

Rally in Halle/Saale during the Elections to the Third German People's Congress (May 15-16, 1949)

Abstract

In March 1949, the "German People's Council" reacted to the pending adoption of the Basic Law in the Trizone by declaring a "national emergency" and convening a Third People's Congress to approve the constitution. This time, the Congress was supposed to be legitimized by elections, which were to be held in the Soviet zone and East Berlin on May 15-16, 1949. The elections, however, took place according to the so-called unified-list principle: candidates were nominated by the individual parties and mass organizations, and the distribution of seats among these groups was determined in advance of the election. The system guaranteed the dominance of the SED, a forced consolidation of the SPD and KPD, which was allotted 25% of the seats. The CDU and Liberal Democratic Party of German were given 15% each; the Free German Trade Union Federation was given 10%; the Democratic Farmers' Party of Germany and the National Democratic Party of Germany were allotted 7.5% each; the Free German Youth Movement and the League of Culture received 5% each; and the rest of the seats went to the other parties and mass organizations. The elections were held on the basis of a "yes" or "no" for the lists, with the ballot reading, "I am for German unity and a just peace treaty. Therefore, I vote for the following list of candidates for the Third German People's Congress." According to official election results, the unified list received 66.1% of the vote; the validity of this result was contested by many, however. The Third German People's Congress eventually took place on May 29-30, 1949. It elected the Second German People's Council, which constituted itself as the Provisional People's Parliament [*Provisorische Volkskammer*] and promulgated the GDR constitution on October 7, 1949. The photograph below shows citizens of Halle/Salle – mostly children – rallying during the elections to the "Third People's Congress" in front of a backdrop of war-damaged buildings. Most of their signs read: "Your Yes Vote for Germany!"

Source



Source: Agitation in Halle/Saale for the election to the 3rd German People's Congress on May 15-16, 1949. The 3rd German People's Congress passed the constitution of the GDR in East Berlin on May 30, 1949. Photo: Herbert Hensky. bpk-Bildagentur, image number 30021235. For rights inquiries, please contact Art Resource at requests@artres.com (North America) or bpk-Bildagentur at kontakt@bpk-bildagentur.de (for all other countries).

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