Signing of the Basic Law [*Grundgesetz*] in the Pedagogical Academy in Bonn (May 23, 1949)

Abstract

The Parliamentary Council consisted of sixty-five voting members (twenty-seven each for the CDU/CSU and the SPD; five for the FDP; and two each for the KPD, the DP, and the Center), and five non-voting representatives from Berlin. It was tasked with holding deliberations on the Basic Law proposed by the constitutional convention that had met on Herreninsel in the Chiemsee from August 10-23, 1948. An official opening ceremony for the Parliamentary Council was held on September 1, 1948, and the group began work that very same day. It met in Bonn's Pedagogical Academy, a building constructed in the sober, functional Bauhaus style so detested by the Nazis. (The academy had been quickly transformed and expanded into an assembly hall.) With its large window façades, the new legislative chamber, designed by architect Hans Schwippert, projected modernity, openness, and political transparency, and thereby symbolized the young republic's desire for a new democratic start.
On May 8, 1949, the council approved the Basic Law. It was approved by the three Western military governors on May 12, 1949. After ratification by the German states, it was signed at the last meeting of the Parliamentary Council on May 23, 1949, and promulgated that very same day. The presence of representatives of the Allied military government made it clear, however, that four years after the end of the war, the newly founded "Federal Republic of Germany" was still occupied and not a completely sovereign state. The term "Basic Law" emphasized the provisional character of the constitution and the state itself, which was supposed to be replaced by a reunified Germany at some point in time. In his concluding remarks at the signing ceremony, Konrad Adenauer, then president of the Parliamentary Council, said: "We wish and hope that the day might soon come when the entire German people will be reunited under this flag."

Source

Source: Signing of the Basic Law at the Pedagogical Academy. The Basic Law is ready for signing on a table. Unknown photographer.
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