took a position of moral support instead of physical interjection. The *New York Times* observed the British resigned themselves not to intervene in the East, but felt it necessary to "offer immediate moral encouragement."¹³

The *New York Times*' first article recounting the uprising's events presented a remarkably clear and comprehensive account of June 16 and 17. "Martial Law is Set" was written on June 17, the day of the riots, and published on June 18.¹⁴ It successfully reconstructed the origins of the uprising and included preliminary estimates of dead and wounded and an emotionally charged retelling of citizens fighting Soviet tanks barehanded. A collection of striking pictures of the day's events accompanied the piece. On

¹¹Ibid.

¹²"Reuter Sees West Berlin Unable to Aid Easterners," *New York Times*, 18 June 1953, p. 9.

¹³Daniel, 18 June 1953, 11.

¹⁴Walter Sullivan, "Martial Law is Set," *New York Times*, 18 June 1953, p. 1.

the same day, the paper published a short quip announcing the Soviets were moving an armored division into East Berlin.¹⁵

By June 21, the *New York Times* pieced more information together and offered an extensive retrospective on the uprising's progression.¹⁶ The article, accompanied by several pictures of strikers and Soviet tanks in the East Berlin streets, followed the calamity as it developed from June 16 through the aftermath and purported results. It also provided some historical background for the uprising and the occasion for the original strikes. The wording is often emotionally charged.¹⁷ On the same day, the paper reported on Soviet activities and an interpretation of East German, Western Allied and Russian relations.¹⁸ The paper estimated that two armed Soviet divisions numbering around 25,000 men were deployed to East Germany, with more on the way.¹⁹

In contrast to the previous article, "The German Workers Rise" exhibited propagandistic and editorial language. It dismissed Soviet claims of "capitalistic" origins of the revolt and lauded "workers rebelling against tyranny and exploitation."²⁰ It claimed the uprising "dropped the curtain" on Soviet propaganda and lies, and hoped it deterred future Soviet military action.²¹

Immediately after the uprising, charges of Western provocateur agents surfaced from the East. The *New York Times* published the accusation posed by Otto Grotewohl,

¹⁵"Russians Use Entire Division," *New York Times*, 18 June 1953, p. 8.

¹⁶Walter Sullivan, "Berlin: The Story of the Uprising," *New York Times*, 21 June 1953, p. E5.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸"The German Workers Rise," *New York Times*, 21 June 1953, p. E8.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

Prime Minister of the GDR, the following day. By 4 p.m. on June 17, Grotewohl announced the uprising was induced and supported by Western powers.²² “Premiere Otto Grotewohl issued a special proclamation attributing the outbreak to ‘Fascist and other reactionary elements in West Berlin.’ He said agents of ‘foreign powers’ were backing the rioters.”²³ The allegation drew immediate reaction and caused much debate, selling newspapers for months and years to come. This charge was repeatedly addressed in the *New York Times* the first week after the riots.

On June 20, the *New York Times* hypothesized East Germany had an extensive and well-organized underground responsible for the uprising.²⁴ This must have been true, it claimed, because organized groups met in public squares in East Berlin and because of simultaneous strikes throughout East Germany.²⁵ This deduction seemed to answer the question of Western involvement. The article closed by clearly stating the underground in East Germany was not attached to western powers.²⁶

Following the uprising, those arrested, charged, and executed in the East provided the West with martyrs and newspapers with stories of public interest. The GDR arrested and charged citizens throughout the following year and the newspaper reported most of the convictions. The prisoners were also subjects of interest over the following years as cries arose for their release and national unity. On June 19, 1953, the *New York Times*

²²Sullivan, 18 June 1953, 1.

²³Ibid.

²⁴M.S. Handler, “Strong Underground of Workers Believed to Exist in East Germany,” *New York Times*, 20 June 1953, p. 4.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

reported the first conviction and execution of a strike participant.²⁷ Willi Goettling was tried and executed on June 18, 1953. The article, riddled with outrage, lifted a martyr out of the uprising's story. "It is in vain that the Russians have rung down the Iron Curtain around their zone and have taken a poor worker and shot him with due public solemnity."²⁸ Within three days of the uprising, the *New York Times* reported 3,000 arrested on June 20 alone.²⁹

July 1953 articles focused on prisoners charged with participation in the uprising, and the exodus from East Germany of implicated individuals for "aiding" the uprising's participants after the fact. Nearly one month after the workers' rebellion, the paper reported a plea by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. The Confederation requested Western officials pressure the Soviet Union and East Germany to release "10,000 men" prosecuted for their participation in the strikes.³⁰ In the same month, the newspaper added a short account of two East German officials being persecuted for not carrying out a stricter offensive against suspected contributors.³¹ One man was demoted within the government, and the other was released from duty for "defeatism in the face of the June 17 workers' revolt."³²

Sporadic coverage of the uprising continued over the next year. By the first anniversary in 1954, the *New York Times*' attention switched to four different goals:

²⁷"Germany Fights On," *New York Times*, 19 June 1953, p. 20.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹"Riot Instigators Hunted," *New York Times*, 21 June 1953, p. 20.

³⁰"Free Unions Acclaim East German Labor," *New York Times*, 12 July 1953, p. 9.

³¹"Two More East Germans Ousted," *New York Times*, 31 July 1953, p. 5.

³²Ibid.

commemorating the uprising and reporting the services or events; reminding citizens of the riots and their history; renewing and bolstering calls for German reunification; and reporting prisoner statistics and prosecution.

Anniversary commemorations of the uprising began on June 7, 1954, in the West German Parliament.³³ The ceremonies honored the events and their victims. They expressed hope that the uprising would inspire further revolts within the Soviet satellites and hasten German reunification.³⁴ The excited language clearly urged the Soviet Union to release East Germany. It claimed the uprising “branded the Communist regimes with an ineradicable mark of treachery and infamy.”³⁵

The *New York Times* reported commemorative processions June 17, 1954. Its articles documenting the anniversary concentrated on the events, possible future uprisings, and East-West relations. One article recounted a torchlight procession and rally in West Berlin near the Soviet border.³⁶ Walter Sullivan, the author, speculated about the likelihood of another revolt and on East Germany’s current state. He surmised the German Democratic Republic, in 1954, was more entrenched with the source of the 1953 revolt purged and the “new course” instated. He described a “noticeable increase in the standard of living” in East Germany, and that the “political pressure has been

³³“Revolt for Freedom,” *New York Times*, 8 June 1954, p. 22.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Walter Sullivan, “’53 Riots Marked by West Germans,” *New York Times*, 17 June 1954, p. 6.

eased.”³⁷ The author quelled all predictions of a repeat. “No responsible observer,” he wrote, “believes a new uprising is afoot.”³⁸ All considered a new revolt suicidal.³⁹

A second article on the same day considered the political and social impact of the anniversary.⁴⁰ The article described a chastised and disappointed East and West German people. The Western Allies seemingly lost a “magnificent opportunity” when they failed to help the revolutionaries.⁴¹ This “failure” left the East feeling neglected and deserted: “East Berliners and East Germans were reported to be bitterly disappointed at what they believed to be the indifference of the West. The people in East Germany were said to believe they had been abandoned to their fate by the West.”⁴² The article continued by depicting East and West German views of U.S. policies as hollow and oblivious.⁴³

More than a year after the initial revolt, citizens were still being charged and convicted for participation in the 1953 uprising. The *New York Times* continued to report prisoner statistics and news regarding convictions during the first anniversary. On June 13, 1954, the *New York Times* reported the conviction of four men accused of participating in and leading the revolt.⁴⁴ Two of the men were sentenced to fifteen years

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰“West Germans Mark Revolt,” *New York Times*, 17 June 1954, p. 6.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴“Reds Ask 15 Years for Rebels,” *New York Times*, 13 June 1954, p. 4.

in prison.⁴⁵ Both men were kidnapped from West Berlin before they stood trial in East Germany.⁴⁶ East German officials were ousted and convicted for being too lenient with the 1953 rebels. The *New York Times* reported the removal of East Germany's Justice Minister for "excessive leniency in dealing with leaders of the June, 1953, anti-Communist revolt."⁴⁷

The same year, the *New York Times* presented a vivid exposé on everyday life in East Germany.⁴⁸ The author, a "refugee from East Germany," described life there as overshadowed by politics. "Politics affects nearly all the life and activities of the East German...Consider the 6,000 convicts who were released after the revolt of June 17, 1953. They were not criminals, they were political prisoners."⁴⁹ East German and Russian films and broadcasts drowned viewers in propaganda. "Plot and performance," the author explains, "are built around ideas of 'collectiveness, fulfillment of the plan, conversion to communism.'"⁵⁰ A dreary picture of life in East Germany following the revolt emerged. In the same month, the *New York Times* reported the story of three East German Judges who requested asylum in West Berlin.⁵¹ They feared persecution and prosecution because they declined to bring three June 17 participants to trial.⁵²

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷"German Red Official Jailed for 10 Years," *New York Times*, 15 July 1954, p. 4.

⁴⁸"Inside East Germany: A Refugee's Report," *New York Times*, 22 August 1954, p. SM10.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹"3 East German Judges Flee," *New York Times*, 29 August 1954, p. 58.

⁵²Ibid.

By the second anniversary, the revolt's memory served as background or manipulation for political agendas—predominately the issues of reunification and the proposed internationalization of Berlin. Articles in the *New York Times* concentrated on East-West relations and East Germany's and Berlin's future of "internationalization."⁵³ While the articles noted the anniversary's proceedings and history, the clear focus of this occasion was East and West Germany's future on an international scale. West German representatives used the celebrations to proclaim their absolute disapproval of any possible internationalization of Berlin. Some 60,000 citizens collected in front of West Berlin's Town Hall commemorating the revolt with vocal outcries for reunification, general disarmament, and non-internationalization.⁵⁴ Bonn representatives—Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, Mayor Willy Brandt, and the President of the West German Bundestag, Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier—likewise called for reunification while disparaging all proposals of internationalization.⁵⁵ June 17 thus acted as a backdrop for political declarations and international wrestling. The participants of the revolt were mentioned as heroes whose memory would be desecrated if Berlin were internationalized and reunification ignored.⁵⁶ "Erich Ollenhauer, leader of the Social Democratic Opposition," the article recounted, "said internationalization...would be a 'policy of surrender and ingratitude toward the fighters for freedom on June 17.'"⁵⁷ In addition, the *New York*

⁵³"Bonn Will Insist Berlin Be Capital," *New York Times*, 18 June 1955, p. 4.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

Times published a brief quip in remembrance of the June 17 events and their significance.⁵⁸

West Germans and their Western Allies loudly renewed the call for reunification on the third anniversary in 1956. By 1956 the workers' revolt of 1953 had assumed an official role as representative of the struggle for reunification and the growing tension between East and West. The year marks a further turning point in which all future anniversaries of the revolt would bring forth public clamor for reunification in the West—demands met by utter silence in the East. The most striking development in 1956 was a letter by President Eisenhower calling for reunification and Soviet recoil from East Germany.⁵⁹ Specifically citing the third anniversary of the workers' revolt, President Eisenhower wrote an open letter to the President of West Germany, Dr. Theodor Heuss.⁶⁰ The letter recognized the threat East Germany presented for the West and the lack of “cooperative relations.”⁶¹ “The ending of the division of Germany,” the President wrote, “is essential to the development of friendly and cooperative relations between the Western nations and the Soviet Union.”⁶² This letter sought to keep the “German unity question alive.”⁶³ Eisenhower equated the 1953 revolt to a “spontaneous demand...for freedom of the 17,000,000 German people of the Soviet Zone.”⁶⁴

⁵⁸“Revolt Started by Workers,” *New York Times*, 18 June 1955, p. 4.

⁵⁹Elie Abel, “Eisenhower Calls on Moscow Anew to Unite Germany,” *New York Times*, 17 June 1956, p. 1.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²*Ibid.*

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴*Ibid.*

The *New York Times* printed the letter in its entirety and reported plans to commemorate “the third anniversary of the uprising against Communist tyranny in the Soviet zone.”⁶⁵ It further provided a brief emotional recount of the revolt, and reported the commemorative activities. Most of the events were held within sight of the Iron Curtain. Vigils, demonstrations, and meetings were scheduled within yards of the Eastern zone. “A chain of bonfires will be lighted and torchlight processions staged on the zonal border to remind East Germans that their countrymen in the West have not forgotten their aspiration for freedom.”⁶⁶ West Berlin also scheduled a demonstration at the former Reichstag Building, and the Bundestag in Bonn planned a memorial meeting.⁶⁷

Two related articles appeared the following day, June 18, 1956. The first recounted Chancellor Adenauer’s speech before the Bundestag on the anniversary.⁶⁸ Adenauer reiterated his confidence in German reunification.⁶⁹ The second article detailed the previous day’s salutes.⁷⁰ On the evening of June 17, “thousands” of Berliners assembled in front of the Municipal Government Building, and the day was officially proclaimed the “Day of German Unity.”⁷¹ This title, coined on the third anniversary, would signify June 17, 1953, until the Berlin Wall fell more than three decades later. The

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸“Adenauer Sees Faith in Unity,” *New York Times*, 18 June 1956, p. 4.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Harry Gilroy, “Berliners Mark '53 Rising in East,” *New York Times*, 18 June 1956, p. 4.

⁷¹Ibid.

article recounted the revolt's brief history and the previous week's tributes.⁷² It juxtaposed the celebrations in the West with the scorn in the East. "Today Stalinalee," a journalist reported, "East Berlin's showpiece and the home of many Communist activists, was almost empty of pedestrians."⁷³ The article also focused on a scathing "four-column editorial" in the SED Party newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, which disparaged the uprising and the leaders of the Federal Republic. Adenauer's calls for unity were met with the assertion that the "East German regime would never be sacrificed."⁷⁴

On June 29, 1956, workers in Poznan, Poland, revolted. A *New York Times* article, "Uprising Recalls '53 Berlin Rioting," likened the 1953 revolt in East Germany to the current revolt in Poland.⁷⁵ It compared the origins of each revolt and the reactions of the authorities in each case. The article also recapitulated a series of revolts in Eastern Block countries, such as Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, and Tiflis, Georgia.⁷⁶ However, the 1953 riots in East Germany were considered the most damaging to the eastern regime. "The East German riots were probably the most severe shock suffered by the Communist world during the post-war period."⁷⁷ That year also brought the massive uprising in Hungary and its brutal suppression by Soviet forces.

In 1957, coverage of the uprising's anniversary in the *New York Times* focused on responses to a recent statement by Nikita Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Soviet

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵"Uprising Recalls '53 Berlin Rioting," *New York Times*, 29 June 1956, p. 3.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

Communist Party, regarding the reunification of Germany.⁷⁸ Khrushchev, in Helsinki, Finland, stated he considered the issue of reunification a matter for the East and West German governments—leaving many to believe he dismissed the prospect:

We do not have the desire to talk to anyone about the solution of this problem. It is erroneous to believe that the German question can be settled by the Soviet Union and the United States...I am certain that the Germans will find an adequate solution. There are two Germanys, and every realist must recognize this fact...We are not ready to go anywhere to settle the problem or to receive anyone to discuss it.⁷⁹

In response, John F. Dulles, Secretary of State, and President Eisenhower sent letters to Chancellor Adenauer, confirming their devotion to the unification of the two Germanys. While the Day of German Unity was commemorated and mentioned in the letters and articles, all international and German focus remained on the intentions of the two superpowers and the future of German unity at the disarmament talks. Dulles' letter was read in the Bundestag on the June 17 anniversary.⁸⁰ It recalled the uprising and its goals, reaffirmed western resolve to reunify Germany, and portrayed the Soviet Union as an obstacle to reunification, freedom, and peace. "The desire of mankind to live in freedom and peace constitutes a force which cannot be resisted. My countrymen and I join with you in honoring the high cause to which you have dedicated this day."⁸¹

The timing of Khrushchev's statement and Dulles' letter pitted East against West, the United States against the Soviet Union, leaving Germany in the middle between two bickering parents, one detached and disinterested and the other overly patronizing.

⁷⁸M.S. Handler, "Dulles Promises Bonn Aid on Unity," *New York Times*, 18 June 1957, p. 3.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid.

Eisenhower's letter, sent the day after the anniversary, was not released to the public.⁸² The letter reportedly reiterated Dulles' claims of support and addressed concerns that the United States might dismiss German reunification in favor of a disarmament agreement with the Soviet Union.⁸³ Eisenhower reassured Adenauer that the United States would not abandon reunification for a disarmament pact.⁸⁴ Western reports of the fourth anniversary focused less on commemorating the day's events than on international concerns and the negotiations that could impact Germany's future.

1958, the fifth anniversary of the uprising, witnessed a surge in memorial events as reported in a short blip.⁸⁵ "Thousands marched in silent processions today on the fifth anniversary of the East German uprising. Memorial fires were lighted. Wreaths were deposited at public monuments. Political leaders urged renewed efforts to end the partition of Germany."⁸⁶ Chancellor Adenauer addressed the West German Parliament, calling for German unity and freedom.⁸⁷

On the same day, a second *New York Times* article contrasted the observance of June 17 in West and East Berlin, respectively.⁸⁸ West Berlin spearheaded a national day of observance allowing citizens to participate in meetings, memorial services, and

⁸²"Adenauer Receives Eisenhower Letter," *New York Times*, 19 June 1957, p. 15.

⁸³*Ibid.*

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵"West Germans Stage Parades," *New York Times*, 18 June 1958, p. 12.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸"German Uprising in 1953 Observed," *New York Times*, 18 June 1958, p. 12.

demonstrations.⁸⁹ Willy Brandt, Mayor of West Berlin, and Dr. Gerstenmaier, President of the Bundestag, addressed a crowd collected in front of the West Berlin Administration Building on this Day of German Unity.⁹⁰ Brandt focused on four issues surrounding the holiday: “the abolition of the borders around Berlin, the freeing of political prisoners, a relaxation of tension and a reunification of Germany in peace and freedom.”⁹¹ East Berlin did not commemorate or celebrate June 17 at all.⁹² East Germans carried out their usual work, East German planes increased passes over East and West Berlin, and border crossings posted extra police.⁹³ In addition, *Neues Deutschland* reported the execution of a leader of the Hungarian uprising—an ominous warning.⁹⁴ The article reflected the general feeling in West Berlin. “The appearance of the planes and the publicity given to the execution of Mr. Nagy were interpreted in West Berlin as warnings from the East German Government to any of its people who might consider a public show of dissatisfaction.”⁹⁵

The sixth anniversary witnessed a collection of international figures in Bonn and Berlin for the celebration and remembrance.⁹⁶ “As a demonstration of solidarity with the 17,000,000 East Germans, President Theodor Heuss of West Germany and the Ambassadors of the United States, France and Britain flew to Berlin from Bonn to attend

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶“Germans Mark Anti-Red Rising,” *New York Times*, 18 June 1959, p. 4.

the ceremonies in the divided city where the anti-Communist uprising began.”⁹⁷ The *New York Times* reported the day’s observances—“hundreds of ceremonies”—including a demonstration comprised of “tens of thousands” of participants in front of West Berlin’s City Hall.⁹⁸ However, this commemoration was bittersweet—six years of promises passed without reunification. The article quoted Mayor Brandt as saying, “the anniversary was ‘no cause for celebration since the request of the June 17 uprising has in no way been fulfilled.’”⁹⁹ The memorial events in West Berlin and Germany also elicited stern warnings and accusations from the East.¹⁰⁰ The demonstrations were labeled disruptive and incendiary. “‘The German Democratic Republic,’ an East German newspaper reported, ‘will not tolerate’ impudent provocations within its own territory.”¹⁰¹ In reaction, West Germany appealed to East Germans not to incite controversy.¹⁰²

At the same time, Chancellor Adenauer delivered a speech before the West German Parliament recalling the uprising and renewing the appeal for German reunification.¹⁰³ However, in this speech, Adenauer concentrated on the United States and its commitment to German unity. While reading a letter from Christian Herter, the

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³“Adenauer at Ceremony,” *New York Times*, 18 June 1959, p. 4.

Secretary of State, Adenauer bound the United States to the German issue. “The United States in particular,” he said, “is the spokesman for all who love freedom.”¹⁰⁴

By the seventh anniversary in 1960, officials questioned the resolve of the people as well as their memory of the uprising and what it represented. The *New York Times* article reflected political wrestling, internal struggle, and waning faith. Regardless, West Germany and Berlin held “scores of rallies and ceremonies.”¹⁰⁵ The West German Parliament held a special session, as it had for the last seven years.¹⁰⁶ Contrary to tradition, Chancellor Adenauer did not address Parliament on the holiday. Instead, he was on vacation, and Dr. Erhard, Economics Minister, took his place and gave the customary speech against the Communist system, against “fear and terror,” calling for reunification and asking for support from the Allies.¹⁰⁷

Distinct from the mainline speeches of previous years, a disillusioned Mayor Brandt spoke to a rally of more than 80,000 people in West Berlin.¹⁰⁸ Rather than focus on promises from the United States and other Western countries, Brandt concentrated on the need for political unity within West Germany, reunification through German determination, and a long-term common plan to attain German goals.¹⁰⁹ Brandt specifically called for unanimity among the West German political parties in these goals, but recognized that German Unity was farther than originally thought or hoped, and felt it

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Sydney Gruson, “Germans Pledge Fight for Unity,” *New York Times*, 18 June 1960, p. 9.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

would only develop through German action: “In the long run we are not going to be deprived of the right of self-determination.”¹¹⁰ He also chastised his fellow West Germans for allowing the German Day of Unity to lose its importance in their hearts. Less than ten years after the event, the day was recognized in passing and considered by many a convenient, care-free holiday.¹¹¹ “The West Germans are being increasingly criticized,” the paper explained, “for accepting it merely as a holiday from work rather than, as former President Theodor Heuss put it to the West Berlin rally, as ‘a day of defeat but also a symbol of the love of free citizens for freedom.’”¹¹²

The only mention of international concern was at an international gathering of approximately 1,000 Americans and Germans at a hotel.¹¹³ Franz Josef Strauss, West Germany’s Defense Minister, delivered a speech to the group calling for a unified front against Soviet agendas in Germany.¹¹⁴ He likened any compromise with the Soviet Union to aiding and abetting theft, fraud, or trespass. “It would perhaps be convenient to bring about an arrangement with the Communist rulers,” he surmised, “by telling them that their loot has become legitimate and thus legalize their possessions acquired by fraud and by brute force, but that would not only be betraying our ideals – it would also be utterly ineffective, and we would repent of it extremely soon.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

The only other recognition given the anniversary in the *New York Times* was a picture of Mayor Brandt offering condolences to families of people slain in the 1953 uprising, on June 18, 1960.¹¹⁶ The reference only included a picture with a byline. The byline merely reported that officials from West Germany, the United States, France, and Britain attended the memorial.¹¹⁷

The 1961 commemoration of the June 17 uprising concentrated on a looming peace treaty between East Germany and the Soviet Union. On June 15, 1961, the *New York Times* reported a demand by East Germany aimed at quashing any celebrations of the eighth anniversary.¹¹⁸ In a letter from Karl Maron, East German Interior Minister, to Gerhard Schroeder, West German Interior Minister, the GDR demanded West Germany outlaw any anti-Communist meetings celebrating the June 17 uprising. The letter specifically required cancellation of any gatherings “in a three-mile-wide zone along the border between the two Germanys, especially demonstrations on June 17.”¹¹⁹ Tension between East and West along the “flash point” remained fresh, which heightened international attention on the anniversary, and the *New York Times* reported the anniversary’s history with renewed vigor.

As a result of the stern warning from the East Government, coverage and participation in the anniversary’s events increased from previous years. In response to the East German stipulations, West Germany’s government specifically urged its citizens

¹¹⁶“In Memoriam,” *New York Times*, 21 June 1960, p. 5.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸“New East German Demand,” *New York Times*, 15 June 1961, p. 10.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

to participate in the anniversary's rallies and demonstrations.¹²⁰ An estimated 100,000 participants marched in the streets of West Berlin during the day, and more joined a night parade.¹²¹ "The police said," the paper related, "attendance at the rally was much higher today than in previous years. This was attributed to increased tension over the city."¹²² Mayor Willy Brandt led a gathering in front of West Berlin's City Hall.¹²³ His disheartened speech of the previous year was replaced with a new rally cry—"We shall never surrender!"¹²⁴ Brandt then led a "torch-light parade" up the streets to light a bonfire visible from East Germany.¹²⁵ In conclusion, Brandt specifically cautioned the Soviet Union from making a separate peace treaty with East Germany.¹²⁶

On the same day, the *New York Times* addressed the proceedings in Bonn.¹²⁷ Dr. Adenauer addressed the Bundestag, as on previous anniversaries, pleading for resolve and faith in the East.¹²⁸ He surmised the East Germans did not want the Communist system because more than three million had escaped to West Germany.¹²⁹ The article recounted the history of the 1953 revolt and summarized the day's celebrations. It claimed that more than 1,500 rallies and demonstrations occurred throughout West

¹²⁰ "100,000 in Berlin at Anti-Red Rally," *New York Times*, 18 June 1961, p. 15.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ Gerd Wilcke, "Adenauer Assures East," *New York Times*, 18 June 1961, p. 15.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

Germany and West Berlin, and speculated that the renewed interest in the anniversary resulted from an impending peace treaty to be signed by the Soviet Union and East Germany.¹³⁰ “Today’s memorials were held against the background of new Communist threats to perpetuate Germany’s division. On Thursday, Premier Krushchev and Walter Ulbricht, Communist East Germany’s leader, repeated their demands that a peace treaty with Germany be signed before the end of the year.”¹³¹

In contrast, a third article in the *New York Times* on the same day painted a more discouraging picture. The difference in 1961 from previous anniversaries was the promise from Khrushchev to resolve the German question with an accord with East Germany.¹³² While this typically would not concern West Germany, the announcement came after a meeting with the U.S. President Kennedy, who left appearing weak and indecisive.¹³³ He did not specifically address the treaty issue with Khrushchev.¹³⁴ West Germany feared their ally’s resolve was faltering. “They [West Germans] feel Premier Khrushchev is determined to have things his way. But they ask themselves: ‘How determined is the West?’”¹³⁵ While some U.S. advisors were considering a compromise over Berlin, West Germans considered any compromise a defeat. “Any compromise,” the article explained, “on Berlin is the first step out of Berlin.”¹³⁶ Berlin represented a

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Gerd Wilcke, “German Unity Cry Has Weaker Sound,” *New York Times*, 18 June 1961, p. E4.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Ibid.

staple for West Germany, an international business center, a sanctuary for refugees from East Germany, and a production site for West German goods.¹³⁷

The article anticipated the ways the Soviet Union would squeeze the West out of Berlin once the “peace treaty” was signed.¹³⁸ Meanwhile any celebration of the June 17 seemed inflated and inevitably short-lived. Most met the anniversary with a feeling of futility. ““We will commemorate the day,” the article quotes another paper, “as we did in the past seven years. But next year’s June 17 will not be the same...because Premier Khrushchev has left no doubt that he is determined to settle the German and Berlin questions before the end of the year.””¹³⁹ Less than two months later the Berlin Wall went up.

Perhaps because of the dramatic events of August 13, 1961, and their aftermath, the Day of German Unity witnessed a dramatic drop in coverage on its anniversary in 1962. The only article published in the *New York Times*, a weak attempt at inflaming the reader, failed to inform.¹⁴⁰ The article likened the uprising to a slaughter, the Berlin Wall to a “wall of shame,” Communists to murderers of women and children, East Germany to a prison, and the Soviet Union and the Communist leaders to “jailers.”¹⁴¹ The only mention of the anniversary sought to set the stage for a provocative call for reunification: “All were crushed by Soviet tanks and troops while the West watched in helpless horror. But the embers of the fires they lit continue to smolder and are causing new anxiety in

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰“A Poignant Anniversary,” *New York Times*, 17 June 1962, p. 150.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

Berlin as both East and West observe, each in its own fashion, the anniversary of that first bid for freedom.”¹⁴²

Interest in the tenth anniversary in 1963 was heightened by the Cuban Missile Crisis which occurred October of the previous year as the tension between the Soviet Union and the United States remained severe. Less than a week prior to the uprising’s anniversary, Kennedy delivered a speech calling for nuclear test ban talks in Moscow.¹⁴³ Kennedy announced that the United States would cease all atmospheric nuclear tests as long as other nations acted in kind and encouraged a new relationship between the two superpowers.¹⁴⁴ Only as an attachment to this article did the *New York Times* report the expected celebration of the uprising’s anniversary in Bonn.¹⁴⁵ The anniversary’s significance relied on the stress between two other nations.

A rally in West Berlin attracted nearly 75,000 people on the tenth anniversary.¹⁴⁶ The *New York Times* reported the rally’s events and the speeches given by Vice Chancellor Ludwig Erhard and Mayor Willy Brandt.¹⁴⁷ In a sharp twist, Erhard and Brandt did not speak of unification through the United States, or through a complete release by the East. Instead, they proposed direct negotiation with the Soviet Union for the reunification of the two Germans.¹⁴⁸ In addition to the Berlin rally, the *New York*

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³“Kennedy’s ‘Peace Strategy’ Is Welcomed at U.N.,” *New York Times*, 12 June 1963, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

¹⁴⁶Arthur J. Olsen, “Erhard and Brandt Urge German Unity Accord,” *New York Times*, 18 June 1963, p. 5.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

Times drew attention to approximately two hundred other events commemorating the revolt.¹⁴⁹ The day was not free from strain with the East. East Germany claimed West Germans planted a bomb in front of the East German Foreign Trade Ministry.¹⁵⁰ Regardless, West German speeches advocated unity and peace.

The second article commemorating the tenth anniversary focused on the economic developments since the uprising.¹⁵¹ A West German study revealed that developments in the East since the uprising had been counterproductive to the West's agenda.¹⁵² The report revealed that nationalization in industry approached 100 percent, and the retail trade was not far behind at 95 percent.¹⁵³ In addition productivity, industrial and individual, had declined since 1953.¹⁵⁴ Although disappointing, the news did not extinguish the services carried out on the anniversary. In West Berlin, a multitude of Berliners collected and marched to the Wall, screaming for its destruction.¹⁵⁵ West Berlin police intervened and detoured the group. Meanwhile, U.S. Senator Thomas Dodd attended a memorial ceremony in Bonn, where he insisted on a reduction of trade with the Soviet Union.¹⁵⁶

Coverage of the eleventh anniversary in 1964 dropped dramatically. Two small articles in the *New York Times* briefly mentioned the uprising and its observances. One

¹⁴⁹Ibid.

¹⁵⁰Ibid.

¹⁵¹"Ills in East Germany," *New York Times*, 18 June 1963, p. 5.

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³Ibid.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

day prior to the anniversary, Senator Keating used the anniversary and the increased focus on the disarmament negotiations in Geneva to beseech the Soviet Union and East Germany to refrain from executing citizens trying to cross the Berlin Wall.¹⁵⁷ His request was read at a gathering commemorating the 1953 uprising.

Two days later, the *New York Times* briefly summarized the remembrances on June 17.¹⁵⁸ The article quoted a speech given by West German President Lübke which reiterated the same goals of the past eleven years while Mayor Brandt spoke to an assembly of an estimated 100,000 Berliners.¹⁵⁹ He demanded that East Germany release their political prisoners.¹⁶⁰

The *New York Times*' recognition of the twelfth anniversary in 1965 lessened even more. One brief article recapped the uprising's history and reported on commemorative activities.¹⁶¹ While the numbers of events and West German participation remained strong, the mood was somber and disheartened. The article announced the participation of West German officials, including President Lübke and Mayor Brandt, in more than 47,000 planned events.¹⁶² Although Lübke spoke determinedly about reunification, he could not hide his disappointment in current failings. He described West German efforts as having "little prospect of success."¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷"Keating Asks Talks to Curb Brutality Along Berlin Wall," *New York Times*, 16 June 1964, p. 9.

¹⁵⁸"Germany Observes '53 Revolt in East," *New York Times*, 18 June 1964, p. 16.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁶¹"'53 German Rising Marked in West," *New York Times*, 18 June 1965, p. 6.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*

¹⁶³*Ibid.*

Nearly thirteen years after the revolt, Günter Grass's play, "The Plebeians Rehearse an Uprising," opened in West Berlin.¹⁶⁴ The *New York Times* summarized the reviews and reactions. The paper quoted the first reaction of a patron immediately following the play who yelled, "My God, that play was bad."¹⁶⁵ Other reviews were mixed. The article drew parallels between the play and the 1953 uprising. The article emphasized Grass's focus on the failure of German intellectuals "to act and assume leadership at moments of political crisis."¹⁶⁶

In recognition of the opening of his play, the *New York Times* presented an extensive exposé on Günter Grass, hailing him as "the living German writer."¹⁶⁷ The critique provided a sweeping biography of Grass, a vignette on his current daily life, and a retrospective of his work, complete with analysis.¹⁶⁸ The article questioned whether the play implied an undeserved, scathing scrutiny of Brecht's behavior during the uprising of 1953, or a necessary examination of the interaction between art and politics: "We shall be able to decide whether Grass is indeed attacking Brecht, whom he personally reveres, or merely illustrating, for himself and for all artists and honest men, Brecht's terrible and typically German trilemma: to live with, against or for power."¹⁶⁹ In his interview, Grass focused on the fallacious or skewed perception of blame surrounding the uprising:

¹⁶⁴"Berlin Sees Play by Gunter Grass," *New York Times*, 18 January 1966, p. 31.

¹⁶⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷Keith Botstord, "Günter Grass is a Different Drummer," *New York Times*, 8 May 1966, p. SM15.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*

In his play, Grass is trying to force his countrymen, on both sides of the Wall, to admit the truth about at least one incontrovertible fact in German history: that the June, 1953, manifestation, which the East Germans describe, in Grass's words, 'as the work of Nazis sent in by the West' and which the West Germans call a 'heroic uprising of the people,' was in fact 'neither on nor the other, but a simple workers' demonstration. The intellectuals, the church, the bourgeoisie abstained completely,' Grass said, 'It was neither the Nazis, nor was it the whole German people. That would be too easy. I subtitle my play 'A German Tragedy' because, by telling a few lies, everyone got off the hook.'¹⁷⁰

Grass considered the 1953 uprising the only chance for reunification. "The possibility [for reunification] did once exist, as my play demonstrates. But in 1953 almost no one rose to the possibility, and the very few who tried, like Ernst Reuter, were carefully muzzled or rendered ineffective. There was the possibility once. Now there is none."¹⁷¹ The article, however, recalled Grass's campaign speeches—speeches of hope. "The East German state is really there. Take your glasses off—and it's still there...If we really want unity...then we must envisage it as a task that will require sacrifices from us. Reunification will not be handed us on a platter, nor will it fall from heaven."¹⁷²

Grass considered the source of unrest and division. "The trouble is we don't feel like a nation. We have a choice between an empty materialism, with each grabbing what he can get, and, on the other side, a fake kind of nationalism. A real nationalism is something you can feel; it is quite natural to you, it is knowing who you are."¹⁷³ Grass charged writers with the duty to help the German state and people find their nationalism. Grass argued that a lack of guidance by writers and self-discovery led to misguided

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Ibid.

attempts at nationalism—Prussians, Nazis, and now a seemingly permanent division.¹⁷⁴ His play and previous writings attempt to develop a German nationalism or identity.

Grass's play was not the only news on the thirteenth anniversary. The *New York Times* recorded the commemoration by the West German Chancellor, West Berlin's Mayor, and an American Senator.¹⁷⁵ On June 17, 1966, Chancellor Ludwig Erhard spoke to the Bundestag.¹⁷⁶ He reiterated the call for reunification and demanded a nationwide free German election.¹⁷⁷ On the same day, Mayor Willy Brandt addressed a crowd in front of the West Berlin City Hall.¹⁷⁸ He called for reunification, but also announced plans to meet Communist leaders in East Germany.¹⁷⁹ At the same time, U.S. Senator Javits spoke at a ceremony at the Waldorf-Astoria, sponsored by the American Council on Germany and the German Consul General in New York.¹⁸⁰ He warned against rushing reunification and negotiations with the Soviet Union without "harmonizing with the other Western nations."¹⁸¹ Javits did not consider the time right. Dr. Barzel of the Christian Democratic Union Party also spoke at the event, but argued for negotiations

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁷⁵"Erhard Stresses Appeal for Unity," *New York Times*, 18 June 1966, p. 6.

¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

¹⁷⁹Ibid.

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹Ibid.

with the Soviet Union and concessions to their demands—reunification no matter the cost.¹⁸² Still, thirteen years after the uprising no one had a clear answer.

The *New York Times* did not cover the celebrations commemorating the revolt in 1967 at the fourteenth anniversary. In 1968, the fifteenth anniversary, U.S. President Johnson broke his silence regarding the division in Germany in response to a recent East German threat of new taxes and document requirements for those traveling to West Berlin.¹⁸³ In a public letter to Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger, which was read at a public rally commemorating the 1953 uprising, President Johnson considered the East German scheme a direct Soviet threat to West Berlin, and his letter meant to eliminate any rumors that the U.S. would concede:

It is a matter of great regret to me that while the Federal Republic and we are pursuing objectives that I believe all mankind shares, names to live in peace with out neighbors, Berlin is once again threatened. Our Government and yours, along with the British and French, are consulting on this latest totally unprovoked and unjustified aggravation of the situation. I want to express to you on this ‘Day of German Unity’ that our support of free Berlin and the goal of a German people united in peace remains as firm as ever.¹⁸⁴

All focus in the *New York Times* regarding the uprising concentrated on the immediate international tension created by the East German and Soviet threat.

The following year’s activities witnessed little exposure in the *New York Times*. In 1969, Chancellor Kiesinger addressed the West German Parliament in a speech that sounded more like a “State of the Nation” address than a commemoration of the 1953 uprising.¹⁸⁵ Kiesinger offered to institute a “joint commission with the East German

¹⁸²Ibid.

¹⁸³Max Frankel, “Johnson Affirms Stand on Berlin,” *New York Times*, 18 June 1968, p. 1.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 8.

¹⁸⁵“Kiesinger Renews His Offer to East,” *New York Times*, 18 June 1969, p. 9.

Government” or to contract a treaty.¹⁸⁶ Regarding reunification, Kiesinger’s message was bleak, reiterating that Bonn would never recognize the East German Communist government, thus extinguishing hopes for reunification.¹⁸⁷ Most of the speech concentrated on West German development, prosperity, and state of affairs.¹⁸⁸

While German ceremonies venerated the seventeenth (1970), eighteenth (1971), nineteenth (1972), and twentieth (1973) anniversaries, the complete absence of any coverage of the day’s events in the *New York Times* in those years reflected dwindling public interest in the United States. While the *New York Times* carried no piece on the twentieth anniversary of the uprising, 1974 bore a striking proclamation from West Germany.

Immediately preceding the 1974 anniversary, on June 13, the West German Government announced it would not commemorate the twenty-first anniversary of the 1953 uprising.¹⁸⁹ A collection of Social Democrats and Free Democrats argued the June 17 Parliament meeting should be used for a debate on West German industrial issues.¹⁹⁰ An opposing group of Christian Democrats and Christian Socialists threatened to skip the Parliament meeting and travel to West Berlin and host a commemorative rally.¹⁹¹ Negotiations resulted in the cancellation of the June 17 Parliament session and the

¹⁸⁶Ibid.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Ibid.

¹⁸⁹“Bonn Won’t Mark East’s ’53 Rising,” *New York Times*, 13 June 1974, p. 10.

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

¹⁹¹Ibid.

abandonment of the Berlin rally.¹⁹² This decrease in West German interest in the uprising's anniversary was consistent with a public poll result that 33 percent of West Germans "did not know why June 17 was a holiday" and 53 percent "thought the observance should be abolished."¹⁹³

Inexplicably, on June 17, 1974, the Bundestag held a special session regardless of the previous announcement.¹⁹⁴ Representatives of the two main parties spoke. Annemarie Renger, President of the Parliament and member of the Social Democratic Party, spoke to the special session but commented that the commemorations only reminded Germans of the forced division.¹⁹⁵ Heinrich Windelen, Chairman of the Christian Democratic Party, appealed to the United Nations to pursue the perceived injustices in East Germany.¹⁹⁶

Another four years passed before the *New York Times* reported again on June 17 commemorations. Its coverage focused on controversial events surrounding the celebrations of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the uprising. In Frankfurt, policemen attempted to quell a riot between demonstrators and "Neo-Nazis."¹⁹⁷ Leftist activists attempted to interrupt a right-wing National Democratic Party rally commemorating the 1953 uprising's twenty-fifth anniversary.¹⁹⁸ The police struggled to maintain order.

¹⁹²Ibid.

¹⁹³Ibid.

¹⁹⁴"53 Uprising in East is Marked in Bonn," *New York Times*, 18 June 1974, p. 8.

¹⁹⁵Ibid.

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

¹⁹⁷"Frankfurt Police Battle Leftists Seeking to Block a Neo-Nazi Rally," *New York Times*, 18 June 1978, p. 15.

¹⁹⁸Ibid.

In the same year, the *New York Times* published a comprehensive background piece on the uprising, its history, progression, and results.¹⁹⁹ It included a succinct explanation of the uprising's place in East German and Soviet history, "the first uprising in Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe since 1945" and a precursor to revolts in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.²⁰⁰ The second half of the article considered the uprising's aftermath and its impact on an international scale.

The article captured a bleak image of East Germany—suffocating oppression in the work place, dissatisfaction among the population, and division solidified by the raising of the Berlin Wall in 1961: "The wary Communist leadership maintains a tight grip on the 17 million East Germans. An armed militia, made up of thousands of Communist workers in factory groups, has been called into being to assist the armed forces and the strong Soviet troop units in quelling any unrest."²⁰¹ The article evaluated the uprising in a broader context, explaining its history, its place in European and international events, and its long-term impact. The article also analyzed Western reaction and tried to explain the American course: "During the 1953 revolt, the Americans and their allies had carefully refrained from involvement so as not to upset delicate relations with the Soviet Union."²⁰²

While West Germany continued to commemorate the "Day of German Unity," Chancellor Helmut Schmidt recommended moving the celebration to May 23, the day

¹⁹⁹"25 Years After East German Revolt, Strains Linger," *New York Times*, 18 June 1978, p. 3.

²⁰⁰*Ibid.*

²⁰¹*Ibid.*

²⁰²*Ibid.*

West Germany implemented its constitution in 1949.²⁰³ The day would not be recognized in East Germany.²⁰⁴ The *New York Times*' article commemorating the revolt's twenty-fifth anniversary thus revealed the uprising's continued relevance in American news and its international significance.

Five years later, in 1983, on the uprising's thirtieth anniversary, the only mention of the revolt came in an exposé of East German author, Stefan Heym.²⁰⁵ The article encompassed his life's story—his flight to Prague during World War II, his migration to the United States, his service in the U.S. Army, and finally his move to East Germany during the Red Scare.²⁰⁶ It also focused on Heym's writing career and the peculiarity of his politics and his life in East Germany.²⁰⁷ Most of his books were published in the West after the East German government refused to publish his "Five Days in June" (*Fünf Tage im Juni*) following a public argument with Walter Ulbricht.²⁰⁸ The Western bestseller was banned in East Germany.²⁰⁹ This limited coverage of the East German revolt and East Germany reflected the eclipsed interest in the uprising. The *New York Times* did not cover any celebrations or commemorations of the thirtieth anniversary.

²⁰³Ibid.

²⁰⁴Ibid.

²⁰⁵"An East German Writer and the Wall of Silence," *New York Times*, 7 September 1983, p. C16.

²⁰⁶Ibid.

²⁰⁷Ibid.

²⁰⁸Ibid.

²⁰⁹Ibid.

The year 1987 marked the 750th anniversary of Berlin's foundation.²¹⁰ In response, East Germany made efforts to "reclaim" German history in 1986, which elicited a reaction from West German and Western Allied officials. American and international historians considered the East German embrace of German history as the triumph of time and history.²¹¹ West Germans considered it an occupation. Chancellor Helmut Kohl described the East German agenda with disdain: "The goal...is to occupy German history, take over its identity from the Middle Ages to Frederick the Great...Every year they're occupying another chunk."²¹² East German historians published biographical and historical accounts about Martin Luther and Frederick the Great.²¹³ Plays poking fun at the East German government while presenting Communist slants on historical figures were performed and classic operas—with Communist angles—opened in refurbished theaters.²¹⁴

East Germany's crowning proposal was a Museum of German History built along Unter den Linden, covering German history from the Stone Age to the present.²¹⁵ The article noted the museum's slant on history—glossing over unpopular Communist programs or proposals and historical events unfavorable to the Communist agenda or remembrance.²¹⁶ For example, the museum described the 1953 uprising as a failed

²¹⁰James M. Markham, "Who Owns the Past?" *New York Times*, 27 April 1986, p. SM88.

²¹¹*Ibid.*

²¹²*Ibid.*

²¹³*Ibid.*

²¹⁴*Ibid.*

²¹⁵*Ibid.*

²¹⁶*Ibid.*

“putsch attempt promoted by capitalist agents.”²¹⁷ In response, the West German Government announced its intention to build a West German History Museum.²¹⁸ History was a battleground.

Prior to the revolt’s anniversary in June, 1990, the first since the Berlin Wall’s fall, the *New York Times* published a piece supplying German perspectives on reunification.²¹⁹ The few references to the revolt consisted of remembrances of individuals. Klaus Harpprecht, author of *Der Aufstand*, remembered it as the source of his first book.²²⁰ The experience moved him profoundly. Michael Naumann, a publisher, remembered the uprising as the reason his family finally fled East Germany.²²¹ He considered the event life-changing and ultimately scarring: “In 1953 there was a big workers’ revolt and the Communists went looking for scapegoats. This time they weren’t looking for the ‘race enemy’ but for the ‘class enemy.’ Only the names had changed. We left in the middle of the night...I have no nostalgia for East Germany.”²²² The article focused on current worries concerning reunification. Should Germany, the source of two World Wars, be unified? Should flourishing West Germany endure union with the economically stagnant east? Michael Naumann voiced his concern that the U.S., Great Britain, and France considered every German guilty of the atrocities of World War II, and with reunification would come more. “In New York, they think we’re reopening the

²¹⁷Ibid.

²¹⁸Ibid.

²¹⁹Craig R. Whitney, “Upheaval in the East: In West Germany, Anxiety Over Unity,” *New York Times*, 8 March 1990, sec. A, p. 1.

²²⁰Ibid.

²²¹Ibid.

²²²Ibid.

concentration camps.”²²³ Germany seemed more alone than ever—old wounds reopened with reunification.

June 17, 1990, witnessed the first “inter-German” Day of German Unity.²²⁴ East and West German government leaders met in the Bundestag on that day to discuss reunification and commemorate the 1953 rebellion—never before celebrated by the East.²²⁵ East and West met to consider the logistics of reunification—thirty-seven years after the uprising, after thirty-seven years of promises, rallies, and speeches.

The day before the fiftieth anniversary of the revolt, June 16, 2003, the *New York Times* ran an article reviewing the history of the revolt, its place in history, interviewing a couple of participants, and considering the celebrations to come.²²⁶ The article intimated the uprising was largely forgotten outside of West Germany, since later events led to the “fall of Communism all over Eastern Europe.”²²⁷ However, interviews with participants revealed how fresh the events remained in their minds and the meaning the uprising held for them. One participant, Paul Werner Wagner, who marched with his father when he was five, later devoted his life to carrying out the goals of the uprising and attempted to create a political party based on the ten-point demands of the 1953 revolt.²²⁸ “So for me,” he explained, “June 17 is a symbol of hope, and the people who undertook the

²²³Ibid.

²²⁴Ferdinand Protzman, “East Germans Add to Unity Pressure,” *New York Times*, 18 June 1990, p. A1.

²²⁵Ibid.

²²⁶Richard Bernstein, “In Eastern Germany, 1953 Uprising is Remembered,” *New York Times*, 16 June 2003, sec. A, p. 3.

²²⁷Ibid.

²²⁸Ibid.

events of June 17 must not be forgotten.”²²⁹ While the article paradoxically considered the uprising forgotten, its very existence demonstrated that fifty years had not lessened the event’s impact, place in history, and deeper meaning.

The *New York Times* consistently reported the 1953 uprising and related stories from June 18, 1953, to its sixteenth anniversary in 1969. Following 1969, sporadic coverage related the revolt to international relations and domestic developments. Still, the *New York Times* reminded its readers decade after decade of the uprising’s history and relevance all the way to the fiftieth anniversary in 2003.

With regard to content, the *New York Times* repeated three themes during the first week of the uprising: detailed reports of the progression of the strikes; reactions of citizens and officials; and communiqués between Eastern and Western officials with accusations and denials concerning responsibility for the revolt. Later attention moved to other related subjects: renewing the cry for reunification; remembering or commemorating the uprising; relating the conviction and sentencing of the victims of abuse within the Democratic Republic; and reporting the international debates and tensions surrounding political developments in general, and those of Berlin in particular. In all this, the *New York Times* faithfully reflected the tenor and rhythm of the Cold War confrontation between East and West of which the East German revolt in 1953 became an early marker of deep and lasting symbolic power.

²²⁹Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX

June 17 in the *Washington Post*

The *Washington Post* covered the first week of the uprising in 1953 in substantial detail. Its reports were broad and inclusive. The first day's reports presented the revolt's events, including movements of people, Volkspolizei, and Soviet troops and tanks; the toll of injured and dead; Soviet and East German accusations of Western provocations; reactions from officials and citizens, East and West; and the general impression that the uprising was indicative of the Soviet and East German regime's failure. These original themes expanded soon to include several others: unexpected confessions from the Soviet sector regarding the impact of the uprising and mistakes made within the government; commemorations and memorials honoring the revolt and its martyrs; demonstrations staged; the Soviet enforcement of martial law in the German Democratic Republic; conditions in East Germany; the rumored downfall of the SED and Premier Otto Grotewohl; and repeated demands for reunification. Over time the articles revealed a dwindling public interest in the revolt and a growing sense of hopelessness in West Germany with regard to reunification. The *Washington Post* stopped reporting stories related to the 1953 uprising after 1963, and considered instead comparisons and contrasts between East and West Germany and between capitalism and communism.

Compared to the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* took a more sweeping approach in the first days and year of the uprising. While the *New York Times* provided several separate articles in a day, the *Washington Post* published one comprehensive article for each day in the first week. The *New York Times* filled June 18 with accounts

from every angle and covered the newspaper with pictures of the uprising. The *Washington Post* printed no pictures on the first day. The *New York Times* did not release information everyday in the first week. The *Washington Post* reported daily on developments from June 18 to June 25. The *New York Times* continued to relate happenings into September 1953, while the *Washington Post* stopped coverage after the first week until the revolt's anniversary the following year.

On June 18, the *Washington Post* offered a blow-by-blow account of the previous day's events.¹ The article narrated in detail the movements of the mob, the reaction of the East German Police, and especially the movements of Soviet troops and tanks. It also recounted the injured and death toll released by West Berlin hospitals. Statements were taken from injured East Germans handed over to West German Hospitals for help, as even East German officials sought refuge in West Germany, suffering wounds from attacks by angry mobs.² East German or Soviet authorities quickly reclaimed them before these officials could make public statements.³

The article contained much emotional diction, referring to the East German government as a "puppet regime," East Berlin as an "armed camp," and the uprising as an inevitable reaction to oppression: "The target of bitter hatred by the working masses it had dragooned since 1949, the government was reported on the verge of a drastic shakeup."⁴ Statements released immediately by the GDR's Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl blamed the uprising on Western provocateurs, and Western powers

¹"Red Division Halts East Berlin Revolt: Troops, Tanks Patrol German Soviet Zone," *Washington Post*, 18 June 1953, p. 1.

²*Ibid.*, 2.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

immediately responded with denials.⁵ The *Washington Post* described the uprising as a spontaneous action of the people, as a clash between Russian guns and tanks and East German fists and rocks.

The *Washington Post*'s first article also related American reactions to the uprising, and the actions of Chancellor Adenauer in West Germany. American sources—politicians and officials involved in the negotiations with the Soviet Union—considered the uprising as a sign of dissatisfaction in the East with the Soviet system, the inadequacy of the East German government, and Russian strong-arming.⁶ Dr. James Conant, the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany, believed the uprising indicated that the Soviets failed to “convert the Germans to their own point of view,” and considered the East German authorities weak and unable to govern.⁷ The article also noted Chancellor Adenauer's appearance at the West German Parliament to comment on the situation in the East.⁸

On June 19, 1953, the *Washington Post* concentrated on the immediate aftermath of the uprising. The article noted the Western Allies condemning the Soviets; the accusations and denials regarding responsibility for the uprising; accounts from all of East Germany, indicating the spread of discontent through the entire zone; and injuries and fatalities, including the conviction and execution of Willi Goettling.⁹ One segment

⁵Ibid.

⁶“Berlin Riots Symptoms of Unrest, Wiley Says,” *Washington Post*, 18 June 1953, p. 2.

⁷Ibid.

⁸“Adenauer Calls Cabinet in East Berlin Crisis,” *Washington Post*, 18 June 1953, p. 2.

⁹“Big 3 Demand Russia Stop Berlin Terror,” *Washington Post*, 19 June 1953, p. 1.

of this article proclaimed that President Eisenhower announced the United States would award West Berlin fifty million dollars in “foreign aid funds.”¹⁰

June 20, 1953, in the *Washington Post* brought accounts of more unrest, executions, and arrests.¹¹ The tension between East and West Germany seemed to soar to new heights. Germans attacked an SED Party office in the American sector, destroying property and documents, but no one was hurt.¹² News of more arrests and executions met with angry reactions from West German citizens and officials. East Berliners were arrested and forced to return to work. West Berliners were shot if they accidentally strayed onto East German soil as no wall or markings clearly delineated the sector boundaries.¹³ Karl Wilhelm Kindel, a West Berlin citizen, was shot in the arm when he mistakenly stepped onto East German territory (the building was in the American sector, but the sidewalk was East German).¹⁴ Outrage in the West met intransigence in the East. The *Washington Post* closed its article with pleas from the West to the Russian sector to allay tensions and reactionary behavior.¹⁵

June 21 signified one of the few days on which the *Washington Post* covered multiple angles and stories on the aftermath of the uprising. By June 21, the focus of Washington, D.C., centered on reports of the extent of the revolts across Germany and

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹“Reds Flee as Germans Storm Their Office in West Berlin,” *Washington Post*, 20 June 1953, p. 1.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

the repercussions felt throughout East Germany.¹⁶ Also, the *Washington Post* relayed the dispatches by Tass, the Soviet news agency, that East Berlin held the Western powers responsible for the uprisings.¹⁷ Contiguous to the reports regarding further revolts and the extent of the original uprising, Washington concentrated on the recent passing of a five billion dollar bill allotted for foreign aid.¹⁸ Most concern in Washington focused on the distribution of the five billion, with General Omar Bradley pushing for money to be spent in Germany and along the “iron curtain.”¹⁹ He argued that a strong American presence in Germany and along the Soviet controlled territories forced the Soviets to “pull back.”²⁰ This came in the face of recent budget cuts decreasing the Air Force’s budget by five billion dollars.²¹

While American politicians haggled over budgetary allocations, and Soviet news blamed Western powers for the uprisings, East Germany continued to rock with widespread revolts. More than 100,000 mine workers revolted in Saxony.²² The revolt was successful against a smaller force of East German police until Red Army troops quelled the revolt. Soviet troops immediately executed twelve workers for their

¹⁶“100,000 Reported Battling Troops at German A-Mine: 2000 East Zone Police Disarmed; Thousands Jam Soviet Zone Jails,” *Washington Post*, 21 June 1953, p. 1.

¹⁷“West Organized Riots in Berlin, Tass Says,” *Washington Post*, 21 June 1953, p. 8.

¹⁸“We Made Reds ‘Pull Back,’ Bradley Says,” *Washington Post*, 21 June 1953, p. 1.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*

²²“100,000 Reported Battling Troops at German A-Mine: 2000 East Zone Police Disarmed; Thousands Jam Soviet Zone Jails,” 21 June 1953, 1.

participation in the riot.²³ A revolt in Leipzig gathered over 60,000 workers, and as many as 120 were wounded.²⁴ In a strange development, while reports of spreading revolts throughout Germany proliferated—in Leipzig, Saxony, the port in Rostock, a silk factory in Rathenow, an optical plant in Jena, stock yards in Warnemünde, in Poland, and countless more—East Berlin mayor, Fritz Ebert announced complete peace and resolve in the East German sector, thanking the Russians for their assistance in allaying “the Fascist-inspired plot.”²⁵

These releases were accompanied by a striking confession by the Soviets admitting the far-reaching impact of the uprising on June 17.

The Communists admitted for the first time the scope of the workers’ revolt. The official ADN news agency and the party press published dispatches from a score of cities dedicated to the theme Western agents and Fascists provoked the putsch that it was smashed and that the rank and file had pledged to go back to work. In each case, the regime admitted that every major city and major industry was paralyzed as though a D-day signal had flashed through. It became clear that several million East Germans, almost half the working force, had risen.²⁶

The Soviet and East German secret police reacted to strain caused by the uprising by arresting and attacking suspected participants. “Communist raiding parties rocketed through rebellious East Germany tonight in the greatest police action the Germans have seen...”²⁷ The article reported three thousand people arrested in the raids.²⁸ On June 21, the *Washington Post* reported an extreme level of international tension and continued

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵“Red Raiders in Greatest Police Move Since Hitler,” *Washington Post*, 21 June 1953, p. 8.

²⁶Ibid., 1.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

discontent in the Soviet sectors. While news of riots and revolts continued to stream into the West, the Soviet sector responded with a perplexing mixture of disclosure, complete denial, and accusations.

The *Washington Post* related the first official commemoration of the June 17 victims five days after its occurrence.²⁹ West Germany held a memorial service in the West Berlin Assembly Hall for the seventeen people executed in East Germany for their participation in the uprising.³⁰ This included the first executed, Willi Goettling, who was the center of American articles over the previous five days.³¹ Another service was held in the West German Parliament in Bonn, in which President Theodor Heuss spoke.³² This would be the first of a tradition.

In addition to a short piece recounting the memorial services, the *Washington Post* printed an article focusing on the conditions in East Germany and its continued state of revolt and martial law; relations (accusations and denials of guilt) between East and West; and the predicted downfall of the SED and Otto Grotewohl (and his administration).³³ The article continued coverage of the miners' strike previously reported in Saxony—increasingly relevant with the destruction of a briquette factory in nearby Nachterstedt.³⁴

²⁹“Germans Bow in Memory of 17 Revolt Dead,” *Washington Post*, 22 June 1953, p. 1.

³⁰*Ibid.*

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*

³³“Saxony Plant is Set Ablaze by Revolters,” *Washington Post*, 22 June 1953, p. 1.

³⁴*Ibid.*

The tension in East Germany lingered while martial law remained in force and was imposed by Soviet troops.³⁵ The only hint of relief was the gradual transfer of power by the Soviet troops back to the East German Volkspolizei.³⁶ Meanwhile, Soviet spokespersons such as Major General Dibrova, publicly accused the West of inciting the revolts, arguing that there would be no Soviet resumption of transportation between the German zones until the West stopped “sending provocateurs and other criminal elements into East Berlin.”³⁷ Meanwhile, rumors flew predicting the overthrow of the SED’s power in East Germany and Grotewohl’s dismissal. The *Washington Post* presented the buzz as conjecture based on leaks from Soviet High Commissioner Vladimir Semyenov’s office, supported by recent meetings between Semyenov and leaders of the CDU and LDP (rival parties).³⁸

By the following day, coverage of the uprising was limited to reporting Soviet and East German reactions and continued restlessness. Citizens in West Berlin destroyed a Socialist Unity Party office while East Germany expanded its lists of “automatic arrests” in relation to the uprising.³⁹ In response to the rumors the previous day, Premier Grotewohl released an outline of proposed measures to recover from the continued discord in East Germany. He opened by accusing the West of placing provocateurs in

³⁵Ibid., 3.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹“30,000 Ex-Officers of Wehrmacht Put on Reds’ Arrest List,” *Washington Post*, 23 June 1953, p. 1.

East Germany and threatened strict prosecution of any further insurgency.⁴⁰ He offered incentives to East Germans in the form of “amnesty for honorable workers” who had fallen to West German deception, promised lowered work norms, an increased lifestyle, and other perquisites.⁴¹

June 24 saw a dramatic change in the tone of disclosures from West Germany in the *Washington Post* as information focused on a memorial service in West Berlin commemorating those who died in the revolt and specifically the deaths of eight “martyrs.”⁴² The article was laden with dramatic and emotional language, including the admonition that “the men they mourned had shown the world Germans will never yield to Soviet tyranny.”⁴³ Chancellor Adenauer spoke to a crowd of 125,000 assembled in front of the West Berlin City Hall.⁴⁴ Seven men shot by Soviet and East German authorities lay in state in coffins at the rally. One coffin remained empty, Willi Goettling’s, since the Soviets refused to return his body.⁴⁵ Adenauer’s emotionally charged speech blared across the border into East Berlin. The ceremony closed with an orchestra playing the German funeral song, “I Had a Comrade.”⁴⁶

The *Washington Post* completed its 1953 coverage of the uprising and related East German stories one week after the initial revolt. The final article acted as a summation, tying loose ends, reiterating East-West tensions, reporting the numbers

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²“Red Terror Swells Zone Prison List,” *Washington Post*, 24 June 1953, p. 1.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

imprisoned and executed, more insurgency in Soviet territories, and a statement released by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.⁴⁷ The article maintained the emotionally loaded verbiage of the previous day, referring to the East German government as a “puppet” and portraying the Soviets as a strong-arm government behind the screen. “The Russians gave their puppet east German government a chance to save its neck and stay in office today,” the article opened, “but kept guns pointed against any new uprising by German workers.”⁴⁸

Rumors were dispelled when Grotewohl announced his government would not step down, and declared incentives for people to remain in the Soviet zone.⁴⁹ The article further focused on the economic dilemma in Germany as West and East Germany agreed to increase their trade in order to supply East Germany with ten million marks in food and steel.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, the Soviets released different territories from set production norms.⁵¹ Regardless of the changes and promises made, the Western Allies continued to publicly demand the Soviets revoke martial law in their zone and re-open full trade and transportation with other zones.⁵² Still, information continued to stream into the West about the execution or imprisonment of more “insurrectionists.”⁵³ In response, Prime

⁴⁷“East German Red Regime to Stay in Office, Promises to Free Many Seized in Rioting,” *Washington Post*, 25 June 1953, p. 3.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

Minister Churchill sent a public letter to Chancellor Adenauer calling for reunification through free elections and open negotiations.⁵⁴

After the first week of the uprising, coverage of East German issues sharply dropped in the *Washington Post*. The revolt was not mentioned again until its first anniversary in 1954 when the paper published two related articles. The first recounted the commemorative events and the ground-breaking for a memorial honoring the 1953 uprising and its martyrs.⁵⁵ The article employed emotive language, portraying the uprising as a clash between David and Goliath, and focusing on an arousing speech given by a Washington Reverend, Dr. Charles Lowry, at the event.⁵⁶ Lowry hailed the memorial as a “Monument of Freedom which shall be a sign of battle and of victory, of continuing universal resistance by moral and spiritual weapons until mankind shall at last be of plenitude, of liberation, and of brotherhood.”⁵⁷ The article also familiarized the reader with Count Nicholas de Rochefort, who recommended building the memorial to honor the uprising and its participants.⁵⁸ Rochefort explained, “The memorial...will honor the heroic people of East Berlin, Germany,” he explained, “and also serve as a symbol of hope to all people threatened by Communism.”⁵⁹

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵“East Berliners Honored for 1953 Uprising,” *Washington Post*, 18 June 1954, p. 10.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

The *Washington Post*'s sister article reported an outbreak of violence surrounding the tribute's events.⁶⁰ Communist activists collected near the memorial service and attempted to "unfurl an East German flag."⁶¹ Those participating in the service became enraged and attacked the demonstrators. West Berlin Police struggled to protect some of the demonstrators. Then the crowd began to turn on itself, suspecting innocent people of being Communist. Seventy-eight people were injured in the clash, most of whom were not communist demonstrators.⁶² The article recounted each step of the conflict and described the crazed frenzy of rage, capturing the rawness of the uprising within Berlin and Germany as a whole.⁶³

The only German issue addressed in the *Washington Post* on the uprising's second anniversary in 1955 developed in connection with Harvard University awarding Chancellor Adenauer an honorary law degree.⁶⁴ Adenauer used the opportunity for a public statement, pleading with the U.S. to hold the Soviet Union in check.⁶⁵ He proclaimed the United States as the strongest nation in the world and the only one able to hold the Soviets at bay.⁶⁶ His pleas came at an apt time, as he tried to gain momentum off the 1953 uprising to move forward toward reunification. However, the revolt was not mentioned directly in the article.

⁶⁰"Berlin Police Bar Attempted Lynching of Reds; 78 Injured," *Washington Post*, 18 June 1954, p. 10.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴"Adenauer Gets Degree at Harvard, Praises U.S.," *Washington Post*, 17 June 1955, p. 8.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

The *Washington Post*'s final report on the uprising in the 1950s came on its third anniversary on June 18, 1956.⁶⁷ In a short piece, it described West German activities commemorating the revolt. Chancellor Adenauer hosted a rally in Bonn while Lord Mayor Otto Suhr held a rally at the City Hall in West Berlin.⁶⁸ In addition, celebrations and speeches were carried out throughout West Germany.⁶⁹ The day did not escape controversy. The Saar Protectorate, a French Protectorate on Germany's southwest border with France, celebrated the uprising's anniversary for the first time in 1956.⁷⁰ French authorities removed a German flag raised in Saarbrücken, an action which provoked an argument between Saar and French authorities.⁷¹ This marked the *Washington Post*'s last report on the uprising until its tenth anniversary in 1963.

Only one article in 1963 reported the celebrations surrounding the uprising's tenth anniversary in the *Washington Post*. The article reported the day's events and gatherings, including a demonstration in West Berlin.⁷² The protest developed along the Berlin Wall after an explosion rocked the East German Foreign Ministry, causing little damage and hurting no one.⁷³ West Berlin Police quashed the march with water cannons, fearing a

⁶⁷"Germans Mark Day of Revolt," *Washington Post*, 18 June 1956, p. 6.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²"Crowd at Berlin Wall Hosed on Revolt Date," *Washington Post*, 18 June 1963, p. A13.

⁷³Ibid.

riot or conflict with East Berlin sentries.⁷⁴ Regardless of these violent and provocative episodes, the article described the remembrances as bland and flaccid:

Today's speeches were more subdued and the crowds were smaller. The old slogans and mottos, urging reunification and self-determination for the oppressed Germans, lacked fire. There was the distinct feeling in West Germany and West Berlin that most Germans now realize that there is little they can do to speed unification or free elections for their countrymen in the East.⁷⁵

The article essentially described reunification doomed and the hope for reunification floundering. Regardless, a rally collected thousands in West Berlin, where Mayor Brandt and Chancellor-designate Ludwig Erhard spoke.⁷⁶ Consistent with tradition, Chancellor Adenauer gave his speech in Bonn.⁷⁷ This article in 1963 marked the last coverage of the 1953 East German uprising in the *Washington Post*. The revolt was not mentioned again.

In 1973, the uprising's twentieth anniversary, all attention in the *Washington Post* focused on the perceived growth in East German trade and the increasingly relaxed border controls between East and West Germany and Berlin. A piece in 1973 focused on the recent treaty between East and West Germany in April 1972, and West Germany's recognition of East Germany as an independent country in 1973.⁷⁸ In addition, East and West Germany applied for membership in the U.N. in June 1973.⁷⁹ All consideration in the *Washington Post* towards Germany no longer focused on reunification and remembrance of June 1953 as much as it considered the Germans' future as independent

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Dan Morgan, "German Heritage Bothers GDR Leaders Seeking Own Identity," *Washington Post*, 11 June 1973, p. A2.

⁷⁹"East Germany Applies for Membership in U.N.," *Washington Post*, 13 June 1973, p. A32.

nations and compared the East German system with Western capitalist systems. Talk of reunification lapsed until the fall of the Wall in 1989 and reunification in 1990.

The *Washington Post* compacted an abundance of information on the 1953 uprising and its aftermath into a ten-year period from 1953 to 1963, then abruptly and inexplicably discontinued recognition of its history and anniversaries. Its first reports concentrated on recapturing the day's events blow-by-blow. The paper retold the movements of the crowds and the troops in East Germany, and reported the mortality and injury statistics as victims were carried to West Berlin hospitals. While the GDR hurled accusations against the West of provoking the revolt, American and other Western authorities fired back denials and attacked the faulty nature of the Soviet agenda and regime. According to the *Washington Post*, the Western Allies considered the uprising an indication of the failure of the Soviet and East German governments to win the people's favor. They also denounced the Soviet entry into East Berlin and the use of force and executions to quell the revolt. As news streamed into West Berlin and Germany about the spreading insurgency throughout East Germany, reports of arrests, convictions, sentencing, and executions multiplied. The United States answered with "foreign aid funds" designed to help East and West Germany. The German Democratic Republic surprised Western Allies when it admitted failings. The *Washington Post* recorded these confessions and narrated the overall developments in East Germany and their effects: the state of martial law; the likely future of the SED and Grotewohl's government; continued arrests; living conditions in the GDR; and random insurrections. The first commemoration occurred five days after the uprising. Reunification was its resounding theme and resurfaced in future speeches and international debate. The subject

lost its inspiration by the ten-year anniversary, and was replaced with reservation, skepticism, and hopelessness. By all appearances the editors of the *Washington Post* shared this indifference and gloom.

CHAPTER SEVEN

June 17 in the *Times*

The London *Times*' coverage of the 1953 uprising constituted a comprehensive exposure and analysis of the central events, its place in history, and international diplomatic maneuvering surrounding Germany near the onset of the Cold War. The *Times* reported, in a distinctly British perspective, from Britain's sector in Berlin. The paper's coverage started June 16 and continued to relay information on injured and dead, arrests and convictions, and the ongoing insurgency and strikes throughout East Germany, for weeks to come. In particular, it noted the lack of coverage in East Germany and Russia. Internationally, the *Times* recognized West and East Germany's place in global issues; their admission to conventions and international talks; their ability to elect public officials; disarmament debates; demands posed by the Western High Commissions and the Federal Republic; and the appointments and removal of high-ranking officials in the Soviet Union and the GDR.

The *Times* related conditions in East Germany from the imposition of martial law to the apparent improvements in the standard of living, the return to a strict Communist line signaled by increased work norms, and the restoration of collectivization. The British paper also printed the accusations by Russian and GDR officials claiming Western responsibility for the uprisings, as well as the adamant denials by Western authorities. Since Russian sources concentrated on accusing American provocateurs, the British paper reported with a tone of detachment. Memorial services for victims served to rekindle calls for the repair of communications and transportation between the zones,

reunification, free elections, self-determination, and international disarmament. With time, the repeated question of loyalty, resolve, and steadfastness developed. Officials and papers questioned the determination of the West German people to remember the uprising and its goals, particularly in the face of the building of the Berlin Wall. This sparked an international debate and arguments surrounding the true purpose of the revolt and its recollection. Questions related to the uprising's place in history continued for fifty years to 2003 when technology brought the hope of answers, truth, and revelation.

Compared to the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, the *Times* of London published accounts of the uprising until the end of August 1953. In 1954, the *Times*' comprehensive treatment of the first anniversary began in April before providing a thorough treatment of the anniversary's events and services on June 17 and 18, 1954. Coverage dropped off dramatically after June 18, 1954. The *Times* remembered the uprising again on its anniversary, June 16, 1955, with a single article. The *Times* increased its spread in 1956 and included related stories on its third anniversary. The years 1957 and 1958 witnessed limited exposure, but the *Times* remained attentive and vigilant. The British paper published information on commemorations in 1959, but did not mention the uprising or related stories in 1960. Coverage resumed after 1961. After the tenth anniversary, the *Times* limited its features to once a year from 1964 to 1968. Reporting completely ceased between 1968 and 2003. Contrary to the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, the *Times* never reported any of the events of the June 17 rebellion on the first page. Any coverage of the East German uprising was confined to the international pages of the paper, somewhere between pages five and eight.

In the first year, the *Times*' reporting focused on defensive measures taken in the British sector and, from a distance, on the argument that ensued between America and the Soviet Union and East Germany over the origins of the riots. The first week in the *Times* focused on the developing news of the revolt, international accusations and denials, the arrests and sentencing of participants, and the memorial services planned in West Germany.

The *Times* recounted the rebellion's events a day earlier than the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.¹ While the American papers waited to report the more organized proceedings of June 17, the *Times* let its readers know of the early, unorganized events of June 16. The first day's dispatches held an air of excitement and novelty, and while lacking details, they captured the day's tension, passion, and the potential political and historical impact of the strike. The article examined the day's events; the coverage by East Germany and Russia and attempts to suppress exposure; West Germany's interpretation of the fledgling eruption; and concern for West Germany's representation at international talks in London and Bermuda.²

The *Times* described the first signs of the rebellion, considering it a short-lived, spontaneous, isolated anomaly supported by two or three thousand workers.³ Although the number of workers grew, participation seemed unorganized and underwhelming. There were no reports of violence or injuries.⁴ This early strike dissolved on its own

¹"East Berlin Demonstrators Shout for Freedom," *Times* (London), 17 June 1953, p. 6.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

without a clash with the Volkspolizei.⁵ The police arrested two participants, but promptly released them when intimidated by the crowd of protestors.⁶ The strike peaceably disbanded when the workers went home at the end of the day, and it was uncertain whether the strike would continue the following day.⁷

The East German and Soviet media did not report the strike at all.⁸ The *Times*, however, considered the walk-out a groundbreaking assault on the Communist system.⁹ In an ironic twist, the paper estimated that if police had been called out, the Western powers would have been forced to help the strikers.¹⁰ The following day proved this calculation wrong:

In the opinion of many people in west Berlin to-day's demonstrations could hardly have occurred elsewhere than in east Berlin, where the proximity of the western sectors may reasonably be regarded as having been a deterrent to action by the 'people's police.' They would also have provided a line of retreat if the police had attempted to use force against the workers. Finally, observers believe that the tantalizing nearness of the western sectors with their higher standard of living and their greater political freedom may well have contributed to the mood of the east Berlin workers.¹¹

By the evening of June 16, people collected in the streets and outbursts of clashes between the protestors and Communist youth developed; however, the flare-up was short-lived.¹² In addition, leaders of the movement released a four-point demand list to RIAS

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

for broadcast.¹³ The demonstrators required the reversal of the new work quotas, a decrease in food prices, “free and secret elections,” and a reprieve for all strike participants.¹⁴ The same evening, reports told of strikes and walk-outs throughout East Germany. Grotewohl and Ulbricht addressed the Communist Party June 16 and admitted to a lowered standard of living in East Germany.¹⁵

In addition, the *Times* considered the general reaction and opinion of the early strike in West Germany. The paper related the attitude in Bonn, considering the strike indicative of “long-smouldering resentment” within the Eastern Zone and a “crack in the Communist façade.”¹⁶ Several officials declared the movement a grab for freedom and suspected the actions in East Berlin were being reproduced throughout East Germany and other Soviet-controlled territories.¹⁷

On the same day, the head of the political department of the West German Foreign Ministry, Blankenhorn, left talks in London prematurely when he learned of the walk-out.¹⁸ The *Times* speculated that Adenauer was concerned that “German interests” would not be represented at the Bermuda meeting.¹⁹ Ironically, Soviet authorities offered a plan of reform to encourage the eventual reunification of Germany.²⁰ This was met

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶“Long-Smouldering Resentment,” *Times* (London), 17 June 1953, p. 6.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸“Herr Blankenhorn’s Visit Ends,” *Times* (London), 17 June 1953, p. 6.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

with suspicion. On the whole, news of the June 16 developments conveyed a short-sited excitement with little comprehension of what was to come.

The following day, June 18, 1953, the *Times* reported the June 17 uprising.²¹ The *Times* focused on the day's events as seen from the British sector of West Berlin, and the measures taken by British troops. However, it did not offer detailed descriptions of the progression of the revolt in comparison to the coverage provided by the *Washington Post*. The *Times* conveyed the rebellion in reverse order: beginning with the most current condition, the state of martial law, followed by information regarding flare-ups during the night, and finishing with a summary of the June 17 revolt the previous day. The sun rose on June 18 to countless wounded and sixteen dead in West Berlin hospitals.²² Some of the dead included West German sentries shot at their posts at the check-points and along the division line.²³

Following the morning's chronicle, the *Times* rearranged coverage to depict the previous night's developments: "Sporadic firing was still going on late to-night at the Potsdamerplatz, where the east and west sectors meet, and some further casualties have been reported. Western police have been withdrawn from the boundary to avoid further losses."²⁴ West Berlin citizens demonstrated at the division line, yelling at Russian and GDR police.²⁵ The confrontation climaxed with Russian troops or East German police

²¹"East Berlin Demonstrators Fired On," *Times* (London), 18 June 1953, p. 8.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

volleying shots at the demonstrators. The crowd ran for shelter, but quickly regrouped while British troops remained on guard in the British sector.²⁶

The column then relayed the day's happenings, beginning with the demonstration at the Potsdamerplatz that morning.²⁷ The throng grew as people walked out of work and took up their place in the protest. On the whole, the revolt was described in mellow terms. The upheaval did not escalate until the marchers arrived in the Leipzigerstrasse where the crowd screamed political demands.²⁸ Volkspolizei and Russian troops poured into the plaza with machine guns producing a clash between the German people and the Soviet forces.²⁹ The people clamored for the downfall of the GDR as a puppet state and for the Russians to get out of East Germany.³⁰ The crowd then receded, and only small skirmishes continued through the day. Overall the paper considered the strike a success because the German Democratic Republic vacated the work norms the same day.³¹

In addition to the day's proceedings the paper reported the number of East German police fleeing to the West during the uprising. The article estimated that "several hundred" Volkspolizistan had deserted their posts in addition to the apparent escape of the East German Deputy Prime Minister, Nuschke.³² Later accounts disagreed whether Nuschke was fleeing East Berlin or an angry mob. Accounts of officials fleeing

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

the Eastern Zone enforced the Western belief that the Russian hold was slipping and the Communist regime collapsing.

At the same time, the *Times* described a rally on the West Berlin side of approximately ten thousand people supporting the rebellion.³³ The *Times* briefly recited the immediate denials issued by the “western commandants” repudiating responsibility for the strikes or the revolt: “The western commandants issued a statement denying responsibility for events in east Berlin. Neither they nor the west Berlin city authorities had directly or indirectly instigated or assisted the eastern sector demonstration.”³⁴ The *Times* related an article in *Neues Deutschland*, claiming that American officers were spotted provoking the East German people: “*Neues Deutschland*, the Socialist Unity Party newspaper, said that ‘uniformed American officers’ encouraged the demonstrators, while American radio cars guided groups of agitators and an American aircraft dropped instruction leaflets.”³⁵ The article, however, also circulated Grotewohl’s admissions to a Communist meeting, claiming that unreasonable Russian deadlines had caused failure in the East German plan.³⁶

Following the update on past developments, the article returned to current conditions. The tension between East and West was evident as Soviets trucked in reinforcements during the night. “Motorized units, tanks, and armoured vehicles were seen driving into the city.”³⁷ The West responded by increasing the number of sentries

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵“Further Troops Brought in,” *Times* (London), 18 June 1953, p. 8.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

along the border. International anxiety grew. “At the Potsdamerplatz around midnight British military police in armoured cars were on guard alongside west Berlin police, facing the Russians and east German police. West Berlin police kept west Berliners at least 500 yards from the Potsdamerplatz, only those who lived near the square being allowed to pass the cordon.”³⁸ The following day brought the first reports of arrests from the risings.³⁹

On the same day as the revolt, the West German Parliament held a special session in Bonn.⁴⁰ Dr. Adenauer spoke at the meeting, announcing West Germany’s absolute support for the East German people, and calling for reunification. “An effectual change in the conditions of life in the Soviet zone and Berlin,” Adenauer explained, “can be achieved only by the restoration of the unity of Germany in freedom.”⁴¹ Adenauer’s address to a special session of the Bundestag became a tradition in commemorating the uprising. Simultaneously, the High Commission, chaired by Western Allies, released a statement criticizing Russian treatment of the East German people and supporting the strikes.⁴² The article closed with brief news of uprisings in Magdeburg and Erfurt.⁴³ The *Times* focused its first day of reporting on the international climate and reactions. Details of the revolt were of minor concern.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰“Bundestag Shows United Front,” *Times* (London), 18 June 1953, p. 8.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

On June 19, 1953, the *Times* focused on reactions in Moscow versus those in the West. The *Times* published three main articles. The first, “Moscow Comment on Berlin Riots,” focused on press releases in Moscow and throughout Soviet-controlled territories.⁴⁴ Inconceivably, news out of Moscow completely denied any riots or strikes in East Berlin based on the discontent of East German workers. The Soviet news blamed any strikes on Western provocateurs who were unsuccessful due to the “east German Government’s prompt action.”⁴⁵ No mention was made of Russian interference in regaining control. Radio reports throughout Soviet-controlled territories completely denied any strikes at all. The radio news explained that new norms were accepted by the East German workers after a “thorough discussion,” and as a result, “no incidents occurred.”⁴⁶ If the Soviet news recognized the rising at all, it blamed the Americans.⁴⁷

“Moscow Comment on Berlin Riots” was followed by a piece publicizing the memorial plans in West Germany and public announcements of support of the rising from West German authorities. “Sorrow in Federal Republic” told how the flags flew at half-mast in West Germany in commemoration of the people who died in the revolt.⁴⁸ The Bundestag opened with a speech from Dr. Ehlers, the President, to honor “the victims” of the uprising.⁴⁹ In addition, a memorial service was to be held the following

⁴⁴“Moscow Comment on Berlin Riots,” *Times* (London), 19 June 1953, p. 6.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸“Sorrow in Federal Republic,” *Times* (London), 19 June 1953, p. 6.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

Sunday, on June 21, 1953.⁵⁰ Regardless of tense feelings in West Germany, officials and citizens attempted to maintain a respectful distance while memorializing those who died in the riots. West Germans believed the only means of reunification had to come through peaceful negotiations and free elections: “The sense of outrage which goes with the respect felt for the resistance movement is, however, tempered by the caution that liberation for the east Berliners and the Germans of the Soviet zone must come, and can only come, through peaceful means and an understanding among the four occupying Powers.”⁵¹ The reporting closed with discouraging news: all telephone communications between the East and West Zones were completely interrupted. How could negotiations and peaceful understanding come between two isolated zones?

Two pages later, the *Times* reported the execution of Willi Goettling, the first official victim of the East German rising. In “West Berliner Shot,” the *Times* announced how General Dibrova, the Soviet military commander, signed the execution order, and the Soviet and East German news openly publicized the swift implementation of the order.⁵² Willi Goettling, a West Berlin citizen, was convicted of taking part in and directing the uprising.⁵³ The swiftness and extreme judgment was met with shock and disbelief in the West. The *Times*, however, surmised that Communist authorities were using Willi Goettling’s execution as an example: “They [Russians] may be seeking by an

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²“West Berliner Shot,” *Times* (London), 19 June 1953, p. 8.

⁵³Ibid.

early ruthless example to crush the spirit behind the revolt as they have crushed its outward manifestations on the streets.”⁵⁴

The article continued by describing the complete stillness in the Eastern Zone of Berlin under martial law. Furthermore, the news relayed accusations from Communist broadcasts and news reports. These dispatches were met with the press releases from the three Commandants of the High Commission.⁵⁵ The letters condemned the Soviet reaction to the rebellion—military force followed by a complete lockdown, interrupting traffic and trade between the two zones.⁵⁶ The letter also emphatically denied any accusations of Willi Goettling being a hired provocateur, and referred to his execution as an “act of brutality which will shock the conscience of the world.”⁵⁷ The letters reiterated the responsibility of the Soviets to the German people:

As the highest Soviet authority in the Soviet sector of Berlin, you share with us the responsibility of guaranteeing the well-being and the freedom of the people of Berlin. We therefore demand, in the interest of Berlin as a whole, that the harsh restrictions imposed on the population be lifted immediately and that free circulation within Berlin be re-established.⁵⁸

This complete censure was followed by U.S. President Eisenhower’s announcement of a fifty million dollar grant of foreign aid for West Berlin.⁵⁹ Western sentiment stood enforced and unwavering.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵“Western Protest,” *Times* (London), 19 June 1953, p. 8.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

Renewed resolve on both sides ushered in provocative language and accusations in the newspapers. On June 19, the *Times* reported a consensus within West Germany for a peaceful and respectful response in order to encourage the eventual reunification of Germany. By the following day, June 20, the *Times*' coverage added controversy as it reported on West Berlin authorities and their charges. The *Times* referred to East Berlin as a "seething cauldron" of "pent up exasperation" and Soviet politics as a "velvet glove and the iron fist."⁶⁰ The chief mayor of Berlin, Reuter, did not censor his opinion when he announced that reunification would already be a reality if it had not been for Soviet interference.⁶¹ Meanwhile, reports of further rebellions and disturbances surfaced in Magdeburg, which the *Times* described as "one of the main centres of resistance against the Communist regime."⁶²

Accusations and denials between East and West continued. *Neues Deutschland* renewed claims of a failed strike incited by Western provocateurs as it recognized the existence of the strikes for the first time on June 19.⁶³ Any recognition, however, was only made to refresh allegations of Western interference.⁶⁴ The Western High Commissioners responded with another letter reiterating their condemnation of further executions and calling for the resumption of transportation and trade in Berlin.⁶⁵ Regardless, all communication and transportation between the zones remained closed—

⁶⁰"Riots Spread in E. Germany," *Times* (London), 20 June 1953, p. 6.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

virtually no one was permitted to travel between East and West Berlin. East Berlin remained quiet and inactive, and the *Times* referred to it as “calmed and crushed.”⁶⁶ The High Commission called a general meeting in Berlin for the following week.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, news of Nuschke’s release from the Western sector surfaced. Once he emerged in the Eastern sector, he claimed the Americans tortured him in order to gain confessions, information, and “calumnious statements about the Soviet Union and the east German Government.”⁶⁸ Little attention was paid to these statements.

As promised earlier in the week, West Germany hosted a memorial service in the Bundestag in Bonn honoring the fallen strike participants.⁶⁹ Dr. Adenauer, along with other West German officials, contributed to the occasion with public speeches dramatically describing the revolt and offering moral support to the workers. They also called for reunification and free elections.⁷⁰ President Theodor Heuss noted that 1953 marked the fifth anniversary of the Berlin blockade—commenting on German resilience.⁷¹ Once again, the *Times* focused more on the impassioned tone of the day than on the details as the *Washington Post* reported. The *Times* captured the emotional charge of the happenings and feelings in West Germany. “The blood of the victims of June 17,” the article explicated, “was the mortar of the new house of national unity in freedom.”⁷²

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹“Bonn Tribute to Berliners,” *Times* (London), 22 June 1953, p. 5.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

The mood in West Germany was underlined by a report that the Free Democratic Party called for the elimination of the Occupation Statute.⁷³

The news during the first five days of the rising focused on news and developments directly related to the movement. This coverage grew to include an international dialogue regarding culpability, arrests and sentencing of participants, and memorial services in West Germany. After the first five days of the rebellion, however, the *Times*' focus on East Germany evolved to include Soviet reports of reform and the current and developing conditions in East Berlin and East Germany. Also, after the first full week, the *Times* identified food shortages in East Germany soon to become another subject for international maneuvering.

On June 22, in addition to reporting the memorial service, the *Times* reported the current situation in East Berlin along with a response from General Dibrova regarding the letters from the Western Commandants.⁷⁴ Dibrova completely rebuffed the Western Commandants' letters regarding Russian interference in the revolt. His response was simple: Western agents acting as provocateurs created the riot, compelling Soviet forces to interject and suppress the violence.⁷⁵ Furthermore, Dibrova guaranteed further Soviet support to the East German Government as long as Western powers continued to provoke lawlessness and revolution.⁷⁶ Dibrova supported his accusations with a confession by Werner Kalkovski, a West Berlin citizen, claiming he was hired and specifically

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴“Russian Reply on Berlin,” *Times* (London), 22 June 1953, p. 6.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

instructed to cross the border and incite a riot.⁷⁷ *Neues Deutschland* published Kalkovski's confession, naming specific "agents."⁷⁸ Meanwhile, life in East Berlin appeared to be restored with church services resuming, transportation restarting, and life returning to normal. Communications between East and West remained sealed.⁷⁹ West Berlin and West Germany appeared more distressed by the uprising than the East. Public services in West Berlin remained closed after those in East Berlin's resumed.⁸⁰ While June 22 brought emotional reactions paralyzing West Berlin and West Germany, East Berlin and East Germany attempted to return to routine.

This theme continued in the following day's news. East Berlin's return to normal routine from Soviet enforced martial law shocked Western authorities and citizens. By June 23, most public services were restored and normal daily life recommenced in East Berlin.⁸¹ Only the limitations on travel between East and West remained to remind East Berliners of the previous week's activities.⁸² West Berlin continued to feel the impact of the unrest and faltered in returning to normalcy. East German sentries shot a 15-year old West Berlin boy when he and his friends threw rocks at the guards.⁸³ West Berlin citizens and authorities voiced outrage at the loss. Conflict seemed to remain outside the Eastern Zone.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹"Berlin Nearer Normal," *Times* (London), 23 June 1953, p. 5.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid.

Reports of political reform in East Berlin emerged. Grotewohl spoke to the Central Committee, announcing his plan to improve the living standard in East Germany with perquisites such as increased food supply, workers' railway tickets, increased pensions, and improvements in work conditions.⁸⁴ Moreover, East Germany's government purged "scape-goats," including officials perceived as ineffective and those whose actions seemed publicly damaging during the insurrection, such as the Minister for Light Industry, Selbmann, who had addressed the crowds.⁸⁵

The East German focus on reform did not distract the government from volleying further accusations of provocation at the United States. East German news radio claimed that American planes delivered "parachuted agents" into the Eastern sector to incite the strikes and riots.⁸⁶ The American High Commission promptly denied the allegations.⁸⁷

The calm announcements of reform and an attitude of resolve in East Germany were countered by a tone of distressed pleading for reunification and support in West Germany to the Western officials and High Commissioners. On June 23, 1953, the *Times* noted three public letters authored by Dr. Adenauer to the leaders of the Western Allies: Prime Minister Churchill, President Eisenhower, and French Prime Minister Mayer.⁸⁸ Adenauer sent the letters directly, thus skipping the High Commission as he communicated feelings of desperation and exigency.⁸⁹ The *Times* quoted the letter sent

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸"East Germans' Plight," *Times* (London), 23 June 1953, p. 6.

⁸⁹Ibid.

to Prime Minister Churchill. Dr. Adenauer, motivated by a resolution passed in the Bundestag to reach out, pled with the three powers to help restore unity and pride to Germany. “Help these people to obtain an existence free and worthy of human dignity, and help to restore unity and freedom to the whole German people, whereby the peace of Europe may be served.”⁹⁰ At the same time, Dr. Adenauer recommended that the Bundestag appoint and seat a selection of East German refugees as representatives of “the 18 million Germans behind the Iron Curtain.”⁹¹ He suggested the representatives could debate and speak publicly in the Bundestag, but could not vote.⁹² As Adenauer was scheduled to participate in a memorial service in Schöneberg for the uprising’s victims, and later attend the Conference of Foreign Ministers in Paris, the Soviet Union announced the appointment of Semyonov as the Soviet High Commissioner.⁹³

At the one week mark, June 24, the *Times* documented the participation of the British High Commissioner, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, in a meeting of the Allied High Commission.⁹⁴ The *Times* did not cover any interaction between the newly appointed Semyonov and the other High Commissioners or future plans for a four-party meeting.⁹⁵ The failure to meet could have been due to the revived tension surrounding the revolt when West Germany and West Berlin honored the victims and participants in the East German insurrection with a memorial service accompanied by a five-minute period of

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴“Sir I. Kirkpatrick Back in Bonn,” *Times* (London), 24 June 1953, p. 7.

⁹⁵Ibid.

silence. The Communist Party labeled the act subversive to peace and an attempt to renew tension between East and West.⁹⁶

On the same day, June 24, the *Times* published a more thorough description of the memorial service in a separate article.⁹⁷ While the *Washington Post* reported the same event, the *Times* published a far more detailed account. The *New York Times* did not report the June 23 memorial service at all. Dr. Adenauer stood with other West German and West Allied officials on the steps of the Schöneberg town hall with eight coffins.⁹⁸ The first seven were filled with victims from the uprising, and the eighth stood empty for Willi Goettling.⁹⁹ All of West Germany stopped in a five-minute period of silence at 3 p.m.¹⁰⁰ Dr. Adenauer spoke, stating that West Germany's brothers in the East would never be forgotten, and those in the West would not rest until Germany was reunited. "The whole German nation behind the Iron Curtain calls out to us not to forget it, and we swear, in this solemn hour, that we never will forget it. We will never rest content—and this oath I take on behalf of the whole German people—until they have regained their freedom, and until the whole of Germany is reunited in peace."¹⁰¹

Other West German officials spoke as well. The "freedom bell" rang, and the coffins were taken to Wedding Cemetery, where a private ceremony commenced for relatives and friends of the victims. Afterward, the public filed past the coffins in

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷"W. Berlin in Mourning," *Times* (London), 24 June 1953, p. 8.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

procession.¹⁰² The Western Allies in the American, British, and French sectors honored the moment of silence and flew their flags at half-mast.¹⁰³ A silent march, initiated by Free University students, grew into a 200,000-person procession.¹⁰⁴ The West German mourning period emphasized the dichotomy between the two parts of the city. Conversely in the East, work continued and workers were allowed passes between the sectors.¹⁰⁵ Still, all was not calm in the east. *Neues Deutschland* brought updates of more convictions and sentences.¹⁰⁶ Strikes and fighting continued in Magdeburg, Leipzig, and other regions in East Germany.¹⁰⁷ Tribunals issued severe and swift convictions and sentences. In response to the growing number of executions, the House of Commons in Great Britain considered a motion condemning the executions of German citizens by the occupying Soviet forces.¹⁰⁸ The motion remained unanswered.

On June 25, the *Times* reported a response from the Western Allied Commandants to General Dibrova's letter published of June 22.¹⁰⁹ The three Commandants categorically denied any involvement or responsibility for the uprising and dismissed all of Kalkowski's claims that he and 90 other agents were ordered to provoke or accelerate the riots in East Berlin. The *Times* quoted: "You [Dibrova] and the world are well aware of the true sources of the disorders which have occurred in east Berlin, and it is therefore

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹"Cause of Berlin Disturbances," *Times* (London), 25 June 1953, p. 5.

unnecessary for us to tell you that the three Powers in west Berlin have no responsibility whatever for instigating them.”¹¹⁰ The Commandants renewed their promise to uphold the law in their sectors and try to return them to routine.¹¹¹

In the same article, the *Times* reported the French Commandant’s (General Manceaux-Demiau) visitation with General Dibrova—the first of its kind—the previous day. The meeting was not public, but both men purportedly met to voice their government’s perspective regarding the rebellion and international related tensions.¹¹²

In addition, the piece, extinguished any hopes for the downfall of Grotewohl’s government and the resignation of the omnipotent SED.¹¹³ Grotewohl announced in a public statement that no member of the government would resign. He rationalized that resignation constituted a retreat in Communist agenda. Instead, the government would undergo reform, and “correct its mistakes.”¹¹⁴ This was a striking confession indeed. Furthermore, he announced the GDR would not carry out “mass reprisals” against those suspected of participation in the uprising.¹¹⁵ On the same day, June 25, the East Berlin sentries opened the borders to East Germans who were stranded in West Berlin when the revolt erupted.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

Grotewohl's candid admissions continued to dominate the next day's news coverage of the *Times*.¹¹⁷ Still, Grotewohl's striking confessions and his eagerness to reveal East German faults left officials and newspapers in the West dubious. "They [Grotewohl's self-criticism] almost betray," the paper surmises, "a desire not to be outdone by western critics in condemning the errors of his Government and of the régime."¹¹⁸ The East German Council of Ministers released estimations regarding fatalities and wounded on the June 17 insurrection. They estimated 191 wounded Volkspolizisten, 61 civilians, and 126 "demonstrators."¹¹⁹ Western authorities argued the numbers were "conservative" and countered with reports from other areas of East Germany.¹²⁰ Concurrently, the Ministry delivered the previously promised compromises to improve the standard of living in East Germany. One surprising step: to reduce the size of the East German Volkspolizei, freeing five percent of the budget.¹²¹

Meanwhile, Grotewohl continued his tour of candor, speaking with workers throughout East Germany, including a group of coal miners in Böhlen, confessing shortcomings and recognizing problems.¹²² He publicly acknowledged that the uprising developed out of dissatisfaction in the working class. He admitted East Germany had eroded its agricultural base by focusing on industrial development and penalizing

¹¹⁷"E. German Unrest Analysed," *Times* (London), 26 June 1953, p. 6.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

¹²⁰*Ibid.*

¹²¹*Ibid.*

¹²²*Ibid.*

farmers.¹²³ East Germany experienced food shortages because thousands of farmers left their land and escaped to the West.¹²⁴ In a remarkable admission, Grotewohl explained that East German and Soviet officials considered the possibility of reunification remote, and as a result focused on industry to make East Germany economically independent.¹²⁵ The *Times* reported the East German workers' response as doubtful.¹²⁶

British citizens and politicians responded to the insurrection's stunning images and the crisis in East Germany. Fifty-four Labour M.P.s constructed a letter to the Soviet Government objecting to its military measures against the East German people.¹²⁷ "We, the undersigned trade union members of the British Parliament, respectfully request you to convey to your Government our protests at the way in which your military occupation forces were used to suppress the east German workers...It is a stain on your Government."¹²⁸ The M.P.s presented the letter to the Soviet Ambassador to forward to Moscow.¹²⁹ A similar letter was constructed for the House of Commons.¹³⁰

The growing concern for food shortages forced the East German Government to free food reserves.¹³¹ In addition to releasing tons of fish, sugar, meat, butter, dairy, and grain to the public, the government increased its quota—buying goods from farmers for

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹Ibid.

¹³⁰Ibid.

¹³¹"E. German Rulers More Confident," *Times* (London), 27 June 1953, p. 6.

an elevated amount.¹³² “Concern over the food supply has naturally led the east German Government to adopt measures designed to pacify the farmers. The deliberate attempts, made in the heyday of collectivization, to victimize the larger farmers by exacting proportionately far greater delivery quotas from them than from the smaller men are to cease.”¹³³ The yoke loosened on East German farmers. The Government also released work clothes, socks, underwear, and daily utilitarian needs such as bicycles.¹³⁴

The East German government also staged a public demonstration to improve public relations with the East German citizens. Amidst a rainstorm, East Germans collected in East Berlin. East German newspapers printed pictures of East German citizens embracing Soviet soldiers.¹³⁵ “This is a new propaganda theme which has been largely exploited through the east German Press in the past two or three days, together with illustrations of touching scenes between the Berlin population and the troops brought in to ensure their orderly behavior.”¹³⁶ These dubious demonstrations of friendship started after the uprising and continued into the weeks.

Soviet and East German authorities desperately worked toward restoring normalcy, but only generated a sense of heightened, bizarre awkwardness. On June 30, East Germany opened its borders for hundreds of East Berliners to participate in a Catholic rally.¹³⁷ The numbers of participants mounted to an unmanageable level for the

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷“E. Berlin Police Benevolence,” *Times* (London), 30 June 1953, p. 6.

Volkspolizei to control, and non-participants were able to slip through to see friends and family.¹³⁸ The flood of people over the border brought a deluge of information and reactions. East Berliners described the atmosphere in East Berlin and East Germany as strange and unsettling. East German police made an effort to interact with the people, pretending to show kindness and civility. One citizen described the “improvement” as “more suspicious than their usual behavior.”¹³⁹ Regardless of the unusual openness of the border, all participants had to apply for a pass.¹⁴⁰ The borders remained closed to general traveling, martial law remained, and the *Times* saw no end in sight.¹⁴¹

Prolonging the East German surge of good-nature, food continued to flow into the markets. For the first time that year, cherries appeared in the markets, creating a fervor and lines of shoppers.¹⁴² Furthermore, personal property and businesses were returned to merchants, tradesmen, and craftsmen.¹⁴³ Despite the perceived affability in East Berlin and East Germany, Potsdamerplatz, where the June 17 uprising began, remained a “no-man’s land.”¹⁴⁴ East and West Berlin police stood guard on either side of the division.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Ibid.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Ibid.

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

In an unpredicted move, the Soviet Union rescinded the state of emergency in East Germany and East Berlin on the first day of July.¹⁴⁶ This proved contrary to the *Times*' prediction on the previous day. In a statement released by General Dibrova, all curfews and meeting restrictions were lifted. The borders between East and West Berlin were opened to allow people to visit family and friends with passes. Dibrova, however, refused to reconnect communications between East and West, claiming the Western High Commandants refused to "take the steps he asked for."¹⁴⁷ Arguments continued between the Commissioners over responsibility for the incitement of the revolt. The American High Commissioner, Dr. Conant, publicly announced his willingness to meet with Semyonov, but refused to consider the restoration of the Allied Control Council.¹⁴⁸ Dr. Conant remained dubious regarding promises of "de-Sovietization," and argued the only way to reunify Germany was to eliminate dictatorships.¹⁴⁹

The *Times* saw several hopeful signs. The four-power talks at British Headquarters in Berlin resumed on July 1, 1953.¹⁵⁰ Some 120 West Berliners seized on June 17 were released by East German officials.¹⁵¹ Several death sentences were commuted and prison terms lessened. The East German Minister of Justice, Fechner, announced all crimes would be publicly tried, and the GDR would refrain from

¹⁴⁶"State of Emergency Ended in East Berlin," *Times* (London), 1 July 1953, p. 6A.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*

retribution.¹⁵² International apprehensions contradicted the perceptibly positive developments in East Germany.

The West German Bundestag met as the four-power talks closed on July 2, 1953.¹⁵³ Dr. Adenauer proffered a six-point program for East Germany in the case of reunification: opening the borders; elimination of the buffer zones between East and West; free movement in Germany; “freedom of the Press and of assembly;” freedom of political parties; and individual rights protected by the government.¹⁵⁴ Dr. Adenauer also recommended that the Bundestag consider making June 17 a national holiday.¹⁵⁵ In an emotional appeal Adenauer argued the workers’ revolt forced the German reunification issue to the forefront of international attention, and predicted the revolt would remain relevant throughout history.¹⁵⁶ “The dead will have their abiding niche in the history of the German people.”¹⁵⁷

The food scarcity in East Berlin and East Germany became an international tool for propaganda. On July 5, 1953, the *Times* related the posturing between the Western and Soviet sector powers.¹⁵⁸ Shortly after the insurrection, America offered free food for East Germany. The GDR refused, leaving hungry East German frustrated.¹⁵⁹ The offer proved an ingenious move as the American sector promptly designated a day allowing

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³“Seeking German Reunion,” *Times* (London), 2 July 1953, p. 5E.

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶Ibid.

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

¹⁵⁸“Cheaper Food for East Berliners,” *Times* (London), 5 July 1953, p. 7B.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

East Germans to buy food with East German marks in West Berlin.¹⁶⁰ The vendors were reimbursed the difference between the currencies, an estimated four to six million marks a month.¹⁶¹ East Germans merely had to present an East German identification card.¹⁶² The strategy proved equally beneficial as Anti-Communist agitation. Participating East Germans freely described conditions in East Germany, including a complete lack of variety or even availability of food.¹⁶³ The British considered the American measure a clever propaganda coup.

America did not restrict their propaganda acts to food. When Semyonov and Dibrova refused to restore communication between the sectors, an American organization released leaflets attached to balloons into wind currents over Czechoslovakia.¹⁶⁴ The leaflets reported the June 17 uprising and encouraged people to fight for their freedom.¹⁶⁵

On the same day, July 5, the three Western foreign ministers summarized in a public letter the results of meetings held in Washington.¹⁶⁶ Among other issues, the council discussed German reunification inspired by the June 17 revolt. “The grave events which took place recently in Berlin and in the Soviet zone once again gave proof of the will to independence and the indomitable determination for freedom of the inhabitants of

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

¹⁶¹Ibid.

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³Ibid.

¹⁶⁴“12 Million Leaflets,” *Times* (London), 5 July 1953, p. 7B.

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁶⁶“Proposed Talks with Russia,” *Times* (London), 5 July 1953, p. 7B.

these areas.”¹⁶⁷ The Ministers announced they considered an “early reunification” the best solution for “international tension.”¹⁶⁸

Signs of improvement or a return to routine emerged in East Germany. On July 7, the *Times* circulated self-congratulating statements by President Pieck, originally released to East German papers, endorsing the “new policy” as a means to improve daily life in East Germany.¹⁶⁹ Pieck renewed accusations that “Fascist agents and provocateurs” incited the worker’s rebellion.¹⁷⁰ Nonetheless, he rationalized that the “provocateurs” were “successful” because the party’s policy was too severe, a collapse in communication alienated the people and kept them uninformed.¹⁷¹ General Dibrova continued to refuse to renew communication, however, East Berlin allowed more traffic to cross between the zones.¹⁷² Furthermore, Grotewohl declared the curtailment of industrial production in order to free funds for farming and for importing staples.¹⁷³

All of the progress discussed above was refuted by another article printed on the same day, July 7, in the *Times*. A correspondent described a militant stranglehold on the East German people. “Since the rising of June 17 the Communist and Russian authorities have tightened rather than relaxed their vigil,” he contended, “and everything heard during a rapid visit along a stretch of the Hessian border districts yesterday suggested that

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁶⁹“Herr Pieck Explains,” *Times* (London), 7 July 1953, p. 5G.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²Ibid.

¹⁷³Ibid.

an atmosphere of anxiety and apprehension prevails on the other side.”¹⁷⁴ He described the citizens of each zone having to meet on each side of “no man’s land,” careful not to cross the line, to exchange greetings and family news.¹⁷⁵ The boundaries separated families and friends, and, since the revolt, all communication was cut off. Family members could not attend funerals or weddings, and had to settle on small memorials placed in the “no man’s land.”¹⁷⁶ The article communicated a sense of oppression when it described current meetings as one sided. People in the East could stand at the border, but were afraid to waive or recognize their loved ones due to nearby look-outs spying on villagers.¹⁷⁷ The author described the freeways as deserted, particularly any traffic headed west.¹⁷⁸ This stark account contradicted the favorable image portrayed by GDR authorities.

In a related issue, the three Western Commandants generated another letter calling for free communications in Berlin and between East and West Germany.¹⁷⁹ They also renewed denials of Western provocation of the uprising.¹⁸⁰ Their letter responded to public accusations by General Dibrova and other East German and Soviet authorities.

¹⁷⁴“Silent Borderlands,” *Times* (London), 7 July 1953, p. 5D.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹“Allied Reply to Soviet Commander,” *Times* (London), 7 July 1953, p. 5D.

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*

In the same column, the *Times* reported a tribute for the June 17 rising, held at the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in Stockholm.¹⁸¹ The conference included a discussion on the insurrection in their agenda. The summit allowed two East German tradesmen who experienced the revolt to talk.¹⁸² The two men asked for support from the international arena and insisted on the dire nature of the circumstances in East Berlin and East Germany. Conference attendees applauded and passed a resolution conveying their support for the uprising and the East German workers.¹⁸³

Developments in the following days shattered any illusions of normality or contentment. On July 8, 1953, the *Times* detailed a surge of sit-down strikes in East Berlin.¹⁸⁴ The article credited the rebellion with educating the workers as to the proper strike technique. Throughout East Berlin and surrounding areas workers joined sit-down protests. Participants included workers from factories, steel mill, electric station and construction sites.¹⁸⁵ The workers demanded the release of June 17 strike participants; the Government's resignation; free elections; a higher standard of living; back pay for days missed due to the strikes; and open travel between the sectors.¹⁸⁶ The *Times* treated the series of sit-down strikes as a continuation of June 17, referring to them as "the second phase of the east Berlin uprising."¹⁸⁷ With the exception of a few reports of scuffles between the East German police and the people in Alexander Platz, the strikes

¹⁸¹"Berlin Revolt Applauded," *Times* (London), 7 July 1953, p. 5D.

¹⁸²*Ibid.*

¹⁸³*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴"New Strikes in East Berlin," *Times* (London), 8 July 1953, p. 6E.

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷*Ibid.*

were described as peaceful. The Volkspolizei stood by with machine guns, but Soviet troops were not deployed into the city.¹⁸⁸ The borders remained open, and daily living continued throughout the city. The sit-down strikes were considered an evolutionary response by the people to the GDR's inability to deliver.¹⁸⁹

July 9 brought a limited victory for the strikers. The East German authorities announced that communications would be renewed between the sectors, and movement across the borders would be restored.¹⁹⁰ With the exception of reports of violence around Alexanderplatz and the Stalin Allee, the sit-down strikes remained peaceful.¹⁹¹ Public transportation and day-to-day living continued while the strikes lasted.¹⁹² The *Times* considered the strikes a success. "The workers protest is this time silent and the more effective since it provides no excuse for the east German authorities to resort to force."¹⁹³ East German newspapers reacted with stories announcing the presence of Western provocateurs inciting the strikes. *Neues Deutschland* claimed "mischief-makers were seen."¹⁹⁴ The *Times* judged the accusations empty and baseless, and considered the Americans a "universal scapegoat of the Communists."¹⁹⁵

The *Times* also reported hopeful news for reunification on July 9. It speculated that Soviet, American, British, and German officials were considering a non-aggression

¹⁸⁸Ibid.

¹⁸⁹Ibid.

¹⁹⁰"Renewed Unrest in E. Berlin," *Times* (London), 9 July 1953, p. 7E.

¹⁹¹Ibid.

¹⁹²Ibid.

¹⁹³Ibid.

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

¹⁹⁵Ibid.

pact.¹⁹⁶ According to unofficial sources, Dr. Adenauer asked Dr. Conant, the American High Commissioner, to consider a pact with the Soviet Union to assuage tensions.¹⁹⁷ Many speculated that the non-aggression pact, originally suggested by Winston Churchill, would be considered at a joint foreign affairs committee.¹⁹⁸

West Germany pursued the momentum built around a possible non-aggression pact in a six-point program.¹⁹⁹ The Bundestag passed it on July 1, 1953, and Adenauer wrote a letter to the three Western High Commissioners requesting the consideration of the points in reunification negotiations as the West hoped to capitalize on the “amicable gestures” recently experienced in the East.²⁰⁰ The six-points focused on the destruction of the borders between the sectors and the “no man’s land” between them.²⁰¹ They also called for the protection of personal rights of the German citizens, including freedom of press and assembly, and movement between the zones.²⁰² West Germany’s public letter, however, received little notice compared to the announcement on the same day that Lavrenti Beria, Soviet Minister of the Interior was removed from the Communist party on charges of being “an enemy of the party and of the Soviet people.”²⁰³

Food shortages in East Germany remained of international concern. On July 13, 1953, the *Times* reported the Soviet government rejected the American offer of fifteen

¹⁹⁶“Bonn Discussions on Future of Europe,” *Times* (London), 9 July 1953, p. 7E.

¹⁹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹“Basis for Union of Germany,” *Times* (London), 10 July 1953, p. 6C.

²⁰⁰*Ibid.*

²⁰¹*Ibid.*

²⁰²*Ibid.*

²⁰³“Dismissal of Mr. Beria,” *Times* (London), 10 July 1953, p. 6C.

million dollars worth of food.²⁰⁴ Soviet officials claimed the offer was a “propaganda maneuver,” and if the U.S. believed there was a food shortage in the Eastern Zone, they were “incorrectly informed.”²⁰⁵ The Soviet Foreign Minister, Molotov, blamed the Americans for June 17, which he claimed caused any economic problems or food shortages in the East:

If, on June 17, they had not organized the dispatch of whole groups of paid agents and criminal elements from the American sector of Berlin to set fire to food and other shops and to attack employees of State institutions of the German Democratic Republic, no disturbances in the public order of Berlin would have occurred...The Soviet Government has already rendered aid to the German population by sending foodstuffs at an earlier date.²⁰⁶

In addition, Molotov’s press office released a statement. “Having failed in their efforts to halt the ‘new policy’ by their abortive attempts to stir up unrest on June 17, the Americans, it claims have now seized upon this new device.”²⁰⁷ Meanwhile, the *Times* questioned if East Berlin was moving toward “normality” with the revocation of the state of emergency. The East German government officially lifted the imposed martial law at midnight on July 12.²⁰⁸ The column also speculated on the impact Beria’s removal from the Communist party might have on policy in East Germany, and whether Semyonov would remain in office.²⁰⁹

Reunification remained a pervasive issue. One month after the uprising, Grotewohl publicly claimed East Germany was open to moving toward reunification and

²⁰⁴“No U.S. Food for E. Germany,” *Times* (London), 13 July 1953, p. 6D.

²⁰⁵*Ibid.*

²⁰⁶*Ibid.*

²⁰⁷“Towards Normality in E. Berlin,” *Times* (London), 13 July 1953, p. 6D.

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*

²⁰⁹*Ibid.*

free elections.²¹⁰ He considered international tensions were on a downward trend and argued that America's position in Europe was weakened. Other East German officials followed suit and declared their desire for reunification.²¹¹

On the following day, one month anniversary of the revolt, the German Democratic Republic released 1,017 "economic crimes" prisoners.²¹² In light of the previous day's announcements of openness to reunification, East Germany appeared to be making strides toward reunification and normality.²¹³ The *Times*, however, questioned how genuine the recent announcements were in view of previous experiences.²¹⁴

The month of July brought further drastic changes in the Soviet public relations campaign. While in the aftermath of June 17, GDR and Soviet authorities portrayed an attitude of reconciliation, touted the "new policy" and made announcements encouraging reunification. Now the Soviet tone seemed to harden abruptly and returned to a strict Communist line. Convictions of suspected revolt participants continued, and many wavering East German officials were replaced with reliable Communists.

An example of the new approach came on July 18 with the dismissal of the East German Minister of Justice, Max Fechner.²¹⁵ The *Neues Deutschland* reported that Fechner practiced "deviationist tendencies."²¹⁶ In particular, the article questioned Fechner's public announcement that "the right to strike was guaranteed by the

²¹⁰"E. Germany 'Ready' for Free Vote," *Times* (London), 16 July 1953, p. 6B.

²¹¹*Ibid.*

²¹²"Hint of New Curb on East Germans," *Times* (London), 17 July 1953, p. 4E.

²¹³*Ibid.*

²¹⁴*Ibid.*

²¹⁵"Party Quarrels in E. Germany," *Times* (London), 18 July 1953, p. 5C.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*

constitution of the German Democratic Republic.”²¹⁷ Members of the Central Committee considered this misleading to the people, and argued that production quotas would have to increase before promises of an improved lifestyle could be fulfilled.²¹⁸ These quarrels left doubts as to the future of the “new policy” in East Germany.

On the same day refugees crossing into West Berlin described strikes in Jena and Merseburg.²¹⁹ The accounts estimated over fourteen thousand workers in each town refusing to work in a united strike.²²⁰ The demonstrators issued a list of demands including the release of those arrested after June 17. They also demanded free elections and the resignation of union and government officials.²²¹ The Volkpolizei seemed ineffective in making them resume work. Only when Russian authorities threatened to execute every tenth man did they slowly resume work.²²² This information confirmed the final withdrawal of Soviet tanks from East Berlin and their reported movements.²²³

With news of more strikes throughout East Germany, the GDR’s promises regarding reunification and softening of policy diminished. The East continued to replace soft officials with stricter practitioners.²²⁴ The *Times* described the turnover as a

²¹⁷Ibid.

²¹⁸Ibid.

²¹⁹“Tank Movements in East Germany,” *Times* (London), 18 July 1953, p. 6E.

²²⁰Ibid.

²²¹Ibid.

²²²Ibid.

²²³Ibid.

²²⁴“E. German Hunt for ‘Agents,’” *Times* (London), 20 July 1953, p. 7E.

“stiffening of east German internal control.”²²⁵ The paper argued this agenda extended to the East German press. Prime Minister Grotewohl met with East German journalists and released a statement charging the press with the responsibility to educate the people as to the June 17 insurrection and make sure that the “workers draw the proper lessons from the June 17 rising.”²²⁶ He argued their focus should be to warn against provocateurs and encourage a positive relationship with the government. In the same breath, he recommended that the press achieve this by dropping the “old propaganda methods.”²²⁷ He advised that the Government and press should work together to improve relations with each other...without propaganda.²²⁸

The following day, July 21, brought news of more convictions of workers associated with June 17.²²⁹ In a short blurb, the *Times* reported the conviction and sentencing of sixteen people charged with participating in a revolt in Niesky.²³⁰ The sentences ranged between six months and life imprisonment.²³¹ The uprising in Niesky was completely unknown in the West until East German papers published the sentences.²³²

²²⁵Ibid.

²²⁶Ibid.

²²⁷Ibid.

²²⁸Ibid.

²²⁹“Aftermath of June 17 Rising,” *Times* (London), 21 July 1953, p. 6D.

²³⁰Ibid.

²³¹Ibid.

²³²Ibid.

On July 23 the *Times* noted more dismissals of East German officials.²³³ The GDR branded them officials in question as “enemies of the Republic,” and either charged them with a crime or dismissed them with no hope for employment.²³⁴ The GDR and party heads emphatically denied any dismissals were related to June 17.²³⁵ Meanwhile, Russia initiated shipping massive amounts of food into East Germany. While fruit and vegetables were still difficult to obtain, the Soviet government shipped quantities of butter, fat, and oil.²³⁶ The East German papers responded with dichotomous reports: first commending the Soviet Union for its help in East Germany’s time of need, and then denying the existence of a food shortage, claiming western powers were mistaken.²³⁷ In the meantime, West Germany continued making plans for relief programs in the form of food passes.²³⁸

Forty days after the uprising, on July 27, President Eisenhower wrote a public letter to Dr. Adenauer.²³⁹ Eisenhower reassured the Chancellor that America firmly favored reunification and that it could only come through free elections.²⁴⁰ Eisenhower credited the worker’s rising as a “great historical development” of an exceptional nature: (1) it was unprompted and impulsive; (2) it resulted from long-term underlying resentment; (3) the participants were the workers the Communist system claimed to be

²³³“Accusation Against Herr Hamann,” *Times* (London), 23 July 1953, p. 7D.

²³⁴*Ibid.*

²³⁵*Ibid.*

²³⁶*Ibid.*

²³⁷*Ibid.*

²³⁸*Ibid.*

²³⁹“Aim of German Unification,” *Times* (London), 27 July 1953, p. 4.

²⁴⁰*Ibid.*

built for; (4) it indicated the failure of the SED system and party; and (5) the demonstrators demanded free elections.²⁴¹ Eisenhower wrote the letter in part to ask for West German participation in the European Defense Community (EDC) Treaty. “The EDC,” he urged, “will be the simplest, most straightforward, and clearest demonstration of strength for peace.”²⁴² On the same day, Dr. Adenauer addressed a rally in Berlin in which he reasoned that the EDC Treaty at a four-power meeting would be the speediest way to reunification.²⁴³

The next day, July 28, brought news of more dismissals from the Socialist Unity Party’s Central Committee.²⁴⁴ The article recounted the most infamous discharges over the past month, including the Minister for State Security and the Minister of Justice among others.²⁴⁵ The *Times* speculated the dismissals were more likely due to critical public statements made about the GDR.²⁴⁶

In August 1953, the only news of the riots entailed the sentencing of strike participants. On August 25, the *Times* reported a life-sentence passed on Gerhard Roemer, a 26-year-old East German.²⁴⁷ In a related story, revealing international frustration, the Soviet Union refused to participate in a United Nations commission on

²⁴¹Ibid.

²⁴²Ibid.

²⁴³“Dr. Adenauer’s Plea for EDC Treaty,” *Times* (London), 27 July 1953, p. 4.

²⁴⁴“Herr Zaisser’s Downfall,” *Times* (London), 28 July 1953, p. 6G.

²⁴⁵Ibid.

²⁴⁶Ibid.

²⁴⁷“East German Sentenced,” *Times* (London), 25 August 1953, p. 5B.

Prisoners of War.²⁴⁸ The *Times* explained that “Moscow prefers to handle the repatriation of last war prisoners on a purely political basis.”²⁴⁹ Three days later, the *Times* reported a profusion of sentences for “crimes” related to June 17. The article counted no fewer than 183 convictions.²⁵⁰ Of those, sixteen were executed in Soviet courts. East Germany executed one, sentenced two to life, and the remainder to “hard labor.”²⁵¹ On August 27, news of the latest life conviction came: a 42-year-old East German was convicted of murder of police officers despite the absence of any proof of his participation.²⁵² East German officials labeled the sentence a “warning to all those who cherished thoughts of another June 17.”²⁵³ Meanwhile, in a move considered a public relations manipulation, the Soviet High Commission reduced its staff by one-third.²⁵⁴ The *Times* commented, “This would appear to be yet another step designed to give the east German Government a greater appearance of independence and sovereignty...”²⁵⁵ These reports on the convictions and sentences for victims signified the final updates on the workers’ revolt and related stories in the *Times* for 1953.

In 1954, the first update on the 1953 uprising appeared in late April. The *Times* reported new convictions in East Germany for political crimes related to the revolt, and

²⁴⁸“Political Use of War Prisoners,” *Times* (London), 25 August 1953, p. 5B.

²⁴⁹*Ibid.*

²⁵⁰“Savage Sentences on Demonstrators,” *Times* (London), 28 August 1953, p. 5B.

²⁵¹*Ibid.*

²⁵²*Ibid.*

²⁵³*Ibid.*

²⁵⁴“Russia Reduces Staff in Germany,” *Times* (London), 28 August 1953, p. 5B.

²⁵⁵*Ibid.*

overall statistics for the previous ten months.²⁵⁶ The latest guilty verdict carried an eight-year prison sentence for a dentist said to have participated in the demonstrations and later solicited a company to print fifty thousand “seditious pamphlets.”²⁵⁷ Some previous sentences were extended because they were considered too lenient and meant to warn the East German people to be mindful of provocation from the West.²⁵⁸ “In fact, this is but one more illustration of the procedure employed by the east German authorities to keep perpetually fresh in the public memory alleged attempts of western ‘agents’ to undermine the Communist regime.”²⁵⁹ The *Times* tried to reconstruct conviction accounts since the trials and sentence hearings were all closed. The Soviet courts sentenced twenty-three to death while East Germany executed twenty-nine.²⁶⁰ The 921 prison sentences ranged up to life imprisonment.²⁶¹

Articles remembering June 17 and relating connected stories numbered four in 1954. The day before the uprising’s first anniversary, on June 16, the *Times* summarized two articles published by Walter Ulbricht on the “new course” in East Germany.²⁶² Although the “new course” was already a year old, the piece attempted to outline the “policy and purpose” behind it.²⁶³ Ulbricht argued that the “new course” ultimately aided reunification. The *Times* considered Ulbricht’s articles revealing of remarkably elastic

²⁵⁶“June Disturbances in E. Germany,” *Times* (London), 26 April 1954, p. 5D.

²⁵⁷*Ibid.*

²⁵⁸*Ibid.*

²⁵⁹*Ibid.*

²⁶⁰*Ibid.*

²⁶¹*Ibid.*

²⁶²“East Germany’s ‘New Course,’” *Times* (London), 16 June 1954, p. 8E.

²⁶³*Ibid.*

ideas, perhaps a change in perception of Soviet policies. Ulbricht, however, considered the “first priority” of the East German program “the defeat of western plans to integrate the Federal Republic in the western defense system.”²⁶⁴ This position directly opposed President Eisenhower’s hopes for an EDC Treaty in Europe between the four powers. Instead, Ulbricht focused on “sovereignty” and East Germany’s relationship only to West Germany.²⁶⁵ In an unexpected change of focus, Ulbricht emphasized the importance of “mass organizations” to the people instead of big government.²⁶⁶ Ulbricht’s tone split between proclamations of flexibility and condemnation of America’s perceived international agenda. The anniversary perhaps commemorated the acrimony between the two super-powers more than the worker’s revolt. In short, the *Times* remained an ambivalent observer.

The day of the June 17 anniversary, the three Western High Commissioners chose not to object to West Germany’s decision to elect a President for the Bundestag.²⁶⁷ The three considered the free election a “symbol of the hopes” for reunification, and felt obliged to agree with the decision since it could not impact international conditions or “Berlin’s status.”²⁶⁸ In addition, West Germany hoped to gain admission to the Bonn conventions for their strong support of the EDC Treaty, which had recently been

²⁶⁴Ibid.

²⁶⁵Ibid.

²⁶⁶Ibid.

²⁶⁷“Berlin Election of President,” *Times* (London), 17 June 1954, p. 5C.

²⁶⁸Ibid.

deferred.²⁶⁹ 1954 carried hopeful news for the Federal Republic on the anniversary of the East German strikes.

On the same day, June 17, the *Times* published two articles commemorating the revolt. The first covered the political observances, and the second presented a one-year retrospective. The Bundestag held a special session the day before the anniversary, and Federal Republic officials, including Dr. Adenauer, attended and spoke, honoring the victims and looking to the future.²⁷⁰ The U.S. High Commission observed the “Day of German Unity” as a holiday, and the British and French High Commissioners sent letters of support for the German people.²⁷¹

The retrospective described conditions in East Germany, beginning with the environment prior to the revolt and the source of discontent, through the previous year and to the present.²⁷² The article opened with a dramatic comparison of East German workers in the present to the workers of the year before. In the present, the *Times* described the East German workers as dejected and demoralized. The article remembered the “same” people as headstrong and strengthened with determination as they marched against the People’s Police and the Russian tanks on June 17.²⁷³ The *Times* condemned the “new course” as a source of discontent in the Eastern sector due to its raised work norms.²⁷⁴ Following the 1953 rising, the Soviet and East German

²⁶⁹Ibid.

²⁷⁰“Day of German Unity,” *Times* (London), 17 June 1954, p. 5C.

²⁷¹Ibid.

²⁷²“East Germany a Year After the Riots,” *Times* (London), 17 June 1954, p. 7F.

²⁷³Ibid.

²⁷⁴Ibid.

Governments implemented the “new course” as a “policy of concession and conciliation.”²⁷⁵ Over the next year the East German standard of living improved with shipments of food and staples, the reversal of “sovietization” and “collectivization,” retraction of the new work norms, and an easing of Church persecution.²⁷⁶ The *Times* considered the Allied powers’ response (or lack of response) to the East German people’s condition a disappointment to the citizens and a source of their dismay.²⁷⁷ The article blamed the lack of assistance from the Western powers and the immediate lightening of policy in the East for the reduction in the number of refugees.²⁷⁸ While Communist policy eased immediately after the revolt, the retrospective depicted the Communist line as stiffening in “recent months”—a return of the iron fist. The GDR was beginning to increase norms again, reinstating collectivization, and practicing church persecution.²⁷⁹ Although the *Times* considered the workers’ revolt a warning to the GDR which slowed its progress, it explained that the “new course” was ultimately another tool to achieve a Communist agenda.²⁸⁰ Ulbricht described the “new course” as a “means to an end”—the end being the “reunification of Germany and the construction of Socialism.”²⁸¹ Ultimately, the retrospective portrayed a political and historical loop, a brief reprieve, with the problems originally protested against having returned.

²⁷⁵Ibid.

²⁷⁶Ibid.

²⁷⁷Ibid.

²⁷⁸Ibid.

²⁷⁹Ibid.

²⁸⁰Ibid.

²⁸¹Ibid.

The *Times* published its final article on the anniversary of the 1953 workers' revolt on June 18.²⁸² A collection of officials, West German and Allied, laid wreaths at the graves of June 17 victims.²⁸³ The column also described a rally at the Schöneberg town hall at which West German and Western officials spoke.²⁸⁴ Blücher, the Vice Chancellor, hailed the participants in the revolt as visionaries and forerunners in the fight for German reunification.²⁸⁵ He considered it the job of the Federal Republic and the four-powers to pick up where the demonstrators left off. Blücher branded the 1953 workers' revolt as a "triumph of freedom and justice."²⁸⁶ He closed his speech by calling for free elections and a united Germany.²⁸⁷ A small brawl broke out in the rally when a group of Communists tried to demonstrate in the middle of the gathering. West German citizens abruptly attacked the protestors, and West German police had to allay the dispute.²⁸⁸ East Berlin accused the provocateurs of crossing into the Eastern sector to disrupt factory workers and promote discontent.²⁸⁹ Regardless of the small disruption in Shöneberg and the accusations in the east, the anniversary ended with few remarkable

²⁸²“Berlin Uprising Remembered,” *Times* (London), 18 June 1954, p. 5D.

²⁸³*Ibid.*

²⁸⁴*Ibid.*

²⁸⁵*Ibid.*

²⁸⁶*Ibid.*

²⁸⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸⁸*Ibid.*

²⁸⁹*Ibid.*

episodes.²⁹⁰ This article concluded the coverage of the first anniversary of the 1953 revolt.

The *Times* published two conjoined articles on the second anniversary of the 1953 uprising. On June 18, 1955, it issued a piece on the memorial in Bonn and another about the tribute in Berlin. West Germany recognized the anniversary as a holiday as in the previous year. The Bundeshaus held a special ceremony with Federal Republic officials addressing the house.²⁹¹ In his speech to the Bundeshaus, historian Gerhard Ritter pointed out the irony of the uprising as a workers' revolt, for whom the Soviet Union and the East German government claimed to be built.²⁹² The *Times* considered the insurrection as West Germany's "symbol of the national will towards reunification."²⁹³

In an adjoining article, the *Times* reported the commemorations in West Berlin, describing a gathering of approximately seventy thousand citizens in front of the Berlin City Hall.²⁹⁴ West German officials called for disarmament and reunification. The evening ended in a moment of silence as the "Freedom Bell"—a "gift from America"—rang.²⁹⁵

The day before the third anniversary of the revolt, on June 16, 1956, the *Times* reported on planned events celebrating the day.²⁹⁶ The Bundestag scheduled a special

²⁹⁰Ibid.

²⁹¹"Day of German Unity," *Times* (London), 18 June 1955, p. 5A.

²⁹²Ibid.

²⁹³Ibid.

²⁹⁴"Berlin Celebrations," *Times* (London), 18 June 1955, p. 5A.

²⁹⁵Ibid.

²⁹⁶"Dr. Strasser's New Party," *Times* (London), 16 June 1956, p. 5A.

session, and Dr. Adenauer planned to attend.²⁹⁷ The announcement also publicized a string of bonfires to be lit along the border between East and West.²⁹⁸ In addition to these announcements, Dr. Otto Strasser declared the founding of the German Social Union.²⁹⁹ Strasser arranged the party's first meeting in a hotel in Bonn, and invited several international speakers.³⁰⁰ The *Times* described Strasser's platform as "archaic-sounding nationalism" and predicted that his conservative policies would have little success.³⁰¹

The *Times* actually paid little attention to the services rendering tribute to the East German workers and instead focused on the political upheaval created on the same weekend.³⁰² Social Democrats in Hamburg issued a "no confidence" motion against the Christian Democrats in the Senate.³⁰³ With the Social Democrats comprising fifty-eight of the required sixty-one votes to force the Government's resignation, the party needed only three votes to accomplish its goal.³⁰⁴ This development threatened the FRG and its standing on international issues. "Given sufficient political skill," the *Times* explained, "and further lack of diplomacy on Dr. Adenauer's part, the Social Democrats may bring about another Government crisis in Bonn."³⁰⁵ Furthermore, Dr. Strasser's new party, opened on the rebellion's anniversary, met strong opposition by West German citizens

²⁹⁷Ibid.

²⁹⁸Ibid.

²⁹⁹Ibid.

³⁰⁰Ibid.

³⁰¹Ibid.

³⁰²"New Threat to Dr. Adenauer's Government," *Times* (London), 18 June 1956, p. 8F.

³⁰³Ibid.

³⁰⁴Ibid.

³⁰⁵Ibid.

accusing Strasser of being a Nazi. His opening speech was delayed until the loud critics could be quieted.³⁰⁶

The article estimated that 350 towns in East Germany experienced strikes and revolts on the same day.³⁰⁷ It then summarized economic progress following the revolt. While the Soviet Union claimed East Germany had experienced a 90 percent increase in industrial production, the *Times* estimated production increased approximately eight percent.³⁰⁸ The article closed with an analysis of needs for future development.

Immediately following the third anniversary, on June 19, Dr. Adenauer asked the Federal Foreign Minister to prepare a letter to each of the four-powers concerning German reunification.³⁰⁹ At the same time, the Social Democratic Party made promises dependent on their victory in the upcoming elections. If they won, they promised to negotiate directly with East Germany regarding reunification—ignoring the four-powers. In addition, they would withdraw from NATO and reduce the number of occupying troops in Germany.³¹⁰ These articles, highlighting unrelated political issues, concluded the coverage of the remembrance of the workers' revolt.

The *Times* published a circumspect commentary on the fourth anniversary on June 18, 1957.³¹¹ It described the commemorative events of the day, including Dr.

³⁰⁶Ibid.

³⁰⁷Ibid.

³⁰⁸Ibid.

³⁰⁹“Rival German Unity Plans,” *Times* (London), 19 June 1956, p. 10.

³¹⁰Ibid.

³¹¹“East Berlin Four Years After the Rising,” *Times* (London), 18 June 1957, p. 7A.

Adenauer's traditional address to the special session of the Bundestag.³¹² The anniversary progressed without conflict as most people spent the day outdoors on vacation. The report expected a line of bonfires along the borders to be lit that night.³¹³

The article labeled the uprising a failure which ultimately strengthened the Communist and SED position in East Germany and the Eastern Block.³¹⁴ "Failure," the article explained, "strengthens established authority for a decade or more."³¹⁵ These connected articles constituted the only coverage of the 1957 anniversary in the *Times*.

The fifth anniversary of the workers' revolt brought even briefer coverage by the *Times*. The article concisely outlined the uprising's history and summarized the day's celebratory events.³¹⁶ For the first time since the revolt, the *Times* revealed skepticism in West Germany regarding reunification. With an increased number of West Germans using the holiday to go on vacation instead of honoring the revolt, the *Times* addressed the current attitude of the people. West Germans faced charges of disloyalty and lack of resolve. "This has naturally raised the familiar cries that the west Germans no longer care about reunification and that wallowing in their new-found luxury, they have forgotten their brothers suffering under the Communist yoke."³¹⁷ The *Times* countered, arguing that West Germans were tired of listening to promises of reunification that never came. Many considered the Day of German Unity a chance for politicians to exploit the

³¹²"Commemoration by Bonn Parliament," *Times* (London), 18 June 1957, p. 7A.

³¹³"East Berlin Four Years After the Rising," 18 June 1957, 7A.

³¹⁴*Ibid.*

³¹⁵*Ibid.*

³¹⁶"Reunification Goal Recedes in Germany," *Times* (London), 18 June 1958, p. 8G.

³¹⁷*Ibid.*

promise of reunification for their agendas. The *Times* described the mood in West Germany as a “result of despair or realism.”³¹⁸

The *Times* published its first article on the uprising’s sixth anniversary on June 17, 1959.³¹⁹ The short paragraph simply described the bonfires burning throughout West Berlin on the night before the anniversary, and publicized the upcoming celebrations for the following day. On the anniversary itself, the *Times* focused on the changing attitude of the West German people.³²⁰ The anniversary experienced a surge of people spending the day in the woods and around the lakes and beaches on vacation instead of pondering the grave issue of reunification and the memory of the participants of the 1953 demonstrations.³²¹ West German newspapers chastised their citizens for forgetting the true purpose of the holiday.³²² The *Times* argued that the Federal Republic changed the true meaning behind the anniversary by turning the memory of the victims of the revolt into an “abstract idea” of reunification.³²³ “He [the average German] prefers a glass of wine on a Rhine terrace,” the *Times* justifies, “or a stein of beer in a Bavarian cellar to brooding about reunification.”³²⁴

³¹⁸Ibid.

³¹⁹“Commemoration Fires in Berlin,” *Times* (London), 17 June 1959, p. 10E.

³²⁰“Unity Day Invasion of Woods and Beaches,” *Times* (London), 18 June 1959, p. 9C.

³²¹Ibid.

³²²Ibid.

³²³Ibid.

³²⁴Ibid.

There was more depressing news. The *Times* reported Dr. Gebhard Müller's words at a tribute to June 17.³²⁵ Müller considered the German hopes for reunification at an all-time low.³²⁶ At the same time, Adenauer openly admitted he believed reunification was "out of the question for the time being."³²⁷ Adenauer argued the Eastern sector was too important to the Soviet Union. Regardless, Adenauer, expected every West German to use June 17 to think of their brothers on the other side of the divide "every hour of the day."³²⁸

The *Times* did not report on the seventh anniversary in 1960. The following year, however, experienced a renewed surge of activity. The *Times* described commemorative rallies.³²⁹ More West Germans participated and planned charitable events to help East German refugees on the day of the anniversary. The *Times* estimated the people planned twice as many memorial events to honor the uprising.³³⁰ The year 1961 also marked an increase of participation by West German youth partaking in the public occasions and planning charitable causes.³³¹ One youth group worked for the day and contributed the money earned to refugee camps.³³² The *Times* did not explain the sudden surge of

³²⁵“Unification Issue in Germany,” *Times* (London), 18 June 1959, p. 10A.

³²⁶*Ibid.*

³²⁷*Ibid.*

³²⁸*Ibid.*

³²⁹“Appeal to Russia by Dr. Adenauer,” *Times* (London), 19 June 19 1961, p. 10F.

³³⁰*Ibid.*

³³¹*Ibid.*

³³²*Ibid.*

interest other than to note the Soviet Union recently “renewed threats to Berlin.”³³³ Adenauer delivered his traditional speech, calling for the Soviet Union to help promote German reunification.³³⁴

For the anniversary in 1962, with the Berlin Wall a new and haunting reminder of the city’s distress, the *Times* announced Dr. Adenauer’s anticipated attendance at the rally to be held in West Berlin in front of the town hall.³³⁵ The article described the agenda for the day, and recapped the toll of convictions and sentences for the 1953 strikers. It quoted statistics provided by The Berlin Group of Prison Inmates. The organization estimated that 120 people were killed in connection with the uprising, fourteen of them executed citizens, and twenty-one Russian soldiers were executed for “sympathizing with the east Germans.”³³⁶ At the time of this ninth anniversary, the *Times* proclaimed that seventy-five people, convicted for crimes related to the uprising, were still imprisoned.³³⁷ With the ceremonies, Bonn was overwhelmed with political dissent.³³⁸ Government employees demanded pay raises and threatened to strike.³³⁹ On his visit to West Berlin to remember the revolt, Dr. Adenauer faced international tension and domestic breakdown.

For the first time, Dr. Adenauer participated in West Berlin’s rally in front of the Schöneberg town hall, declining his usual place at the special sessions in the

³³³Ibid.

³³⁴Ibid.

³³⁵“Dr. Adenauer Will Speak in Berlin,” *Times* (London), 15 June 1962, p. 10B.

³³⁶Ibid.

³³⁷Ibid.

³³⁸Ibid.

³³⁹Ibid.

Bundestag.³⁴⁰ East German officials declared his presence in West Berlin a purposeful provocation.³⁴¹ The *Times* estimated that 100,000 people attended the rally.³⁴² Dr. Adenauer utilized the chance to denounce the recent East German shootings of citizens along the Berlin Wall. He also made his customary demand for freedom and reunification directed at the Soviet Union. Furthermore, he chastised those West Germans who did not use the holiday to contemplate reunification and remember their brethren in East Germany. “Everyone who takes part in the June 17 celebrations votes for German unity,” Adenauer proclaimed, “all those who use the day as a holiday vote for Germany’s opponent.”³⁴³ In addition to the rally, Dr. Adenauer visited the graves of some of the 1953 victims at the Seestrasse Cemetery.³⁴⁴ The *Times* considered the participation in German Unity Day particularly energetic that year, and suggested that it was perhaps in “protest against the erection of the Berlin Wall.”³⁴⁵

The tenth anniversary of the uprising saw an increase in attention from West German citizens and officials, and of *Times*’ coverage. The first article came nearly a week prior to the anniversary, and described President Lübke’s determined pleas to the West German people to participate in the anniversary’s celebrations and to use the holiday to remember the worker’s revolt and the East Germans on the other side of the

³⁴⁰“Dr. Adenauer Denounces East German Shootings,” *Times* (London), 18 June 1962, p. 10D.

³⁴¹*Ibid.*

³⁴²*Ibid.*

³⁴³*Ibid.*

³⁴⁴*Ibid.*

³⁴⁵*Ibid.*

wall.³⁴⁶ President Lübke also declared June 17 as the “national commemoration day of the German people.”³⁴⁷

Six days later, on June 18, the *Times* reported the tenth anniversary celebrations.³⁴⁸ Professor Ludwig Erhard spoke at the annual Schöneberg town hall rally.³⁴⁹ Although Vice-Chancellor at the time, Erhard was soon to be Adenauer’s successor.³⁵⁰ Erhard and other attending officials encouraged remembrance in the west; pleading with the Soviet Union to allow negotiations for reunification.³⁵¹ All of the tributes were peaceful, and there were no reports of violence in West Germany.³⁵² In addition to the typical celebrations, the Café Cologne opened an exhibition dedicated to the uprising and the building of the Berlin Wall.³⁵³

The newest development in the division—the Wall—constituted a dominant issue during the tenth anniversary. The *Times* article pointed out that the same workers who protested on June 17 were also those who helped build the Berlin Wall—the perceived defeat of all hope for reunification.³⁵⁴ Meanwhile, in East Germany, a bomb exploded in

³⁴⁶“Day of German Unity’ Plea,” *Times* (London), 12 June 1963, p. 10F.

³⁴⁷*Ibid.*

³⁴⁸“Professor Erhard Gives Unity Pledge to East Germans,” *Times* (London), 18 June 1963, p. 10A.

³⁴⁹*Ibid.*

³⁵⁰*Ibid.*

³⁵¹*Ibid.*

³⁵²*Ibid.*

³⁵³*Ibid.*

³⁵⁴*Ibid.*

the Trade Ministry building, but no one was hurt.³⁵⁵ *Neues Deutschland* recognized the tenth anniversary of the insurrection by deeming it a “fiasco of the counterrevolutionaries.”³⁵⁶ In general, the *Times* declared that the tenth anniversary was celebrated “with more solemnity and fervour than in past years.”³⁵⁷

West German citizens met their strongest criticism a few days after the Uprising’s tenth anniversary. The *Times* issued a summation of general attitudes in West Germany regarding the celebration and remembrance of the workers’ revolt.³⁵⁸ Federal Republic officials tried to encourage future participation of German citizens.³⁵⁹ This campaign included President Lübke’s radio broadcast, which later met intense scrutiny over his renaming the anniversary “National Day of Remembrance of the German People.”³⁶⁰ Many thought it diminished the message and memory of the uprising.³⁶¹

Regardless of the national campaign to increase participation, many West Germans used the long weekend for travel and vacation. This attitude earned heavy disparagement from officials and the press. A newspaper in Frankfurt published a cartoon depicting a West German family driving off to vacation on June 17.³⁶² At the same time, the *Deutsche Zeitung* excused travelers—explaining that taking a vacation and

³⁵⁵Ibid.

³⁵⁶Ibid.

³⁵⁷“New Dedication to German Unity,” *Times* (London), 18 June 1963, p. 10A.

³⁵⁸“Butchered to Make a German Holiday?” *Times* (London), 20 June 1963, p. 11F.

³⁵⁹Ibid.

³⁶⁰Ibid.

³⁶¹Ibid.

³⁶²Ibid.

remembering the uprising were not mutually exclusive.³⁶³ The *Times* argued the West German people took vacations rather than participate in celebrations because they felt hopeless, and it would be a disservice to accuse them of apathy:

They [West German citizens] feel there is little they can do about German unity, and are not a little impatient of those in positions to influence who year after year mount rostrums only to utter fine words about it. It would be dangerous however to conclude that they do not care; and if they were deprived of even the mere hope of reunification, things would go on just as before.³⁶⁴

Despite the generalizations and accusations, thousands upon thousands of West Germans contributed and shared in the celebrations commemorating the 1953 revolts. The *Times* labeled it the largest tribute to date.³⁶⁵ In addition to the rallies, youths developed voluntary programs to donate their time and services as well as staging “flag-bearing relays” and burned bonfires in view of the East German sector.³⁶⁶

The *Times* repeated many of the same issues in a condensed version the following anniversary in 1964. The FRG and its citizens held many of the traditional ceremonies, including the special session in the Bundestag.³⁶⁷ Several West German officials participated in a “wreath-laying ceremony” at a cemetery in West Berlin, and then attended the annual rally in front of the West Berlin town hall.³⁶⁸ West German children and youths volunteered for a work day in which they donated their earnings to charitable

³⁶³Ibid.

³⁶⁴Ibid.

³⁶⁵Ibid.

³⁶⁶Ibid.

³⁶⁷“Dr. Erhard’s Plea for German Unity,” *Times* (London), 18 June 1964, p. 12 F.

³⁶⁸“Berlin Ceremony,” *Times* (London), 18 June 1964, p. 12 F.

causes or for parcels sent to the Eastern zone.³⁶⁹ The most notable difference was Dr. Erhard's appearance prior to the anniversary at the Council for Foreign Relations in the United States.³⁷⁰ He gave a speech, stressing the same points discussed so many times before in commemorative addresses. He argued for German reunification and "self-determination."³⁷¹ He likened the Berlin Wall to a "wall of shame."³⁷² Erhard argued that reunification would be difficult, but the German people had to negotiate the possibility on their own.³⁷³

In a repeated topic, thousands of West German citizens used the holiday to travel to the country and take vacations. The large traffic jams and masses of people crossing nearby Belgian and Danish borders converted the "Day of German Unity" into the "German Excursion day."³⁷⁴ The same criticisms surfaced as the previous year. Some, however, argued that the holiday should be changed to a working day with time given to recognize the anniversary during the work hours.³⁷⁵ The *Times*' coverage of the 1964 anniversary concluded on the same controversies as the previous year.

The uprising's twelfth anniversary witnessed little news about its events and nearly all focus was given to a speech delivered by Rudolf Augstein.³⁷⁶ The *Times* briefly mentioned the three thousand meetings held in West Germany to commemorate

³⁶⁹“Dr. Erhard's Plea for German Unity,” 18 June 1964, 12 F.

³⁷⁰Ibid.

³⁷¹Ibid.

³⁷²Ibid.

³⁷³Ibid.

³⁷⁴Ibid.

³⁷⁵Ibid.

³⁷⁶“Bonn Urged to Face Facts on E. Germany,” *Times* (London), 18 June 1965, p. 10C.

the 1953 workers' revolt. But its attention was absorbed by a speech given to students at Bonn University by Rudolf Augstein, the editor of *Der Spiegel*.³⁷⁷ Augstein touched on the insurrection and resulting policies in the East and West. He considered the annual celebration of June 17 a lie, and argued that it was a "day of shame."³⁷⁸ He also contended the East German workers' motives were not as lofty as they had been portrayed in West Germany, and were instead a grapple for material progress. Augstein's answer to the problems was to encourage East Germany to become an economically autonomous state. Augstein's proposals met with sharp disapproval by some of his audience.³⁷⁹ His speech constituted the main focus of the twelfth anniversary.

The *Times* published a short summary of West Germany's celebratory events on the thirteenth anniversary of the revolt.³⁸⁰ The article reported that West Germany held three thousand services or rallies on the anniversary. Chancellor Erhard gave the customary speech to the Bundestag.³⁸¹ Once again, he argued for reunification through self-determination while simultaneously refusing to recognize East Germany as an independent state.³⁸² While the Bundestag held its special session in Bonn, a man was shot by East German sentries trying to cross a canal between East and West Berlin.³⁸³ The report of the refugee's death completed the *Times*' coverage of the 1966 anniversary.

³⁷⁷Ibid.

³⁷⁸Ibid.

³⁷⁹Ibid.

³⁸⁰"East German Rising Commemorated," *Times* (London), 18 June 1966, p. 8F.

³⁸¹Ibid.

³⁸²Ibid.

³⁸³"Shots at Refugee," *Times* (London), 18 June 1966, p. 8F.

The *Times* mentioned nothing of the 1953 revolt's anniversary in 1967. In 1968, reports were limited to protests and clashes between West German citizens and Soviet troops—nothing on the fifteenth anniversary of the rebellion.³⁸⁴ West German demonstrators collided with Soviet troops at the Brandenburg Gate when East German workers stepped out to fix the Soviet War Memorial in the British Sector.³⁸⁵ On the same day, National Democratic Party (NPD) members tried to raid The Congress Hall in Berlin, but were stopped by police.³⁸⁶ Reunification was not completely forgotten. The three western Commandants scheduled a meeting for the following day to “discuss the east German restrictions on access to Berlin.”³⁸⁷ On the same day, U.S. President Johnson sent a communication to Kurt Kiesinger, the Chancellor, that the United States supported West Germany's ambition for reunification.³⁸⁸ Although reunification was a repeated theme on the day, the *Times* did not mention rallies commemorating the anniversary. The reports from Berlin portrayed a scene of chaos and contention. 1968 marked the last report in the *Times* of any issues related to the uprising or the Day of German Unity for the next thirty-five years.

The *Times*' coverage of German history on the fiftieth anniversary of the workers' rising oddly concentrated on the development of new technology created to piece

³⁸⁴“Soviet Bayonets Stop Berlin Demonstration,” *Times* (London), 18 June 1968, p. 5A.

³⁸⁵*Ibid.*

³⁸⁶*Ibid.*

³⁸⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸⁸*Ibid.*

together answers from the past.³⁸⁹ Immediately prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall and reunification, Stasi files were torn apart and stuffed into bags to be burned, however, the East German archives did not have time to finish the job. As a result, 16,000 sacks of Stasi papers sat in its headquarters in East Berlin.³⁹⁰ East Germans raided the headquarters after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the papers were confiscated.³⁹¹ Since then, German civil servants worked to piece the papers back together.

In 2003, The Berlin Fraunhofer Institute of Production Facilities and Construction Technology announced its creation of software which could match all of the quarters together, accelerating the project.³⁹² This new development was considered the answer, bringing hope to deal with unanswered questions, unsolved crimes, and resolution of lawsuits. This news was particularly welcome in relation to the uprising's anniversary. The *Times* speculated the new technology and the Stasi papers could resolve long unanswered questions surrounding the 1953 revolt, in particular the issue of convictions and executions related to the uprising. "Still many details are unclear: the number of deaths was estimated at between 25 and 300 and the fate of many of the prisoners is still murky as is the relationship between the Soviet and East German security forces. The torn Stasi files could provide a clue to this and to many other supposedly defining historical moments."³⁹³ The piece also announced the planned rallies, memorial services, celebrations, and "wreath-laying ceremonies" for the fiftieth

³⁸⁹Roger Boyes, "Swift Solution to Stasi's Jigsaw Puzzle of Secrets," *Times* (London), 17 June 2003, p. 15A.

³⁹⁰*Ibid.*

³⁹¹*Ibid.*

³⁹²*Ibid.*

³⁹³*Ibid.*

anniversary.³⁹⁴ Finally, it summarized the questions still surrounding the origin and purpose of the revolt and provided a brief rundown of the uprising's history.³⁹⁵

The uprising's position in history remained a concern through the fifty years under consideration, with hope for the future, debates concerning the past, and deliberation surrounding the proper way to commemorate the history. The *Times* faithfully recorded the uprising, its developments, and attendant international issues. On a global front, West Germany fought domestic political fracturing to try and maintain its rank in international arena. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union and German Democratic Republic struggled to rebuild public opinion and reverse poor perceptions. At the same time, Western officials appealed for the revival of travel and communication between the sectors, the lifting of martial law, reunification, free elections in the sectors, and disarmament or EDC treaties. The *Times* witnessed how America and the Soviet Union grappled for political and social approval in East Germany with competing foreign aid agendas and food drives. In the end, its articles helped capture the fierce debate over how the uprising and its participants should be remembered. Like the *Washington Post*, the London *Times* elected to detach itself from pertinent and ongoing coverage after the 1960s, reflecting Cold War realities and perhaps the attitude of most West Germans on the question.

³⁹⁴Ibid.

³⁹⁵Ibid.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

The East German worker's uprising seized international attention on June 17, 1953, when Soviet tanks rolled onto the streets of East Berlin to quell the revolt. The direct intervention by one of the occupying countries, the Soviet Union, created inordinate and prolonged tension with the Western powers and the Federal Republic of Germany, and provided dramatic imagery fueling propaganda and controversy. As a result of the spotlight placed on this small region, the uprising became the center of international contention and fixation for the four Allied powers—the Soviet Union, United States, Great Britain, and France. The Western Allies held the Soviet agenda and Communist schemes responsible for the discontent in East Germany that caused the revolt, and blamed them for the inability to reunite the two German halves. The Soviets and Democratic Republic blamed American and Western provocateurs for inciting the riots to undermine the Soviet plan for the GDR. In the end the 1953 uprising became subsumed in the larger European and global debates surrounding the Cold War: disarmament, reunification, Germany's position in the international power scheme, communism versus capitalism, food shortages, responsibilities of occupying countries to a subjugated nation, and an endless list of related concerns.

June 17 was remembered in historians' retrospectives, the visual media, art and literature, and in periodicals. These media included books, movies, television shows, internet sites, sculpture, government tools (such as stamps and coins), poetry, novels, and

newspapers, among others. While these were not the only outlets for remembrance, they were among the most widely known and shared among the general public over time.

June 17, 1953—one day in history. One day in a tumultuous period of contention, when every day seemed to raise issues of international and domestic concern. This one day became a lightning rod for the international discord descended upon Europe following World War II, and revealed the weaknesses, insecurities, and conflicting agendas of the four occupying nations as well as those of East and West Germany. The story that emerged in the preceding pages is disturbing and haunting enough, even if this project relied, for reasons of practicality, primarily on a cross-section of Western sources. Access to Eastern records may one day refine certain findings of this study, but is likely to force a major reinterpretation of the events under discussion.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Table A. *New York Times* Articles

Year	Date	Author	Title	Page
<u>1953</u>				
	18 June 1953	Walter Sullivan	“Martial Law is Set”	1
	18 June 1953	Walter H. Waggoner	“Eisenhower Sees Lesson in Berlin”	1
	18 June 1953		“Russians Use Entire Division”	8
	18 June 1953		“Reuter Sees West Berlin Unable to Aid Easterners”	9
	18 June 1953		“‘Spirit of Freedom’ Seen”	10
	18 June 1953	Clifton Daniel	“London Welcomes Uprising in Berlin”	11
	19 June 1953		“Germany Fights On”	20
	20 June 1953	M.S. Handler	“Strong Underground of Workers Believed to Exist in East Germany”	4
	20 June 1953	Anne O’Hare McCormick	“The Reaction in Europe to the Riots in Berlin”	16
	21 June 1953	Walter Sullivan	“Berlin: The Story of the Uprising”	E5
	21 June 1953		“The German Workers Rise”	E8
	21 June 1953		“Riot Instigators Hunted”	20
	24 June 1953	Anne O’Hare McCormick	“The Revolt in East Germany Will Be Felt in Berlin”	24
	12 July 1953		“Free Unions Acclaim East German Labor	9

Table A—Continued

Year	Date	Author	Title	Page
	31 July 1953		“Two More East Germans Ousted”	5
<u>1954</u>	8 June 1954		“Revolt for Freedom”	22
	13 June 1954		“Reds Ask 15 Years for Rebels”	4
	17 June 1954	Walter Sullivan	“’53 Riots Marked by West Germans”	6
	17 June 1954		“West Germans Mark Revolt”	6
	15 July 1954		“German Red Official Jailed for 10 Years”	4
	22 August 1954		“Inside East Germany: A Refugee’s Report”	SM10
	29 August 1954		“3 East German Judges Flee”	58
<u>1955</u>	18 June 1955		“Bonn Will Insist Berlin Be Capital”	4
	18 June 1955		“Revolt Started by Workers”	4
<u>1956</u>	17 June 1956	Elie Abel	“Eisenhower Calls on Moscow Anew to Unite Germany”	1
	18 June 1956		“Adenauer Sees Faith in Unity	4
	18 June 1956	Harry Gilroy	“Berliners Mark ’53 Rising in East”	4
	29 June 1956		“Uprising Recalls ’53 Berlin Rioting”	3
<u>1957</u>	18 June 1957	M.S. Handler	“Dulles Promises Bonn Aid on Unity”	3
	19 June 1957		“Adenauer Receives Eisenhower Letter”	15

Table A—Continued

Year	Date	Author	Title	Page
<u>1958</u>	18 June 1958		“West Germans Stage Parades”	12
	18 June 1958		“German Uprising in 1953 Observed”	12
<u>1959</u>	18 June 1959		“Adenauer at Ceremony”	4
	18 June 1959		“Germans Mark Anti-Red Rising”	4
<u>1960</u>	18 June 1960	Sydney Gruson	“Germans Pledge Fight for Unity”	9
	21 June 1960		“In Memoriam”	5
<u>1961</u>	15 June 1961		“New East German Demand”	10
	18 June 1961		“100,000 in Berlin at Anti-Red Rally”	15
	18 June 1961	Gerd Wilcke	“Adenauer Assures East”	15
	18 June 1961	Gerd Wilcke	“German Unity Cry Has Weaker Sound”	E4
<u>1962</u>	17 June 1962		“A Poignant Anniversary”	150
<u>1963</u>	12 June 1963		“Kennedy’s ‘Peace Strategy’ Is Welcomed at U.N.”	4
	18 June 1963		“Ills in East Germany”	5
	18 June 1963	Arthur J. Olsen	“Erhard and Brandt Urge German Unity Accord”	5
<u>1964</u>	16 June 1964		“Keating Asks Talks to Curb Brutality Along Berlin Wall”	9

Table A—Continued

Year	Date	Author	Title	Page
	18 June 1964		“Germany Observes ’53 Revolt in East”	16
<u>1965</u>	18 June 1965		“’53 German Rising Marked in West”	6
<u>1966</u>	18 January 1966		“Berlin Sees Play by Gunter Grass”	31
	8 May 1966	Keith Botstord	“Gunter Grass is a Different Drummer”	SM15
	18 June 1966		“Erhard Stresses Appeal for Unity”	6
<u>1968</u>	18 June 1968	Max Frankel	“Johnson Affirms Stand on Berlin”	1
<u>1969</u>	18 June 1969		“Kiesinger Renews His Offer to East”	9
<u>1974</u>	13 June 1974		“Bonn Won’t Mark East’s ’53 Rising”	10
	18 June 1974		“’53 Uprising in East is Marked in Bonn”	8
<u>1978</u>	18 June 1978		“25 Years After East German Revolt, Strains Linger”	3
	18 June 1978		“Frankfurt Police Battle Leftists Seeking to Block a Neo-Nazi Rally”	15
<u>1983</u>	7 September 1983		“An East German Writer and the Wall of Silence”	C16

Table A—Continued

Year	Date	Author	Title	Page
<u>1986</u>	27 April 1986	James M. Markham	“Who Owns the Past?”	SM88
<u>1990</u>	8 March 1990	Craig R. Whitney	“Upheaval in the East: In West Germany, Anxiety Over Unity”	1
	18 June 1990	Ferdinand Protzman	“East Germans Add to Unity Pressure”	A1
<u>2003</u>	16 June 2003	Richard Bernstein	“In Eastern Germany, 1953 Uprising is Remembered”	3

APPENDIX B

Table B. *Washington Post* Articles

Year	Date	Author	Title	Page
<u>1953</u>				
	18 June 1953		“Red Division Halts East Berlin Revolt: Troops, Tanks Patrol German Soviet Zone”	1
	18 June 1953		“Adenauer Calls Cabinet in East Berlin Crisis”	2
	18 June 1953		“Berlin Riots Symptoms of Unrest, Wiley Says”	2
	19 June 1953		“Big 3 Demand Russia Stop Berlin Terror”	1
	20 June 1953		“Reds Flee as Germans Storm Their Office in West Berlin”	1
	21 June 1953		“100,000 Reported Battling Troops at German A-Maine: 2000 East Zone Police Disarmed; Thousands Jam Soviet Zone Jails”	1
	21 June 1953		“Red Raiders in Greatest Police Move Since Hitler”	1
	21 June 1953		“We Made Reds ‘Pull Back,’ Bradley Says”	1
	21 June 1953		“West Organized Riots in Berlin, Tass Says”	8
	22 June 1953		“Germans Bow in Memory of 17 Revolt Dead”	1
	22 June 1953		“Saxony Plant is Set Ablaze by Revolvers”	1

Table B—Continued

Year	Date	Author	Title	Page
	23 June 1953		“30,000 Ex-Officers of Wehrmacht Put on Reds’ Arrest List”	1
	24 June 1953		“Red Terror Swells Zone Prison List”	1
	25 June 1953		“East German Red Regime to Stay in Office, Promises to Free Many Seized in Rioting”	3
<u>1954</u>				
	18 June 1954		“Berlin Police Bar Attempted Lynching of Reds; 78 Injured”	10
	18 June 1954		“East Berliners Honored for 1953 Uprising”	10
<u>1955</u>				
	17 June 1955		“Adenauer Gets Degree at Harvard, Praises U.S.”	8
<u>1956</u>				
	18 June 1956		“Germans Mark Day of Revolt”	6
<u>1963</u>				
	18 June 1963		“Crowd at Berlin Wall Hosed on Revolt Date”	A13
<u>1973</u>				
	11 June 1973	Dan Morgan	“German Heritage Bothers GDR Leaders Seeking Own Identity”	A2
	13 June 1973		“East Germany Applies for Membership in U.N.”	A32

APPENDIX C

Table C. *Times* Articles

Year	Date	Author	Title	Page
<u>1953</u>				
	17 June 1953		“East Berlin Demonstrators Shout for Freedom”	6
	17 June 1953		“Herr Blankenhorn’s Visit Ends”	6
	17 June 1953		“Long-Smouldering Resentment”	6
	18 June 1953		“Bundestag Shows United Front”	8
	18 June 1953		“East Berlin Demonstrators Fired On”	8
	18 June 1953		“Further Troops Brought In”	8
	19 June 1953		“Moscow Comment on Berlin Riots”	6
	19 June 1953		“Sorrow in Federal Republic”	6
	19 June 1953		“West Berliner Shot”	8
	19 June 1953		“Western Protest”	8
	20 June 1953		“Riots Spread in E. Germany”	6
	22 June 1953		“Bonn Tribute to Berliners”	5
	22 June 1953		“Russian Reply on Berlin”	6
	23 June 1953		“Berlin Nearer Normal”	5
	23 June 1953		“East Germans’ Plight”	6
	24 June 1953		“Sir I. Kirkpatrick Back in Bonn”	7
	24 June 1953		“W. Berlin in Mourning”	8

Table C—Continued

Year	Date	Author	Title	Page
	25 June 1953		“Cause of Berlin Disturbances”	5
	26 June 1953		“E. German Unrest Analysed”	6
	27 June 1953		“E. German Rulers More Confident”	6
	30 June 1953		“E. Berlin Police Benevolence”	6
	1 July 1953		“State of Emergency Ended in East Berlin”	6A
	2 July 1953		“Seeking German Reunion”	5E
	5 July 1953		“Cheaper Food for East Berliners”	7B
	5 July 1953		“Proposed Talks with Russia”	7B
	5 July 1953		“12 Million Leaflets”	7B
	7 July 1953		“Allied Reply to Soviet Commander	5D
	7 July 1953		“Berlin Revolt Applauded”	5D
	7 July 1953		“Silent Borderlands”	5D
	7 July 1953		“Herr Pieck Explains”	5G
	8 July 1953		“New Strikes in East Berlin”	6E
	9 July 1953		“Bonn Discussions on Future of Europe”	7E
	9 July 1953		“Renewed Unrest in E. Berlin”	7E
	10 July 1953		“Basis for Union of Germany”	6C
	10 July 1953		“Dismissal of Mr. Beria”	6C
	13 July 1953		“No U.S. Food for E. Germany”	6D
	13 July 1953		“Towards Normality in E. Berlin	6D
	16 July 1953		“E. Germany ‘Ready’ for Free Vote”	6B

Table C—Continued

Year	Date	Author	Title	Page
	17 July 1953		“Hint of New Curb on East Germans”	4E
	18 July 1953		“Party Quarrels in E. Germany	5C
	18 July 1953		“Tank Movements in East Germany”	6E
	20 July 1953		“E. German Hunt for ‘Agents’”	7E
	21 July 1953		“Aftermath of June 17 Rising”	6D
	23 July 1953		“Accusation Against Herr Hamann”	7D
	27 July 1953		“Aim of German Unification”	4
	27 July 1953		“Dr. Adenauer’s Plea for EDC Treaty”	4
	28 July 1953		“Herr Zaisser’s Downfall”	6G
	25 August 1953		“East German Sentenced”	5B
	25 August 1953		“Political Use of War Prisoners”	5B
	28 August 1953		“Russia Reduces Staff in Germany”	5B
	28 August 1953		“Savage Sentences on Demonstrators”	5B
<u>1954</u>				
	26 April 1954		“June Disturbances in E. Germany”	5D
	16 June 1954		“East Germany’s ‘New Course’”	8E
	17 June 1954		“Berlin Election of President”	5C
	17 June 1954		“‘Day of German Unity’”	5C
	17 June 1954		“East Germany a Year After the Riots”	7F
	18 June 1954		“Berlin Uprising Remembered”	5D

Table C—Continued

Year	Date	Author	Title	Page
<u>1955</u>	18 June 1955		“Berlin Celebrations”	5A
	18 June 1955		““Day of German Unity””	5A
<u>1956</u>	16 June 1956		“Dr. Strasser’s New Party”	5A
	18 June 1956		“New Threat to Dr. Adenauer’s Government”	8F
	19 June 1956		“Rival German Unity Plans”	10
<u>1957</u>	18 June 1957		“Commemoration by Bonn Parliament”	7A
	18 June 1957		“East Berlin Four Years After the Rising”	7A
<u>1958</u>	18 June 1958		“Reunification Goal Recedes in Germany”	8G
<u>1959</u>	17 June 1959		“Commemoration Fires in Berlin”	10E
	18 June 1959		“Unity Day Invasion of Woods and Beaches”	9C
	18 June 1959		“Unification Issue in Germany”	10A
<u>1961</u>	19 June 1961		“Appeal to Russia by Dr. Adenauer”	10F
<u>1962</u>	15 June 1962		“Dr. Adenauer Will Speak in Berlin”	10B
	18 June 1962		“Dr. Adenauer Denounces East German Shootings”	10D
<u>1963</u>	12 June 1963		““Day of German Unity’ Plea”	10F

Table C—Continued

Year	Date	Author	Title	Page
	18 June 1963		“New Dedication to German Unity	10A
	18 June 1963		“Professor Erhard Gives Unity Pledge to East Germans”	10A
	20 June 1963		“Butchered to Make a German Holiday?”	11F
<u>1964</u>				
	18 June 1964		“Berlin Ceremony”	12F
	18 June 1964		“Dr. Erhard’s Plea for German Unity”	12F
<u>1965</u>				
	18 June 1965		“Bonn Urged to Face Facts on E. Germany”	10C
<u>1966</u>				
	18 June 1966		“East German Rising Commemorated”	8F
	18 June 1966		“Shots at Refugee”	8F
<u>1968</u>				
	18 June 1968		“Soviet Bayonets Stop Berlin Demonstration”	5A
<u>2003</u>				
	17 June 2003	Roger Boyes	“Swift Solution to Stasi’s Jigsaw Puzzle of Secrets”	15A

APPENDIX D

Table D. Timeline

Date	Event
May 7, 1945	Germany surrendered to America
May 8, 1945	Formal German surrender to the Soviet Union; VE-Day
June 1945	Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD) created to manage the Soviet Zone.
June 3, 1945	Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD) officially recognized by SMAD in the Soviet Zone.
June 7, 1945	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) created
June 16, 1945	Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands (LDPD) officially inaugurated
June 26, 1945	Christlich-Demokratische Union (CDU) founded
June 14, 1945	The Einheitsfront der antifaschistisch-demokratischen Parteien or “Antifa-Block,” later known as the Central Committee, was created by the four-powers
1946	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED) party created by the merger of the KPD and SPD
April 7, 1949	“Trizonia” created from the merging of the French, British, and American Zones
May 23, 1949	Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) founded
October 7, 1949	German Democratic Republic (GDR) founded
November 1950	Bonn confirmed as the FRG provisional seat of government
March 5, 1953	Joseph Stalin died

Table D—Continued

Date	Event
April 1953	Otto Grotewohl made an official request for assistance from the Soviet Union, and was denied
May 1953	SED discontinued the LPGs
May 28, 1953	The GDR Council of Ministers passed a ten percent raise of work quotas
June 11, 1953	GDR Council of Ministers passed the “New Line” or “New Course”
June 16, 1953	GDR increased the work norms for a second time; Workers along the Stalinallee walked out of work and onto the streets
June 17, 1953	More organized, widespread workers’ uprising; officially labeled the “Day of German Unity”
August 4, 1953	West German Parliament declared June 17 the “Day of German Unity,” a national holiday
August 13, 1961	First construction of the Berlin Wall
November 9, 1989	First free crossings of the Berlin Wall; commonly referred to as the “Fall of the Berlin Wall”

APPENDIX E

Table E. People of Interest

Name	Description
Adenauer, Konrad	First Chancellor of the FDR, 1949-1963; Member of the CDU
Augstein, Rudolf	Founder and part owner of <i>Der Spiegel</i>
Beria, Lavrenty	Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, 1941-1953; USSR First Deputy Chairman, 1953
Blücher, Franz	Vice Chancellor of West Germany, 1949-1957
Brandt, Willy	Mayor of West Berlin, 1957-1966; Chancellor of West Germany, 1969-1974
Chuikov, Vasilii	Chairman of the SCC; Commander-in-Chief of Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany
Churchill, Sir Winston	Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, 1940-1945, 1951-1955
Conant, James B.	United States High Commissioner for Germany; United States Ambassador to Germany, 1953-1957
Dibrova, Pavel	Soviet Commandant for Berlin; Major General in the Soviet military
Dodd, Thomas	U.S. Senator from Connecticut, 1959-1971
Dulles, John Foster	United States Secretary of State, 1953-1959
Ehlers, Hermann	Second President of the Bundestag in West Germany
Eisenhower, Dwight D.	Allied General during World War II, and 34 th President of the United States, 1953-1961.
Erhard, Ludwig	Minister of Economy, 1949-1963; Chancellor of West Germany, 1963-1966

Table E—Continued

Name	Description
Fechner, Max	East German Minister of Justice
Gerstenmaier, Eugen	President of the West German Bundestag, 1954-1969
Goettling, Willi	FDR executed in the GDR for alleged participation in the June 17, 1953 uprising
Grotewohl, Otto	GDR Premier or Prime Minister, 1949-1964
Havemann, Robert	President of the GDR Peace Council; stepped out of the SED headquarters to address the June 17 demonstrators
Heuss, Theodor	First elected President of West Germany (FRG), 1949-1959
Il'ichev, Ivan	Deputy Political Counselor for the SCC; Head of USSR mission in the GDR
Javits, Jacob	U.S. Senator from New York, 1957-1981
Jodl, Alfred	German General (official German rank was Chef des Wehrmachtsführungsstabes, or “Chief of Operations Staff”) who surrendered to Allied General Eisenhower on May 7, 1945 at Reims
Johnson, Lyndon B.	36 th President of the United States, 1963-1969
Kennedy, John F.	35 th President of the United States, 1961-1963
Kiesinger, Kurt G.	Chancellor of West Germany, 1966-1969
Kirkpatrick, Sir Ivone	British High Commissioner in Germany, 1950-1953
Kohl, Helmut	Chancellor of Germany, 1982-1998
Krushchev, Nikita	First Secretary of the CPSU CC; Chief Director of the Soviet Union, 1953-1964
Lübke, Heinrich	President of West Germany, 1959-1969
Malenkov, G.M.	Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, 1953-1955; Member of the CPSU CC
Manceaux-Démiau, Pierre	French Commandant for Berlin, 1953-1954

Table E—Continued

Name	Description
Maron, Karl	Minister of the Interior for the GDR, 1955-1963
Mayer, René	Prime Minister of France, 1953
Molotov, W.M.	First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, 1953-1957; Member of the CPSU CC
Nuschke, Otto	Deputy Prime Minister of the GDR
Pieck, Wilhelm	President of the GDR, 1949-1960; founder of the KPD
Renger, Annemarie	President of the West German Parliament, 1972-1976
Reuter, Ernst	Mayor of West Berlin, 1948-1953
Ritter, Gerhard	German historian
Schroeder, Gerhard	Minister of the Interior for the FRG
Selbmann, Fritz	Heavy Industry Minister; stepped out of the SED headquarters to address the June 17 demonstrators
Semyonov, Vladimir	Head of the Soviet Foreign Minister, 1953; High Commissioner of the USSR in the GDR and Soviet Ambassador to the GDR, 1953-1954
Stalin, Joseph	General Secretary of the CPSU CC, 1922-1953
Strasser, Otto	Founder of the German Social Union
Strauss, Franz	West German Defense Minister, 1953-1956
Ulbricht, Walter	SED General Secretary, 1950-1953; First Secretary of the SED Central Committee, 1953-1971
Windelen, Heinrich	Chairman of the Christian Democratic Party
Yudin, Pavel	Political Advisor to the Chairman of the SCC; Deputy High Commissioner for Germany
Zhukov, Marshal Georgi	Commander-in-chief of the Soviet Occupation Troops; created SMAD

GLOSSARY

Alexanderplatz. A public square and transportation hub in Berlin's city center (former East Berlin sector) near the East Berlin town hall, Rotes Rathaus, and the GDR's parliament building, Palast der Republik; one of the key sites of the 1953 uprising and later sit-down strikes of July 1953.

Aufstand. Uprising.

Bezirke. Regional Districts.

Bundeshaus. Federal Houses of Parliament.

Bundestag. Lower House of the German Parliament.

Christlich-Demokratische Union. (CDU) Christian Democratic Union.

Deutsch. German.

Deutschland. Germany.

Einheitsfront der antifaschistisch-demokratischen Parteien. "Antifa-Block" United Front of the Antifascist Democratic Party.

European Defense Community Treaty. (EDC Treaty) A failed proposal in the 1950s intending to create a joint European military force; the EDC would control the West German military, allowing a rearmament but disallowing German power.

Federal Republic of Germany. (FRG) West Germany's government with its capital in Bonn.

Friedrichstraße. The main shopping drag through Berlin's city center, which runs north-south, and intersects Unter den Linden and Liepziger Straße (all famous paths of the 1953 uprising marches); intersected with the Berlin Wall at Checkpoint Charlie.

German Democratic Republic. (GDR) East Germany's government with its capital in East Berlin.

Intelligentsia. An artistic, social, or political vanguard generated by an elite social class of intellectuals.

Juni. June.

Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands. (KPD) Communist Party of Germany.

Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften. (LPG) Agricultural Production Cooperatives or agricultural collectives.

Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands. (LDPD) Liberal Democratic Party of Germany.

Liepziger Straße. A main thoroughfare running east-west through Berlin which begins at Potsdamerplatz and intersects Friedrichstraße; a central gathering point and path of the 1953 uprising.

Neues Deutschland. “New Germany;” The official daily newspaper of the SED in the GDR.

Potsdamerplatz. A public square in Berlin’s city center (former East Berlin sector) near the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag Building; one of the key sites of the uprising’s demonstrations and the clash between East Berlin citizens and Soviet tanks.

Rathaus. Town Hall.

Reichstag. Parliament.

Reichstag Building. The original Parliament building of Germany; Located in West Berlin, adjoining the border with East Berlin, it was shut down by the Berlin Wall in 1961; the site of several famous rallies in West Berlin during the Cold War.

Saar Protectorate. A French Protectorate on Germany’s southwest border with France.

Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands. (SPD) Social Democratic Party of Germany.

Staatsmacht. “Power of the State.”

Stalinallee. A central boulevard in East Berlin; considered a main drive of government buildings; one of the main sites or sources of the June 16 and June 17, 1953 strikes where construction workers downed their tools and marched.

Strausberger Platz. An East Berlin public square where participants of the June 17 uprising met to march toward the SED headquarters.

“Tag X.” “Day X;” The GDR’s expression for June 17, 1953.

Unter den Linden. The main boulevard in Berlin's city center, which runs from the Brandenburg Gate to the former site of the imperial palace, and is crossed by the Friedrichstraße; the famous site where East German workers marched arm-in-arm in front of the Brandenburg Gate while carrying German flags.

Volkspolizei. People's Police; the official police force of the GDR.

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