



Volume 8. Occupation and the Emergence of Two States, 1945-1961
Principles and Aims of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (April 21, 1946)

On April 21-22, 1946, the KPD and the SPD in the Soviet occupation zone merged to form the Socialist Unity Party of Germany [*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* or SED]. Wilhelm Pieck (KPD) and Otto Grotewohl (SPD) became co-chairmen of the new party. Back in the summer of 1945, the KPD had set up its own party apparatus in close collaboration with the Soviet occupying power. With this move, the KPD had initially rejected the desire for unity expressed by workers' parties immediately after the end of the war. But it soon became clear that the KPD enjoyed little popular political support, and the party changed its position. In the fall of 1945, with massive Soviet support, it launched a campaign to merge with the SPD. Although the vast majority of SPD supporters approved only a close cooperation between the two parties, and not a complete merger, Grotewohl eventually yielded to KPD pressure. It was his hope, however, that democratic principles could be secured within the SED. The basic program of the SED promised democratic elections and the protection of individual liberties, but the party also came out clearly in favor of building up socialism and did not rule out the use of revolutionary means in achieving that goal.

The circumstances of the forced merger of the KPD and the SPD in the Soviet zone pulled the rug out from under any merger of the two parties in the West and indirectly contributed to the creation of the Bizonie and the deepening of political divisions, since the British and the Americans now feared that an all-German government would bear a Communist imprint.

Twelve years of fascist dictatorship, six years of Hitlerian war, have flung the German people into the most dreadful economic, political, and moral catastrophe of their history.

Germany was turned into a field of ruins.

Hitler fascism was the instrument of domination used by the wildest reactionary and imperialist elements of finance-capital, by the lords of the armaments combines, and by the large banks and the owners of large estates.

Fascism attained power by splitting the working class. It destroyed all democratic rights and liberties by the cruelest terror and transformed Germany into a military prison.

This cleared the way for an unimpeded imperialist war policy. German imperialism had no compunction about sacrificing the lives and means of existence of millions of workers, farmers,

tradesmen, intellectuals, and above all youth, to its claims of world hegemony; it risked the existence and future of the nation.

How can a way be found out of this catastrophe?

Militarism and imperialist policies of force and war have twice plunged Germany into the greatest national disaster.

To safeguard peace, to reconstruct the German economy, and to preserve the unity of Germany it is necessary to destroy the remnants of Hitler fascism and to liquidate militarism and imperialism.

Never again must reaction be allowed to rule

Never again must reaction be allowed to rule! The unity of the workers' movement and a bloc of all anti-fascist democratic parties is the most important prerequisite for this.

Of all strata of the German people, working men and women have endured the greatest suffering, have borne the heaviest burdens. They constitute the vast majority of the people. On their shoulders first and foremost the burden of reconstruction and of restitution rests.

Therefore the working people must decide the fate of the new democratic Germany.

The working class will unite all democratic and progressive groups of the people. It is the most consistent democratic force and the most resolute fighter against imperialism. It is the force which will surmount our national disaster. The working class alone has a great historical aim: socialism.

The future therefore belongs to it, together with all working men and women. The bitter experience of the past has taught us that the working class can only take the lead in building the new, free, and indivisible German republic and can only then achieve the reform of all political, economic, cultural, and intellectual relationships and the building of socialism, if it overcomes the split in its own ranks, if it creates the Socialist Unity Party of Germany and gathers the entire working population around it.

The fusion of the Social Democratic Party of Germany and of the Communist Party of Germany is therefore the demand of the hour, whose fulfillment brooks no delay. With these considerations in mind the Socialist Unity Party of Germany is formed on the basis of the following principles and aims:

I. THE DEMANDS OF THE PRESENT

1. Punishment of all those guilty of causing the war and of war criminals. Removal of the remains of the Hitler regime in legislation and administration. Complete cleansing of public life in its entirety, of all offices and economic posts of influence by the removal of fascists and reactionaries.
2. Removal of capitalist monopolies, transfer of the enterprises of war criminals, fascists, and those with an interest in war into the hands of the local government bodies.
3. Destruction of reactionary militarism, deprivation of power of the large estate owners, and execution of the democratic Land Reform.
4. Extension of self-government on the basis of elections carried out in a democratic manner. Conduct of all public institutions and economic life by honest democrats and proven anti-fascists; systematic training of able working men and women for posts as officials in the local government bodies, as teachers, people's judges, and works managers, with special emphasis on the training of women.
5. Transfer of all public enterprises, mineral wealth and mines, banks, savings banks, and insurance institutions into the hands of the Gemeinden, provinces, and Länder or those of an all-German government. Combination of enterprises in Economic Chambers in which trade unions and co-operatives are to participate with equal rights. Strongest possible development of the co-operative movement. Limitation of profits and protection of working men and women from capitalist exploitation.
6. Development of the economy and safeguarding of the currency by means of economic plans. Planned increase in consumer goods production in industry and crafts, with the utilization of private initiative. Strongest possible intensification of agriculture. Rebuilding of destroyed towns and speedy restoration of transport and safety in traffic. The creation of a basis for Germany's reintegration in international trade by the export of consumer goods and import of raw materials and foodstuffs of which there are deficiencies, with the aid of credits. Reconstruction of the credit system by means of public credit institutes. Provision of work for all working men and women. Safeguarding of the supply of the vital needs of the population in food, clothing, accommodation, and fuel.
7. Democratic tax reform. Simplification of the tax system by a closer grouping of the different kinds of taxation, with more consideration for social factors in tax assessment. Those who are richer must be made to carry the greater war burdens.
8. Safeguarding of democratic people's rights. Freedom of opinion in speech, pictorial representation, and writing, with safeguards for the security of the democratic state against reactionary attacks. Freedom of thought and of religion. Equality of all citizens before the law

without distinction of race or sex. Equal rights for women in public and working life. State protection for the individual. Democratic reform of the legal system.

9. Guarantees of the right of coalition, the right to strike, and the right of collective bargaining. Recognition of works councils as the legal representatives of workers and employees at their place of work. Equal rights for works councils in all questions concerning the works and production.

10. Legalization of the eight-hour working day as the normal working day. Extension of regulations for industrial safety, especially for women and juveniles. The creation of a uniform system of social insurance for all working men and women. Reform of social welfare and protection of mothers, children, and juveniles. Special welfare arrangements for the victims of fascism and for resettlers and repatriates.

11. Democratic reform of the entire educational system. Creation of the comprehensive school. Education of youth in the spirit of progressive democracy, friendship among the peoples, and true humanity. The right of every German to education according to his gifts and abilities. Separation of the church from the state and the school. Cultural renewal of Germany and fostering of literature, art, and science.

12. The creation of a united Germany as an anti-fascist, parliamentary, democratic republic, and the formation of a central government by the anti-fascist democratic parties.

13. Recognition of the duty to make restitution for the damage done to other peoples by the Hitler regime. The safeguarding of an average European standard of living for the German people as determined by the Potsdam Conference of the three great Powers.

14. Opposition by every means to incitement of racial persecution and international enmity. Measures for the promotion of peaceful and neighborly coexistence with other nations.

II. THE FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

Neither the system of capitalist exploitation and suppression nor the anarchy of the capitalist system of production are, however, removed by the implementation of the demands of the moment; nor is peace finally safeguarded.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany has as its long-term aim liberation from all exploitation and suppression, from economic crises, poverty, unemployment, and from the imperialist threat of war. This aim, the solution of the vital national and social questions of our people, can only be achieved by socialism.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany fights for the transformation of capitalist ownership of the means of production into social ownership, and for the transformation of capitalist production of goods into socialist production, carried out by and for society. In the bourgeois society the working class is the exploited, suppressed class. It can only free itself from exploitation and suppression by simultaneously and finally freeing the whole of society from exploitation and suppression and creating the socialist society. Socialism guarantees to all nations and all people the free exercise of their rights and the development of their abilities. Only with socialism does humanity enter the realm of freedom and general well-being.

The conquest of political power by the working class is the basic prerequisite for the creation of a socialist order in society. To this end the working class allies itself with the other working men and women.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany fights for this new state on the basis of the democratic republic.

The present special situation in Germany, which has arisen as a result of the breaking up of the reactionary state power apparatus and the creation of a democratic state on a new economic foundation, includes the possibility of preventing reactionary forces from blocking the final liberation of the working class by the use of force and of civil war. The Socialist Unity Party of Germany aims at the achievement of socialism by democratic means; but it will resort to revolutionary means if the capitalist class departs from the basis of democracy.

III. THE NATURE OF THE SOCIALIST UNITY PARTY OF GERMANY

It is the historic task of the united workers' movement to shape the fight of the working class and the working people consciously and uniformly. The Socialist Unity Party of Germany must direct the present endeavors of the working class in the direction of a fight for socialism and must lead the working class and all working people towards the fulfillment of this, their historic mission.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany can only conduct its struggle successfully if it unites the best and most advanced forces of the working people and becomes, by representing their interests, the party of the working people.

This fighting organization is based on the democratic right of decision of its members, the democratic election of all Party leaders, and the fact that all members, delegates, deputies, and leaders of the Party are bound by its decisions which are democratically arrived at.

The interests of the working people are the same in all countries with a capitalist system of production. Therefore the Socialist Unity Party of Germany declares its solidarity with the class-conscious workers of all countries. It feels at one with the peace-loving and democratic peoples of the whole world.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany fights, as an independent party in its own country, for the true national interests of its own people. As a German socialist party it is the most progressive and the best national force which fights with all its strength and all its energy against particularist tendencies and for the economic, cultural, and political unity of Germany.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany will adopt a program based on these principles and postulates; it will be submitted to the members by the party executive and will be made the subject of a resolution by the next ordinary party congress.

The unity of the socialist movement is the best guarantee of the unity of Germany! It will secure the victory of socialism! Socialism is the banner of the future! Under its banner we shall triumph!

Source: Principles and Aims of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (April 21, 1946), in *Dokumente der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands [Documents of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany]*, I. 5; reprinted in Beata Ruhm von Oppen, ed., *Documents on Germany under Occupation, 1945-1954*. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1955, pp. 121-25.