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Leading GDR Writers Protest the Expatriation of Wolf Biermann (November 17, 1976)

When the GDR government expatriated Wolf Biermann, a popular singer and critic of the regime, a dozen prominent writers dared to protest the arbitrary action. They asked that the measure be reconsidered, thereby signaling their desire for greater freedom for internal debate within East Germany.

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### **Declaration of Protest against the Expatriation of Wolf Biermann**

Wolf Biermann was and is an uncomfortable poet – he shares that quality with many poets of the past. Bearing in mind Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*, according to which the proletarian revolution is constantly self-critical, our socialist state should, in contrast to anachronistic social forms, be able to tolerate such discomfort in a calm contemplative way. We do not identify with Wolf Biermann's every word and action, and we dissociate ourselves from attempts to misuse the Biermann case against the GDR. But all his criticism notwithstanding, Biermann has never, not even in Cologne, allowed there to be any doubt about which German state he advocates. We protest his expatriation and ask that the measures taken be reconsidered.

Sarah Kirsch, Christa Wolf, Erich Arendt, Jurek Becker, Volker Braun, Franz Fühmann, Stephan Hermlin, Stefan Heym, Günter Kunert, Heiner Müller, Rolf Schneider, Gerhard Wolf.

Source: "Gegen die Ausbürgerung von Wolf Biermann" ["Declaration of Protest against the Expatriation of Wolf Biermann"] (November 17, 1976); reprinted in Klaus Wagenbach, *Vaterland. Muttersprache. Deutsche Schriftsteller und ihr Staat seit 1945. Offene Briefe, Reden, Aufsätze, Gedichte, Manifeste, Polemiken* [*Fatherland. Mother Tongue. German Writers and their State since 1945. Open Letters, Speeches, Essays, Poems, Manifestoes, Polemics*]. Berlin, 2004, p. 303.

Translation: Allison Brown