

Ulrike Kuschel: «Jetzt wird es noch schöner – August 1961»

Audio piece, 6:30 min, 2007

### **English translation**

1. The few pennies I have are over there and I can't get at them any more.
2. Well, it looks like even more will come today, there'll be a lot going on.
3. It's a good thing. It's about time.
4. It'll finally put the brakes on the mop squads and put a stop to the racketeers.
5. You're probably one of their kind as well!
6. Leave me in peace will you.
7. There's no way I'll be going to work.
8. At least now we can see who is responsible for the tension.
9. We're the ones driving a wedge!
10. Why not free elections? Then Germany wouldn't be divided but reunified.
11. Will we able to visit our relatives? There is no freedom in our state. In the West they can go wherever they went, even to Italy.
12. Things will be even better now. We'll even have borders running through the city.
13. How will the colleagues from the outskirts get back home?
14. Two months ago I married a woman from East Berlin and moved here. Today I can't even tell her parents about the birth of our child.
15. Why am I pulling such a face? I'm not concerned about what's going on, I've just got a toothache.
16. Just wait, everything's still quiet today.
17. Why are West Berliners allowed over? This kind of regulation still allows for lots of agents to be smuggled in. We're the only ones who are disadvantaged.
18. The tank deployment wasn't necessary. No provocation would've come from over there.
19. This really pisses me off. We can't go to the movies now, oh, it'll be so boring.
20. Then tomorrow morning we'll have to look for work, at which joint should we start?
21. One shouldn't simply go to work.
22. Give me 300 West marks from my wages and I'll continue to work here.
23. Do I have to go to work straightaway or can I go on vacation first?

24. We won't let them place us in jobs, the Control Council will revoke the measure.
25. Now that you've closed the borders, your lot can do with us what you want.
26. They all deserve to be shot.
27. I simply don't understand the government's measures. I feel that it's a human tragedy brought about by a despotic attitude.
28. 80% of the population won't accept these measures.
29. Why don't you just introduce compulsory military service if you set such great store in us going?
30. It's madness to bring the tanks in and seal the borders.
31. There'll be a war now.
32. We're practically imprisoned.
33. I'd rather eat kangaroo meat than become a bolshevist.
34. Berliners won't put up with it.
35. You can't go on now.
36. Things won't stay like this though, they'll change tact again in the next few days.
37. We won't be taking on any work.
38. The peace accord won't happen now. Things will stay as they are for the next 10 years.
39. We have to respect the opinions of others and keep quiet.
40. Why don't you hold elections? Elections would show what the population thinks.
41. It's better to remain aloof. Maybe they will reverse some of their decisions.
42. If passes are issued can we visit our relatives again?
43. If you issue the passes again, then be generous and let those who've worked over there for 20 years go there.
44. We can't go to the movies, we can't go dancing, we can't go shopping.
45. If the West Berliners can go for a walk down the Stinallee, then we want to be able to do the same on the Kurfürstendamm.
46. The measures affect our citizens more than the West Berliners. Even if you try and understand the measures as politically sensible for society at large, one shouldn't ignore personal interests.
47. Well, it's all taking place in a peaceful and orderly manner and is right in a way.
48. It's about time that the overblown cult with the West Berliner artists is brought to an end.
49. We'll have to mull over it all, it's all come about so suddenly.

50. It wasn't meant like that. We understand that you had to introduce these measures.
51. Enticement is not an accurate description, all those leaving and going over there are the discontented.
52. What's all this about the GDR – there's no democracy here! Leading functionaries have authorization to go shopping over there!
53. Luxury villas on the Wandlitzsee, the women there don't work, they just get into arguments with one another.
54. Does Karl Eduard v. Schnitzler live in the West? He drives a West car and can go shopping over there.
55. We must stick together, we're all in the same boat.
56. Who knows what still lies ahead!
57. Now we don't even have enough air to breathe.
58. The lazy dogs do nothing, and they won't be getting any money from me.
59. And even if we were full of money, we wouldn't give them a cent.

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Only very few turning-points in history happen literally overnight.

Reports on the mood amongst the population are of course not a secure, value-neutral source.

Individual voices are no substitute for the lack of detailed surveys on the political attitudes of GDR citizens.

Patrick Major: Reactions of GDR Citizens to the Building of the Wall prior to and after August 13 1961; in:

Archiv für Sozialgeschichte 39 (1999)

translation: Paul Bowman

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