



Volume 8. Occupation and the Emergence of Two States, 1945-1961

Founding Resolution of the Free German Youth [*Freie Deutsche Jugend*] (February 26, 1946)

On February 26, 1946, some members of the Central Youth Committee for the Soviet occupation zone of Germany expressed their desire to found the Free German Youth [*Freie Deutsche Jugend* or FDJ]. Shortly thereafter, they appealed to the Soviet military administration, which granted the necessary permission, and the Free German Youth was founded on March 7, 1946. The organization subsequently developed into the central state organization for East German youth between the ages of 14 and 27. Its founding decree embraced anti-Fascism, German unity, and reconstruction; later, educating youth in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism formed the core of its program. Although the FDJ was officially non-partisan, it was run by the Communist Party from the outset. From 1946 to 1955, its chairman was Erich Honecker, who would go on to lead the GDR.

Members of the Central Youth Committee for the Soviet Occupation Zone

The members of the Central Youth Committee for the Soviet occupation zone of Germany who were present on February 26, 1946, in the assembly hall of the town hall of the city of Berlin, Parochialstraße, herewith proclaim their unanimous desire to approach the Soviet military administration in Germany for the purpose of establishing a non-partisan, united, democratic youth organization, the “Free German Youth.”

This [request] is based on the goals and bylaws of the Free German Youth, which were accepted by all signatories and are appended to the document.

What does the Free German Youth want?

We boys and girls of the Free German Youth commit ourselves, in Germany’s most dire hour of need, to rebuilding our homeland on an antifascist-democratic basis. We are united by the sacred desire to help overcome, through joint exertions, the guilt of our nation caused by Nazism. We want:

I.

The preservation of Germany’s unity.

II.

To recruit the German youth for the great ideals of liberty, humanism, a proactive democracy, international peace, and friendship among nations.

III.

The active participation of all boys and girls in the rebuilding of our fatherland.

IV.

The creation of a new Germany, one that accords the youth the right of co-determination through their active participation in the administration of public life; one that secures for all boys and girls – independent of their background, wealth, and faith – good vocational training, access to all educational and cultural institutions, equal pay for equal work, and adequate vacation and recreation.

V.

Support for our youthful sense that we all belong together by developing all areas of interest in our life. The formation of work and communities of interest that are social, cultural, and athletic in nature, and of youth hiking groups.

German boy, German girl! If you feel in your heart the urge to participate in the building of a joyful, free, happy, and peaceful future for our people, then we welcome you as a companion and comrade-in-arms. Then take your place in the great, unified friendship league of the Free German Youth.

Source: SAPMO-BArch, DY 24/796; reprinted in Udo Wengst, *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland*. Bd. 2/2: 1945-1949: *Die Zeit der Besatzungszonen. Sozialpolitik zwischen Kriegsende und der Gründung zweier deutscher Staaten. Dokumente* [The History of Social Policy in Germany, Vol. 2/2: 1945-1949. *The Era of the Occupation Zones. Social Policy between the End of the War and the Founding of Two German States. Documents*]. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2001, p. 139.

Translation: Thomas Dunlap