

# Mass Rally and Torchlight Procession by the Free German Youth in East Berlin (October 11, 1949)

## Abstract

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Just four days after the German Democratic Republic was founded on October 7, 1949, the Provisional People's Parliament [*Provisorische Volkskammer*] and the Provisional States' Chambers [*Provisorische Länderkammer*] elected Wilhelm Pieck the country's first president. To celebrate the occasion, then chairman of the Free German Youth [*Freie Deutsche Jugend* or FDJ], Erich Honecker, had 200,000 members of the youth organization march by the dignitaries' stand in front of Humboldt University in Berlin. Illuminated by a torchlight procession, Honecker recited the "Oath of the German Youth," which included the following lines:

"We, the youth of Germany, pledge our loyalty to the German Democratic Republic, because it will bring us peace and a better life!

We, the youth of Germany, pledge our loyalty to the German Democratic Republic, because it will be the first German state to ensure full self-determination for the German people!

We, the youth of Germany, pledge our loyalty to the German Democratic Republic, because it is and will remain the true house of the people! We pledge to maintain this house and protect it from attacks by warmongers and destroyers of our unity!"

In the photograph, FDJ members carry a poster of Stalin and an image of the historical handshake between SPD leader Otto Grotewohl and KPD leader Wilhelm Pieck that symbolically sealed the 1946 merger of the KPD and the Eastern SPD into the SED.

## Source

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Source: Photo: Herbert Hensky.

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Recommended Citation: Mass Rally and Torchlight Procession by the Free German Youth in East Berlin (October 11, 1949), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/occupation-and-the-emergence-of-two-states-1945-1961/ghdi:image-2605>> [May 13, 2024].