

Willy Brandt is the adopted name of Herbert Ernst Karl Frahn. Born in December 1913 to an unwed Lübeck shopgirl, he was raised by maternal grandfather to be a fervent blue-collar socialist. As a teenager Brandt joined the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) in 1930, but one year later switched to a more radical spin-off the Socialist Labour Party (SAP). In 1933 to escape arrest the Gestapo changed his name to Willy Brandt and fled to Scandinavia where he was active as a journalist and in anti-fascist movement.

In 1945/46 he worked as a correspondent in Germany for Scandinavian newspaper and became press officer at the Norwegian Mission in Berlin. Brandt was persuaded by fellow Social Democrats to apply for reinstatement of his German citizenship.

In 1949 he was elected a member of the first parliament of the post-war West Germany that convened in Bonn. In 1957 the SPD chose him as its candidate for the office of the Mayor of West Berlin. At the 1958 Stuttgart Party Congress Brandt was elected to the Party Committee and was prominent in the proceedings of extraordinary party congress held in Bad Godesberg in 1959 where the policy outlook of the party was fundamentally adjusted in the so-called Godesberger Program which accepted that a social market economy had some advantages of a and disavowed rigorously Marxist state ownership.

On August 13 1961 East Germany suddenly began to erect the Wall through the heart of Berlin to stem the outflow of East German refugees. The Wall was a blatant violation of international understanding about free moving city, but the Western allies waited a full 48 hours before lodging an ineffectual protest with the Soviets. "Kennedy cooked our goose" said Brandt, and he fired off a blistering reproach to the president. (He later mellowed toward Kennedy, however after president delivered his *Ich bin ein Berliner*)