

The foundation of the GDR

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As a response to the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in Bonn, in October 1949 the USSR encouraged the proclamation of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in Berlin. East Berlin became the capital of the GDR. The West refused to recognise this State which, following the example of the FRG, presumed to speak for all of Germany. The Communist Wilhelm Pieck became President of the GDR and Otto Grotewohl, a former Social Democrat, was made head of the government. However it was Walter Ulbricht, leader of the Communist Party, who played the crucial role. Since 1946, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) of the Soviet zone had had to merge with the Communist Party (KPD) to form the Socialist Unity Party (SED). This Stalinist party, led by Communists, dominated the political scene in the GDR until the end of the Communist era in 1989.